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*Oliver Plunkett Archbishop of Armagh  
who died for the Faith, the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 1681*

LIFE

OF THE

MOST REV. OLIVER PLUNKET.

Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of all Ireland,

WHO

SUFFERED DEATH FOR THE CATHOLIC FAITH IN THE  
YEAR 1681.

BY THE

REV. PATRICK FRANCIS MORAN, D.D. *D*



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## TO THE READER.

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THE present "Life of Oliver Plunket" is a compendium of the larger work which appeared ten years ago, entitled "MEMOIRS OF THE MOST REV. OLIVER PLUNKET," (*Dublin, Duffy, 1861.*) Every fact connected with Dr. Plunket's life, and every contemporary record calculated to give an accurate idea of the apostolic labours of this devoted Prelate, or of the period in which he exercised his sacred ministry, have been carefully retained, but all matters of mere erudition and such details as were unimportant for the general public are omitted. The object of these pages is to make known to Catholic readers the heroism of one at least of the illustrious champions of our holy Religion, who, in the dark days of persecution, fearlessly guarded the sanc-

tuary of God, and handed down to us the deposit of divine Faith. If even one of those who peruse this little volume be stimulated by it to cherish the memory of this great martyred Archbishop, and to emulate his virtues, the writer will have fully attained his desired reward.

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*Imprimatur,*

✠ PAULUS CARDINALIS CULLEN,  
*Archiep. Dublinensis.*

*Die 14 Oct., 1870.*



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# L I F E

OF THE

MOST REV. OLIVER PLUNKET.

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## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY LIFE OF DR. PLUNKET.

OLIVER PLUNKET was born at Loughcrew, in the county of Meath, in the year 1629. He was connected by birth with many of the most illustrious families of Ireland, and was a near relative of Dr. Patrick Plunket, who successively ruled the dioceses of Ardagh and Meath. He was also connected with the illustrious Peter Talbot, Archbishop of Dublin, who, writing to him before his appointment to the see of Armagh, styles himself *his cousin*. The Bishop of Ardagh, just mentioned, in a letter of 19th October, 1668, addressed to Oliver Plunket, then Agent of the Irish Clergy in Rome, gives the following interesting particulars connected with his family:—

“As regards your relatives, the Earls of Fingall and Roscommon have re-acquired their lands and property, which were in the hands of Cromwell's officers, and to the great delight of all

friends, the castle of Killiney (Killeen), six miles from Dublin, has been restored to Lord Fingall. The Baron of Dunsany not having recovered any of his estates, is reduced to great poverty; but the Baron of Louth has obtained a partial restitution of what he lost. Mr. Nicholas Plunket, of Dunsaille, has got back all his former possessions. The other Plunkets of Tatrath, Balrath, and Preston have not as yet got back their castles, which are all still in the hands of the Cromwellians and Londoners, having been purchased by them from the Parliament in the time of the Rebellion."

Oliver, at an early age, displayed a desire to devote himself to the sacred ministry, and his education, until his sixteenth year, was confided to his own relative, Dr. Patrick Plunket, then titular Abbot of St. Mary's, Dublin. This we learn from a letter of the illustrious teacher himself, who, when the buds had put forth their flowers, and the little plant had become a full-grown tree, recalled to mind with delight the labour of former years, and the anxious care with which he had scattered in his tender mind the fruitful seeds of virtue and learning. This letter is addressed to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda:—

"During twenty-two years I ruled the diocese of Ardagh, nor did I abandon the Church entrusted to me until the persecution of Cromwell, when I suffered exile for seven years. As soon as the king, having obtained possession of

his hereditary dominions, restored to my dear brother and nephews their castles and possessions confiscated by Cromwell, I obtained permission to return to my native country, in which I was the only bishop to perform the pontifical functions. Promptly and faithfully I carried into effect in the very city of Dublin (though not without imminent danger) the Decrees of the Sacred Congregation against the false and schismatical brethren, and on every occasion will I intrepidly continue to execute them, even though now in my old age my blood should be shed; nay, it would be a glorious thing for me to exchange for martyrdom, through reverence for the Apostolic See, the few years of life which yet remain. Rome, as a watchful and holy mother, was not unmindful of my labours; and you, a true lover of Ireland, being the proposer and promoter of my cause, the Holy See and the Sacred Congregation transferred me from the lowly diocese of Ardagh to that of Meath, the most flourishing in the whole Kingdom, where, dwelling in my own home, I may superintend my whole flock. For this favour, and for having increased the number of our bishops, I render to you, and ever shall render, all the thanks in my power; *as also for the affection displayed by you towards Oliver Plunket, who is closely united to me by birth. Having educated him from his infancy till his sixteenth year, I sent him to Rome to pursue his studies at the fountain-head of truth, and I now take pride in his having*

*merited your patronage : neither do I believe that my judgment is led astray by flesh and blood when I assert that he burns with ardent zeal for the Apostolic See, and for the spiritual progress of our country. I earnestly commend him to your protection.*

“I remain, your Excellency’s most obliged and devoted servant,

“ & PATRICK OF MEATH.

“ Killiney, in Meath, 22nd June, 1669.”

In 1643, Father Peter Francis Scarampo was sent by the Holy See on a special mission to Ireland. He was a man filled with the spirit of God, and during his stay among them, heaven seemed to smile on the cause of the Irish Confederates, and to crown their efforts with success. In 1645, the Supreme Council petitioned the Holy Father to send a Nuncio to represent him in Ireland, after the manner of great Catholic kingdoms, and at the same time solicited that this dignity should be conferred on Father Scarampo; but the humble disciple of St. Philip\* offered a most decided opposition to this

\* The author of the Vallicellian MS. life of F. Scarampo says:—“I remember that meeting one day with Cardinal Panzirolo, then Secretary of State of Pope Innocent X., he said to me: ‘Your Father Scarampo through humility has not accepted the title of Nuncio, but he has fulfilled all the duties of an excellent Nuncio.’ And again, Father Wadding, a religious of that exemplary life and learning which the whole world knows, said to me frequently: ‘I will not call your Father Scarampo by any other name than that of Apostle of Ireland, for he truly deserves this title.’”

project, in so much that Innocent X., when permitting him by a Brief of the 5th of May, 1645, to return to Rome, expressed regret that through the holy man's humility the Church in Ireland, and in a manner, the universal Church, should be deprived of his eminent services.

A few months later Father Scarampo, accompanied by five youths, was seen hastening towards the Irish coast. A frigate was there awaiting him to bear him and his companions to Flanders, and the people flocked around him in thousands to receive for the last time the blessing of one whom they loved, and to pray in return that God would shower down His benedictions on the good Oratorian, and on the youthful Levites whom he was leading with him to the sanctuaries of Rome, there to drink in at the very source the pure streams of truth with which one day they might refresh their native land.

One of these youths was the future martyr-Archbishop of Armagh, then in his sixteenth year. The holy Oratorian seems to have even then cherished a special affection for *Don Oliverio*, as he loved to style him—an affection which increased with each succeeding year, and was faithfully responded to by Dr. Plunket.

A journey from Ireland to Flanders was not without its dangers at this period. The narrow seas were covered with cruisers of the rival states, and pirates, also, continually infested the British Channel. The Nuncio Rinuccini, in the month of October of this very year (1645), when

sailing from France to Ireland, had more than once with difficulty escaped from the pursuit of the Parliamentary squadron ; and Father Scarampo, with his young companions, now incurred like dangers when sailing from the Irish shores. Pursued for twenty-four hours, says his biographer, by two large vessels, they were more than once in imminent danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. On arriving in Flanders new perils awaited them. When travelling through the country they were seized by bandits, and it was only by the payment of a large sum of money that they obtained their liberation. But Providence having safely conducted them through these and many other trials, at length, before the close of the year 1645, they arrived in the Eternal City, and knelt together around the tombs of the Apostles.

Here we must depart awhile from chronological order, that we may the better appreciate the warmth of affection with which, in later years, Dr. Plunket repaid the paternal kindness of the good Oratorian. In 1656, the city of Rome was ravaged by the plague. A central hospital for those stricken by the frightful malady was established in the island of St. Bartholomew. All who, impelled by charity, entered within its walls to minister to the wants of its inmates were deemed devoted to certain death. Nevertheless, many were the zealous priests who sought this martyrdom of charity ; and to judge from the records of the time, none displayed in



a higher degree than heroism of divine love than F. Peter Francis Scarampo. Scarce, however, had he entered upon his arduous mission in the pestilential wards of the hospital, than the members of his order, and his other many friends in Rome, wrote letters urging him to abandon the theatre of such imminent danger, and to reserve for other labours his precious life.

The only letter of this apostolic man, which is now preserved in the Vallicellian archives, was written in reply to one of these solicitations, and, in the style of those times, bears the address, "To my Very Reverend Master, Mr. Oliver Plunket, at S. Girolamo della Carità (Rome)." This letter is truly valuable, not only as disclosing to us the noble sentiments of charity and faith which animated the zealous Father of the Oratory, and his ardent affection for Dr. Plunket, but also as recording those facts of their journey to Rome, which otherwise, perhaps, might have remained wholly unknown to us. He thus writes:—

"Why do you fear, oh you of little faith? Should we desist from a work which is truly ours, which God wishes us to perform, and which is so pleasing to Him? I have almost completed my sixtieth year, and never before did such an occasion present itself of satisfying for my sins, and perhaps should I live as many more, such another opportunity would not be granted to me: shall I therefore be idle and allow it to be lost? But, you say, you shall die.

What matter ; even at the Chiesa Nuova and everywhere else we must die. Relatives, friends, masters, acquaintances, dependants, subjects, penitents will grieve ; but all these, if they do not die themselves before me, will have, at some other time, to weep my death. Would it then be proper for me not to face death, in order to pass perhaps eight, ten, fifteen years more in a painful old age, even should death not prematurely assail me ? and yet it will be vain for it to assail me, should not the Lord of death so will it. The same God who snatched both me and you from that death with which the piratical ships threatened us in the English Channel—who freed me from snares in my long and continual journeys—who, in Flanders, by ransom, liberated us from robbers, and who in His power guided us through many other more imminent and certain dangers, which you have never known or heard of—He, too, is present in the hospital, should I be seized with the pestilence in St. Bartholomew's. In Him do I confide. How therefore do you say to my soul, change your quarters and return ? He who sees all things, will He be unwatchful of me ?

“ So much about myself. As to you, place your trust in God and He will do everything. If I have shown you any love or kindness—for I conferred no benefit—to whom are you indebted ? to Him who is the bestower of all gifts, the Father of charity and of kindness ; what He performed through me—I repeat it—if it was

any good, He can perform the same still better through another. Be of good courage! rest not for your support on reeds, of which I am one of the most fragile. I will do what you desire: I will commend you to my Fathers, Virgil and Marianus; nor need you ever entertain any doubt of their charity...Salute Father Luke\* and his charge, Father Young† and his, not forgetting Dr. Creagh and all the other Irish. Thank them for their prayers; and as these are most necessary for me, have them frequently offered up for me; and I embrace you from my heart.

“From the island of St. Bartholomew, the Feast of St. Francis (4th Oct.)

“Your most faithful and devoted servant,

“PET. FR. SCARAMPO.”

This letter clearly evinces the lively interest with which Father Scarampo sought to provide for his young friend. Indeed, so great was the solicitude which he continually displayed in his regard, that his own brother, on one occasion, said to Dr. Plunket—“Father Peter Francis does for you what he would never consent to do for me; for he readily goes on every occasion to

\* F. Luke Wadding, the renowned author of the *Annals of the Franciscan Order*. In the letters of the time he never receives from his friends any other name than *Padre Luca*.

† He was a Jesuit, at this time Rector of the Irish College, Rome.

“speak to the Cardinals in your favour, and this he never once did for me, though I frequently solicited him to do so, even on some matters of great importance.”

A few days passed on from the date of the above letter, and the fears of the friends of Father Scarampo were too sadly realized. Struck by the pestilence, contracted in attending the sick, he breathed his last on the 14th of October, 1656, offering up his life as a holocaust of charity. He was interred in the church of SS. Nereus and Achilles, and the following simple inscription was placed upon his tomb:—

“To Peter Francis Scarampo,  
Superior of the Roman Congregation of the  
Oratory,

Who, inflamed with the ardour of charity,  
And ministering to those infected by pestilence,

Being seized with the same contagion,  
Received as his reward a wished-for death,  
The day before the Ides of October, 1656;  
Of his age the 60th.”

Amongst the MSS. of the Vallicellian, there is, on a flying-sheet, another beautiful inscription, composed by some of F. Scarampo's admiring friends, and not improbably by our own Dr. Plunket. It is as follows:—

“Peter Francis Mary Scarampo, from Saone,  
Superior of the Congregation of the Orat. of  
S. Philip Neri in Rome,

From nature he received nobility ;  
This he increased by his life,  
By his death he rendered it undying.

During the contagion  
He embraced the heroism of charity,  
And losing life he attained it,  
In the year of salvation 1656, of his age the 60th,  
The day before the Ides of October."

In the letter cited above, Father Scarampo commended Dr. Plunket to the care of F. Virgilius Spada. This priest was a member of the Oratory, and had been for some time Superior-General of the Order. During the pestilence he had entered the hospital with F. Scarampo, and had ever been his constant companion in his labours of love. To him Dr. Plunket, whilst weeping for his departed friend and benefactor, now turned for consolation; and the fragment of the letter which still remains, addressed by him to F. Spada, will better express than any words of ours the bereavement and sorrow which overwhelmed him. It is preserved in the Vallicellian and Barberini manuscript lives of Father Scarampo:—

"Ireland has lost an untiring protector and efficacious benefactor in the death of F. Peter Francis Scarampo; and I, in particular, have lost a father more dear to me than my earthly father, for he conducted me from Ireland, encountering in so long a journey many dangers from pirates and bandits, and bringing me to

Rome at his own expense, and also maintaining me for three years in the city and in our college;\* and even when I had completed my studies, his assistance, whether temporal or spiritual, was never wanting to me. God alone knows how afflicting his death is to me, especially at the present time, when all Ireland is overrun and laid waste by heresy. Of my relatives, some are dead, others have been sent into exile, and all Ireland is reduced to extreme misery; this overwhelms me with an inexpressible sadness, for I am now deprived of father and of friends, and I should die through grief were I not consoled by the consideration that I have not altogether lost Father Scarampo; for I may say that he in part remains, our good God having retained your reverence in life, who, as it is known to all, were united with him in friendship, and in charity, and in disposition, so as even to desire to be his companion in death, from which, though God preserved you, yet he did not deprive you of its merit."

But it is time to resume our narrative, and pursue the career of Dr. Plunket as student, and subsequently as professor, in Rome.

\* There being but a limited number of burses in the college, his expenses were defrayed for a time by F. Scarampo until a burse became vacant.

## CHAPTER II.

## DR. PLUNKET PURSUES HIS STUDIES IN ROME.

THE Irish College for the secular clergy in Rome, as most of the other Irish Continental institutions, dates its origin from the times of persecution. Gregory the XIII. (1572-85) had more than once contemplated the establishment of such an asylum for our nation, but the demands for arms and supplies made on him by the Irish princes then combating for their lives and religion, absorbed the various sums set aside by him for this purpose. The bishops of Ireland, however, did not cease their solicitations, that this great boon should be granted to our suffering church, and in a *Relation* presented to Rome in 1625, the foundation of an Irish College is insisted on as a necessary means for supplying our island with virtuous and learned pastors, and maintaining its connexion with the centre of Catholic unity.

It was only in the year 1627, however, that the college was at length established through the munificence of Cardinal Ludovisi, nephew of Gregory XV., and through the untiring exertions of the illustrious ornament of the Franciscan Order, Father Luke Wadding. This wonderful

man, having already founded the Convent of St. Isidore for the members of his own order, earnestly laboured to have a similar institution opened for the secular clergy. An occasion soon presented itself, and, indeed, a truly propitious one. Urban the VIII. had, on his accession to the Papal throne, nominated Cardinal Ludovisi Protector of Ireland. This Cardinal was distinguished even in Rome by his liberality and munificence. One monument alone, the Church of St. Ignatius, which is due to his piety, should suffice to immortalize his fame. It was his desire, and in this he was encouraged by his most intimate friend, Luke Wadding, to render to the Irish Church some important service calculated to perpetuate the memory of his protectorate. "It was not a difficult matter," says the simple narrative from which we learn these particulars, "to convince his Eminence that no other work was more worthy of his munificence, or could render more lasting service to the Irish Church, than the foundation of a missionary college for the youth of that nation." Without delay this idea was carried into effect; and we learn from many sources, that it was the intention of his Eminence not merely to found the College, but to endow it with sufficient funds for the maintenance of a large number of students; death, however, cut short this beneficent design, and the sum which he was able to bequeath for its endowment being comparatively small, during



the 170 years which the college lasted till its suppression by the French usurpers of Rome, in 1798, it was seldom able to receive more than eight students within its walls.

At the period of which we now treat it was under the direction of the Jesuit Fathers, and it sent forth so many learned and distinguished missionaries, who shed lustre on the Irish hierarchy, that it won for itself in Rome the title of *nursery of Bishops*. Indeed the 17th century may be justly considered a glorious era in the history of the Irish College.\*

Of the five students conducted to Rome by Father Scarampo, three were placed in the Irish College; two of them, Drs. Plunket and Brennan, were destined, as Archbishops of Armagh and Cashel, to become pillars of the Irish Church in the days of her severest trials; whilst the third, Father Walsh,† having completed his

\* For instance the following Prelates, contemporary with Dr. Plunket, and whose names will more than once recur in the following pages, were educated in the Ludovisian Irish College: Dr. Brennan, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, and thence transferred to the Archdiocese of Cashel; Luke Plunket, Vicar Apostolic of Raphoe, afterwards of Derry; Ronan Maginn, Vicar Ap. of Dromore; Dr. Cusack, Bishop of Meath: Dr. Peter Creagh, Bishop of Cork and Cloyne, afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, &c., &c.

+ From the Vallicellian MS. life of Father Scarampo, we learn that in 1669 it was the intention of the Sacred Congregation to confer on F. Walsh the Archbishopric of Cashel, his native Diocese; he was prevented by sickness from accepting that dignity, and Dr. William Burgatt was appointed to the See.

course of studies, entered the congregation of the Oratory, and made first Perugia, and then Rome, the theatre of his missionary labours.

On arriving at Rome, Dr. Plunket devoted himself for some time to the study of rhetoric under Professor Dandoni. In the following year, 1646, he was admitted a student of the Irish College. There he applied himself with great diligence for eight years to the study of Mathematics, Philosophy, and Theology;\* subsequently he attended the lectures on Canon Law of the celebrated Jurisconsult Mariscotti,† in the halls of the Roman University called the Sapienza.

With what ardour and proficiency he applied to these studies we learn from a paper presented to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in 1669, by the Rector of the Irish College, Father Edward Locke.

“I, the undersigned, certify that the Very Reverend Dr. Oliver Plunket, of the Diocese of Meath, in the Province of Armagh, in Ireland, is of Catholic parentage, descended from an illustrious family, on the father’s side from the most illustrious Earls of Fingall, and on the mother’s side from the most illustrious Earls

\* Amongst those who at this period attracted by their learning foreign students to the halls of the Roman College, we may mention Father Pallavicino, afterwards Cardinal of Holy Church, and author of the “History of the Council of Trent.”

† Mark Anthony de Mariscotti, was one of the most learned Jurisconsults of the 17th century.

of Roscommon, being also connected by birth with the most illustrious Oliver Plunket, Baron of Louth, first Nobleman of the Diocese of Armagh: and in this our Irish College he devoted himself with such ardour to Philosophy, Theology, and Mathematics, that in the Roman College of the Society of Jesus he was justly ranked amongst the foremost in talent, diligence, and progress in his studies: these speculative studies being completed, he pursued with abundant fruit the course of Civil and Canon Law, under Mark Anthony de Mariscotti, Professor in the Roman Sapienza, and everywhere and at all times he was a model of gentleness, integrity, and piety."

It was the rule of the Irish College that the students after their ordination should return to Ireland; and they were obliged solemnly to avow their intention of discharging this duty, should they not be exempted from it by their superiors. Such was the state of Ireland in 1654, the date of the ordination of Dr. Plunket, that there were great obstacles to prevent his entering immediately on his sacred mission. Indeed, nothing can be more sad than the spectacle then presented by our church. The ruthless invasion of Cromwell had rendered like unto a desert the fairest plains of Ireland: her cities were desolate, and the country deluged with the blood of the inhabitants; many of the survivors of the dreadful massacres had been sent to undergo a lengthened martyrdom in the Barbadoes,

or the swamps of Savannah: all colleges and seminaries had been suppressed, religious houses dissolved, the clergy proscribed, the Bishops put to death or driven into exile, the churches all in ruins: in a word, the long meditated purpose of the enemies of Ireland and of Ireland's creed seemed to have been realized.\* But still the spark of faith was not extinguished, and faithful pastors, concealed in the recesses of the forests and the fastnesses of the mountains, gathered together the remnants of their scattered flocks and broke to them the bread of eternal life.

Fearing to enter on this arduous mission without further preparation, Dr. Plunket, on the 14th June, 1654, thus addressed the General of the Jesuits:—

“I, Oliver Plunket, your most humble petitioner, student of the Irish College, having completed my Philosophical and Theological studies, considering the impossibility of now returning to Ireland (as your paternity well knows), in accordance with the rules of this College, humbly request of you most Rev. Father, that I may be allowed to continue in Rome, and dwell with the Fathers of S. Girolamo della Carità. I promise, however, and declare, that I will be ever ready to return to Ireland whensoever you, Rev. Father, or my superiors shall so command.”

\* See “Sufferings of the Irish Catholics, &c.,” by Rev. P. F. Moran.—(*Duffy*, 1865.)

The permission sought for was readily accorded, and for three years Dr. Plunket devoted himself altogether to study and the unostentatious exercise of the sacred ministry in the silent retreat of S. Girolamo. In 1657, however, his fame for theological learning being wide-spread in Rome, he was appointed Professor in the College of Propaganda, where for twelve years he continued to lecture on Speculative, Controversial, and Moral Theology. He was at the same time Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of the Index, and of other Congregations. In a letter of the 15th September, 1674, Dr. Plunket thus alludes to his labours in promoting study in these schools :—

“I spent in Rome twenty-five years (1645-1669), and for twelve of these I served the Sacred Congregation in the chairs of Theology and Controversy. I also served the Sacred Congregation of the Index. The state in which I found the course of studies in Propaganda, and the progress which they had made before I left Rome, may be learned from the Very Rev. Fathers Libelli, Laurea, Spinola, Sommascho, and the Rector Bonvicini, who were the Prefects of Studies during my time, and are acquainted with the matters to which I refer.”

Dr. Plunket, whilst prosecuting his studies at the Roman College, became acquainted with the celebrated Father Pallavicino, then filling one of the chairs of the Roman College, which had been illustrated by the learning of Suarez,

De Lugo, and Toletus. When the literary and theological labours of the great historian of the Council of Trent were rewarded by his promotion to the Roman purple, Dr. Plunket continued to enjoy his friendship, and to live with him on terms of the most cordial intimacy. In a letter addressed to Cardinal Casanatti, 15th August, 1676, the Archbishop of Armagh thus writes :—

“Whilst your Eminence was Secretary of Propaganda I had the honour of enjoying your erudite and learned conversation, in company with his Eminence Pallavicino, of happy memory, and I must in sincerity declare that from such conversation I derived great instruction. Of this, and of many other favours received from your Eminence, I, although in these remote parts of the world, retain a lively recollection, and never forget you in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, praying the divine Majesty to grant to you long life and every prosperity for the good of all, and especially of this afflicted country.”

Of those whose society he thus enjoyed, many afterwards attained the highest dignities in the Church; and among others, Monsignor Odescalchi, who in 1676 was raised to the Chair of Peter, assuming the name of Innocent XI. The letter written by Dr. Plunket on the occasion of this elevation, and addressed to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, exhibits many features of the early life of Dr. Plunket in Rome. It bears the date 11th August, 1677 :—

“ May it please your Eminence—It would be difficult to express with what spiritual consolation and joy the Catholics of this kingdom, lay and ecclesiastic, have received the announcement of the merited exaltation of our Holy Father to the Chair of St. Peter. The heretics themselves, who surely are no lovers of the faith of St. Peter, entertain, nevertheless, a special veneration for his present successor; and the English and Scotch, who during the past years visited Rome for sight-seeing, returned greatly edified, and reduced to silence their own preachers and ministers, who from the pulpit proclaim all sorts of fables and falsehoods about Rome. The courtesy and kindness shown to the Protestants who visit Rome are of great advantage to the poor Catholics of this country. Whilst professing Theology and Controversy in the College of Propaganda for many years, I had experience of the sanctity of our Holy Father, and of the great esteem in which he was held by all for wisdom, prudence, and holiness. I was particularly intimate with D. Marcantonio Odescalchi: I often assisted him when he served the poor and ragged and needy, many of whom were covered with vermin. He gathered them into an asylum, and clothed them at his expense: with his own hands he cleansed them, fed them, &c. I am morally certain that God granted to his Church so holy a Head through the merit, in great part, of the saintly D. Marcantonio. This being the case, your Eminence

will easily imagine with what joy I received the intelligence of the exaltation of our Holy Father; hence I feel compelled to announce to the people what I saw and what I experienced, that thus they too may raise their hands in thanksgiving to the divine Majesty, and supplicate for the long life of his Holiness. The Irish are especially bound to do this, in consequence of the great tenderness and compassion ever displayed towards them by the Holy See, during the persecutions which they sustained these hundred years past, and which we still have to sustain; for, rather than abandon the ancient faith, they suffer with joy the plunder of all their goods, and the privation of all offices and dignities: and I am sure the Holy Father will ever with spiritual care promote and preserve the holy faith in this kingdom, and remove all obstacles which might impede its progress.

“I pray your Eminence to inform his Holiness that there has been lately published here, in English, in a new form, the pestiferous history of *Soave*,\* which is a continual tirade against the Popes, and against the Council of Trent, with the life of that impostor, as though he were a hero. As the poison has been thus spread, an antidote indeed is necessary; such would be the history of the same Council, by

\* The assumed name of Father Paul Sarpi, a Venetian apostate friar, of the Order of the Servites, author of a history of the Council of Trent, famous for distorting facts, and misrepresenting doctrines.



Cardinal Pallavicino, if translated into English. You cannot imagine what injury has been done by that pest of a writer, Soave: all the nobility, gentry, merchants, &c., read his history, and it is the more detrimental as it pretends to be written by a religious of our communion."

"Your Eminence's most devoted and obliged servant,

"*OLIVER OF ARMAGH.*

"Dublin, 11th August, 1677.

"To his Eminence Cardinal Cybo, &c., &c."

Dr. Plunket enjoyed, moreover, a close intimacy with the Cerri family, and especially with Monsignor Cerri, with whom he maintained in after life an uninterrupted correspondence and constant friendship. On being made acquainted with the appointment of his old friend and fellow-student to the high office of Secretary of Propaganda, Dr. Plunket thus wrote to him, recounting the first occasion of his intimacy with that family:—

"MOST REVEREND LORD—A letter from any member of the house of Cerri would be at any time most gratifying to me; but the letter of your Excellency, of the 11th of June last, was especially so, not only for its own merits, but on account of the many obligations which I owe to the revered memory of your father, who was my master and benefactor. My intimacy with him commenced in this way:—Father Peter Francis Scarampo was confessor of the pious and devout lady, your mother; she gave fre-

quent accounts to D. Francesco (your father) of the great prudence and virtue of this F. Scarampo, priest of the Chiesa Nuova; and D. Francesco being intimately acquainted with, and esteemed by Cardinal Barberini, excited in his Eminence a great affection for F. Scarampo, who, after discharging the mission of papal minister in Ireland, conducted me thence to Rome. When the pestilence broke out in that city, F. Scarampo, by a pious stratagem, obtained permission to assist those who were infected in the island of St. Bartholomew, and there he afterwards got sick, and died in the odour of sanctity. A little while before his death he wrote a letter to D. Francesco, recommending me to his protection, which was of great advantage to me, as through his intercession I soon afterwards obtained the chair of Theology, and subsequently of Controversy, in the College de Propaganda Fide, where I continued to teach till I was appointed to the Primatial See of this kingdom, about nine years ago; so that your Excellency, as if by inheritance, is my master and protector; and I in these remote quarters of the Christian world make continual remembrance of D. Francesco in the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and I pray for the prosperity of the whole house of Cerri, and I induce other priests to do the same. I am moreover obliged to your Excellency for the favour conferred on Dr. James Cusack,\* who is a learned and prudent man,

\* He had been lately appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Meath.

and has laboured here with great zeal for the last sixteen years. The venerable bishop of Meath was well deserving of this favour, having served the Sac. Congregation, as bishop, for nearly thirty years, during all the fury of the persecution."

"\* OLIVER OF ARMAGH.

"Dublin, 30th August, 1678."

In little more than twelve months from the date of this letter, Monsignor Cerri was hurried to a premature grave; and Dr. Plunket, writing on the 30th of November of the following year, thus expresses his sorrow at that event:—

"I am exceedingly grieved at the death of Monsignor Cerri. He was my fellow-student in the city of Rome, and his father, M. Francis Cerri, was my most dear friend. I shall have the Holy Sacrifice and prayers offered up for the repose of his soul by the clergy of the province of Armagh, for they are indeed under an obligation of doing so on account of the fatigues which he sustained for them when Secretary of the Sac. Congregation."

We have already remarked that Dr. Plunket, in 1654, entered the house of the Oratory at S. Girolamo della Carità. The justly-renowned Rubricist Catalani, in his commentary on the Roman Pontifical,\* affirms that he became a member of the Oratory; but from the petition presented by him to the General of the Jesuits

\* Tom. 3, index, *voc.*, Plunket.

in June, 1654, it is manifest that he intended merely to reside there; and in the sketch of his life by Marangoni, to which Catalani refers as his authority, it is only said that—

“Having completed his studies about the year 1654, he procured a place among the fathers of the house of S. Girolamo della Carità, where he obtained permission to reside till such time as his superiors would judge it opportune to send him to Ireland.”

Even to the present day the house of S. Girolamo continues to be a place of peaceful retreat, where many members of the secular clergy take up their abode, devoting themselves at the same time to the pursuits of study, and to the exercise of the ecclesiastical ministry.

Marangoni was a learned Oratorian, whose writings have acquired for him a universal fame. In the appendix to his work, “Life of the Servant of God, Father Buonsignore Cacciaguerra,” page 116, he gives a chapter entitled “Life of Father Oliver Plunket, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of Ireland.” This life extends from the 116th to the 124th page, and contains little more than the translation of Dr. Plunket’s discourse at Tyburn. Nevertheless, the few additional sentences that it contains are of inestimable value, as illustrating this period of Dr. Plunket’s life, and supplying some facts which we would seek for in vain from other sources. He commences his narrative by declaring that Dr. Plunket “should be ranked

amongst the most illustrious personages whose virtuous lives adorned the house of S. Girolamo della Carità." This house had been founded by St. Philip; many of his early disciples had lived there, and it had ever been the abode of virtue and learning, and hence these words of the learned Oratorian show how eminent was the fame of sanctity to which Dr. Plunket had attained, and how distinguished were his missionary labours in Rome.

Marangoni then describes the occupations of Dr. Plunket whilst living at S. Girolamo—

"Here it is incredible with what zeal he burned for the salvation of souls. In the house itself, and in the city, he wholly devoted himself to devout exercises; frequently did he visit the sanctuaries steeped with the blood of so many martyrs, and he ardently sighed for the opportunity of sacrificing himself for the salvation of his countrymen. He moreover frequented the hospital of Santo Spirito, and employed himself even in the most abject ministrations, serving the poor infirm, to the edification and wonder of the very officials and assistants of that place."

Rome is truly rich in sacred monuments. Its very soil, so often bedewed with martyrs' blood shed for the Catholic faith; the treasures of the relics of countless saints which it conceals; its sanctuaries and shrines—present resistless attractions to the fervent soul. The great founder of the Oratory, St. Philip, never

allowed a day to pass without rekindling, at these shrines, the flames of divine love. Dr. Plunket seems to have taken him for his model, and to have daily visited these holy places with special ardour of devotion. As we have seen, Father Scarampo presented in his life a true model of Christian solicitude for the poor and the infirm; and the devotedness which Dr. Plunket displayed in the public hospitals in assisting them and in ministering to their wants, sufficiently attests what progress he had made in this sacred school of virtue. Marangoni speaks only of the hospital of Santo Spirito; but from the incidental reference made by Dr. Plunket himself in his letter to the Prefect of Propaganda, when speaking of D. Marcantonio Odescalchi, we learn that he visited other hospitals with like charity and zeal.

It was when visiting Santo Spirito, that a holy Priest announced to him his future martyrdom, which gave occasion to the humble prelate to betray the ardent desire with which he burned in his inmost soul to attain that glorious crown. We shall allow the learned Marangoni to narrate this fact in his own words:—

“I cannot here but relate a fact,” he says, “which is attested by Father James Mochi, a priest yet living, and Dean of the Fathers of this house of S. Girolamo, who at that time was engaged in attending the hospital of Santo

Spirito, so frequented by Father Oliver, who also was well known to him: he therefore attests that Dr. Oliver Plunket, having gone in his episcopal dress to visit that hospital, before his departure from Rome, when standing at the door which looks towards the castle of St. Angelo, and bidding farewell to the then prior, D. Jerome Mieskow, a Polish Priest of extraordinary sanctity of life; the latter, embracing him, and, as if prophesying, said to him: 'My Lord, you are now going to shed your blood for the Catholic faith.' And he being wholly inflamed with the desire of thus shedding his blood for Christ, replied with humility: 'I am unworthy of such a favour; nevertheless, aid me with your prayers that this my desire may be fulfilled.'"

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### CHAPTER III.

DR. PLUNKET AS AGENT OF THE IRISH CLERGY AT  
ROME.

At the close of the year 1668 there were only two Catholic Bishops in Ireland, Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Ardagh, and Dr. Owen M'Sweeny, Bishop of Kilmore. On the Con-

continent three other members of our Hierarchy, the Bishop of Kilfenora, the Bishop of Ferns, and the Archbishop of Armagh, lived in exile. No wonder, then, that the widowed churches of Ireland should have hailed with joy the 21st of January, 1669, the day on which the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda nominated four new bishops to vacant sees, *i.e.*, Dr. Peter Talbot to the Archiepiscopal See of Dublin, Dr. William Burgatt to Cashel, Dr. James Lynch to Tuam, and Dr. Phelan to Ossory.

Indeed during the period of persecution our Irish Hierarchy was more than once on the verge of destruction; and if our Church at the present day does not present the sad desolation of England and Scotland, we are indebted under Heaven to those indefatigable men who laboured in season and out of season to preserve unbroken, despite the efforts of the enemies of our holy faith, the succession of our chief pastors.

No one laboured more strenuously than Dr. Plunket in attaining this happy result. He had already been for some time agent in the Roman Court for his relative the Bishop of Ardagh; but no sooner were the new bishops nominated by the Holy See than he was chosen by them their common representative in Rome. The letter addressed to him by Peter Talbot, the justly celebrated Archbishop of Dublin, is exceedingly interesting under many respects. He thus writes :—



“The Bishop of Ferns has requested me to unite with him in constituting you our agent in the Roman Court, for the Province of Dublin, to which request I have most readily assented, well knowing your zeal for the faith, and the affection you bear your friends; and that you will correspond with the confidence placed in you, to the full satisfaction of all.

“I was consecrated in Antwerp, on Sunday last (the 8th of May), and I now return in haste to London to meet Peter Walsh, and oppose his infamous efforts against God, the king, and his country; and, although he pretends nothing but allegiance to the king, I know that this is only a mantle with which such plotters ever seek to mask their evil designs.

“Until such time as you shall be able to procure the pallium for me, I have obtained a Brief, authorizing me to exercise its prerogatives and privileges. Nevertheless, I beseech you to ask for it in the same manner as it was granted to my predecessors, and that, as soon as possible.

“Your most affectionate cousin,

“✱ PETER OF DUBLIN.”

The predecessors of Dr. Plunket, as representatives of the Irish bishops in Rome, had filled that office with prudence, and conciliated for themselves and for the Irish Church the esteem of the authorities in that city. Dr. Burgatt, who, as we have seen, was at this

time appointed Archbishop of Cashel, had held that office for many years; and Dr. O'Dwyer, whose name is so justly illustrious as connected with the national Confederation, and subsequently as Bishop of Limerick, was in the early half of this century deputed, on more than one occasion, as agent of our bishops to the Papal court. Those who, during the latter years of the seventeenth century, were appointed to the same office, were not unworthy of their predecessors, and the names of Dr. Brennan, Dr. Creagh, Dr. Sleyne, and Dr. Michael Plunket sufficiently attest the solicitude of the Irish Prelates in sending worthy representatives to the central See of the Catholic world.

The principal efforts of Dr. Plunket were directed against the machinations of Taafe and Peter Walsh, who left no stone unturned to find patrons and abettors for their well-known "Remonstrance," which while pretending to be nothing more than a profession of allegiance to the sovereign, contained all the virus of Jansenism and enmity to the Holy See. Indeed, through the zeal and labours of Dr. Talbot, both before and after his appointment to the Episcopate, this Remonstrance was soon wholly discredited in Ireland, and Dr. Plunket laboured with equal ardour in Rome to second his efforts, and make known to the authorities there the real iniquitous designs of the Remonstrants.

A paper regarding Walsh and his associates,

presented by Dr. Plunket to Propaganda in May, 1699, contains many particulars on this subject, which he states were gleaned from letters of Dr. French, and Bartholomew Plunket, President of the Irish College in Brussels, written on the 13th of April, 1669 :—

“ Walsh has sent an agent to London to seek a continuation of the protection of the Queen, but her Majesty has withdrawn her protection from him. This agent also sought to procure for Walsh the favour of the new Viceroy, but he received for answer, that if the new Viceroy found Walsh in Ireland on his arrival he would send him to the scaffold.

“ F. Taafe is gone to London, and is waiting to receive money and a safe conduct from Monsignor the Internuncio, to pass into Flanders.

“ Ormond, now that he has lost all power, puts himself forward, and pretends to be a well-wisher of his country. The King makes a display of affection towards him, but his intimacy with the Duke of York gives displeasure, and it is thought that for this reason he was deprived of his office.

“ The Catholic gentry of Ireland lately sent Sir Nicholas Plunket as their agent to London, to obtain from the King a restoration of their property on the occasion of the change of Government ; but it is feared that nothing will be gained, as many in the Court are interested in the plunder, the Duke of York receiving

annually two hundred thousand scudi \* (£50,000), and Ormond a like sum."†

The Taafe to whom reference is made in this letter was brother of Lord Carlingford, and few events attracted more attention for many years, or threatened our Irish Church with such imminent danger, as the imposture which he devised, and which can scarcely find a parallel in the ecclesiastical annals of any country. To support the ruinous fabric of the Remonstrance, this companion of Peter Walsh forged a Bull from the Holy See, empowering him to act as Vicar Apostolic of all Ireland, and depose, as he should think fit, the local Vicars and Bishops, and make many other arbitrary arrangements for the due reformation of the Irish Church; all his plans, however, having for their chief object to discredit and depose whosoever had been opposed to the Remonstrance, and to place the ecclesiastical authority of the country in the hands of its favourers and abettors. So artful was the forgery, and so ingenious its author, that he procured the recognition and authentication of his Bull, not only from Ormond and the English Govern-

\* According to the relative exchange of that time, four scudi were deemed equivalent to £1.

† Plowden, *Hist. Review of State of Ireland*, t. 1, p. 175, brings the testimony of a writer who states that "the gifts and grants made to Ormond amounted to £630,000;" all which gifts were continued by Parliament.

ment, but even from Dr. Darcy, Bishop of Dromore, and Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Ardagh. The particulars of the confusion which ensued in many dioceses, and of the sums which were levied on various ecclesiastics, in virtue of this pretended authority, belong to the Life of Dr. Edmund O'Reilly, to whom we are chiefly indebted for having unmasked this iniquitous imposture.

Taafe went through all this farce however more as the dupe of Peter Walsh than through any malice of his own; after repeated summonses he at length repaired to the Eternal City, and for many years led a retired life in the convent of S. Isidore's.

On the same day on which the bishops were nominated to the vacant Sees, Dr. Patrick Plunket was transferred from Ardagh to Meath. Dr. Oliver Plunket, when petitioning for this translation, assigned as its motive the sad condition to which the diocese of Ardagh had been reduced since the ravages of Cromwell. "No two Catholics," he says, "have been left in possession of their hereditary estates, and the whole country is parcelled out between the soldiers of Cromwell and the merchants of London, who purchased it from that tyrant or from Parliament."

Another petition, presented by him to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation was addressed in the name of all the bishops, and was as follows:—

"To establish peace and order in the thirty-

six dioceses, which are in the four provinces of the kingdom of Ireland, whose secular clergy amounts to the number of a thousand, the regulars, moreover, being six hundred, and the Catholic population two millions, we supplicate your Excellency, through the great zeal and affection you bear our kingdom, to consider the following points :—

“ 1. That until such time as the Sees of Ireland are provided with Bishops and Vicars Apostolic, the Bishops already appointed may nominate Vicars-General to the Dioceses which are vacant, or may become vacant, that thus all occasion of schism may be removed.

“ 2. That the Vicars Apostolic, should they be constituted, may be made dependent on the resident Bishop of the Province.

“ 3. That on any day of Lent the Bishops may consecrate the Holy Oils.

“ 4. That the Bishops may have the faculty of blessing a Crucifix, which being kissed by the dying, may communicate to them the indulgence *in articulo mortis*, and that he may bless one such Crucifix for each Parish Priest.

“ 5. That the Bishops may be enabled to communicate their faculties to such Irish Priests as, moved by the spirit of God, may feel a vocation to undertake the arduous mission of the American islands, to succour the many thousands of Irish Catholics sent thither into exile by the tyrant Cromwell, and who, through the want of Priests, run great risk of their eternal salvation.

“6. That by one Order or one Brief, an indulgence may be granted to all the Cathedrals, Churches, and Parishes of Ireland on their titular feast, their dedication, the festivals of our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and the holy Apostles. I said in virtue of one Brief or Order; for to multiply Briefs for every Church, would be too tedious and dangerous in a country ruled by heretics, where there are rigorous penal laws against any such communication with Rome; and that this indulgence may be gained wherever the Parish Priest says Mass, for we have no fixed Churches or Oratories, but celebrate the Holy Sacrifice often in the fields, now at one place, now at another, and often too in the castles of the nobility and gentry.” . . . .

Whilst Dr. Plunket thus laboured in the eternal city to promote the interests of the Irish Church, he displayed an equal solicitude in providing for the wants of his suffering countrymen, who perchance had taken refuge in that common asylum of all the faithful. I find one instance especially recorded in a MS. account of some of the early Students of the Irish College. In the month of April, 1666, Dr. Edmund O'Reilly, Archbishop of Armagh, took his departure from Rome. A few days before his leaving an ecclesiastic arrived from Ireland, and solicited admission to the Irish College. No burse, however, was vacant in the College, and as the young traveller's funds were exhausted, a sad alternative presented itself to

his mind. No sooner was this case of distress made known to Dr. Plunket, than he set to work to satisfy the pious desires of the young man, and obtaining a contribution of 30 scudi from the Primate, from various other individuals an additional sum of 50 scudi, and supplying 20 scudi, the sum which was yet wanting, from his own scanty funds, he succeeded in placing him within the College walls, and maintaining him there till such time as he was able to enjoy a burse of that Institution.

It was probably at this period that Dr. Plunket composed the Irish poem to which O'Reilly, in his "Irish Writers," refers, and which thus began:—" *O Tara of the Kings!*" During his infancy he had often roamed about that royal hill, and it cannot surprise us that in after-life his soul should dwell with rapture on the ancient glories of his country clustered around its summit. Such reminiscences especially could not fail to recur to his mind when, standing amidst the ruined trophies of the persecutors of the Christian name, he contemplated from afar the struggles of his countrymen, and the persecutions which they endured, as well in the cause of nationality as for the faith of their fathers.



## CHAPTER IV.

DR. PLUNKET NOMINATED ARCHBISHOP OF  
ARMAGH.

ON the 9th of July, 1669, Dr. Oliver Plunket was nominated by the Sacred Congregation Archbishop of Armagh. His illustrious predecessor had been compelled, by the storm of persecution which laid waste our island, to seek an asylum on the Continent, and some months had now elapsed since death closed his eventful career. Having been almost wholly deprived for many years of the presence of its chief spiritual pastor, the Church of Armagh was torn by dissensions, and the germs of many scandals had appeared in some of the districts subject to the Primatial See. Hence, urgent were the solicitations of the Irish prelates to have a successor appointed without delay, who might heal these wounds and restore peace and tranquillity to the desolate flock. None more forcibly represented to the Holy See the necessity of appointing at once a distinguished prelate to the vacant Church, than the Most Rev. Peter Talbot, the lately consecrated Archbishop of Dublin. On the 15th of May, 1669, he thus writes to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda:—

“No part of Ireland stands so much in need of a proper Pastor and Primate as the Province of Armagh. For though it is not expedient for the present to create many bishops, lest Ormond should say that the Papal authority received a sudden and dangerous increase in Ireland since his withdrawal; nevertheless, the Bishop of Armagh, added to the other three Archbishops, can give no occasion of evil report or envy, especially should he be a person not displeasing to the Court. Three have been proposed to me by those best acquainted with matters and persons. One of them, *Dr. Patrick Everard*, is a learned theologian, exceedingly pious and prudent. He suffered much for the Catholic faith during the thirty-six years which he strenuously and untiringly laboured in cultivating the vineyard of the Lord, and in rooting out vices in the province of Armagh, of which he is a native, and he is descended from a noble and ancient family. His prudence appears even from the fact that in all the dissensions of the clergy of his province, he was never known to be the author or promoter of factions; and whilst there was no more determined enemy of the Remonstrants, no one, at the same time, was less obnoxious to the government. He opposed and condemned the Dublin approval of the Sorbonic propositions; he is well skilled in the Irish language, preaches also in English, and is dear to both nations; nor will his appointment be displeasing to the

king. I would recommend *D. Oliver Dease*, Vicar-General of Meath, as worthy of the See of Ardagh, or of Clogher, especially as the only objection made to him is that of age; whilst, nevertheless, he is of a robust constitution. Surely the number of years during which he has fought the battles of God, should favour, rather than impede, the promotion of one who is thus at the same time full of merits and of years."

Besides those here named by Dr. Talbot, many others were recommended to the Sacred Congregation as worthy to succeed to the Primatial See. Some difficulty, however, was met with in regard to each of them. Dr. Everard, for instance, a member of the Society of Jesus, was Rector of the Irish College of Antwerp, and the only pillar of its support; and his removal from it threatened to deprive the nation of that ecclesiastical resource. "But why delay," said the Holy Father, "in discussing the dubious merits of others, whilst we have here in Rome, a native of that Island, whose merits are known to us all, and whose labours in this city have already added so many wreaths to the peerless glory of the 'Island of Saints.' Let *D. Oliver Plunket* be Archbishop of Armagh."\*

This appointment, whilst it filled with terror and dismay the sowers of dissension and the

\* *Arsdekin. Theol. Trip. tom. 3, p. 227.*

enemies of our holy faith, called forth the applause of all the true lovers of Ireland. The illustrious Bishop of Ferns thus writes from his place of exile to the Archbishop of Cesarea, then Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda:—

“MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND REV. LORD—Applauding and rejoicing, I have hastened hither from Ghent to the Most Reverend and Illustrious Internunzio of Belgium, to return all possible thanks to our Holy Father, in the name of my countrymen, for having crowned with the mitre of Armagh the noble and distinguished Oliver Plunket, Doctor of Theology. . . . To your influence we owe it, that such a prelate, of noble birth, and adorned with exalted talents, as well as with benevolence and virtue (and yet of no proud conceit), should be raised to the government of the Primatial Church, the spirit of God leading the minds of their Eminences to this conclusion. It came from on high (such is my opinion,) that whilst your Excellency wisely laid open this matter to the Holy Father, he should place this excellent man on the mountain of the Church, in which office he will be a light to all who hope in the Lord.

“The Holy Father acted holily and justly in promoting a devoted child of the Roman See, rather than one who, having favoured Walsh the Philistine, when combating against the Ark of God, nowise deserved to be honoured by the

Church. . . . Do you, in the meantime, most Illustrious Lord, pursue your course ; for by your counsel, affection, and efforts, the falling Hierarchy of the Irish Church has commenced to exalt itself above heresy and error ; according to your piety, promote the members of both Clergy, but only such as are faithful servants of God, soldiers of Christ, champions of the Cross, devoted to the Holy See, and holily fulfilling their vows to God. I lovingly kiss your consecrated hands.

“ In all things your most obedient servant,

“ \* NICHOLAS, Bishop of Ferns.

“ Brussels, 30th Aug., 1669.”

Dr. James Dowley, lately appointed Vicar Apostolic of Limerick, writes in like manner, congratulating the Holy See on the happy appointment made to Armagh :—

“ Most pleasing to all was the appointment of Dr. Plunket, and I doubt not but it will be agreeable to the government, to the Secular Clergy, and to the Nobility ; and all this we owe to your Excellency.”

The ornament of the college of St. Sulpice, in Paris, at this time, was Dr. John O'Molony, who a few years later was appointed Bishop of the ancient See of Killaloe. He too thus returned thanks to the Sacred Congregation for the favour now conferred on our Irish Church :—

“New favours require the expression of new gratitude, and the renewal of benefits can only be requited by the renewal of thanksgiving. Not long ago, though unknown to your Excellency, yet laying aside all fear of temerity, I addressed to you letters expressive of my sincere gratitude for the great watchfulness and solicitude which you displayed for the welfare of our Church, as if it alone occupied your attention, though on you rests the burden of so large a portion of the whole Catholic world. You had already laid the foundations of our edifice, erected the pillars, and given shepherds to feed the sheep and the lambs: but now, that the work should not remain imperfect, you have crowned the edifice, and provided a Pastor for the Pastors themselves, appointing the Archbishop of Armagh. For it is not of the diocese of Armagh alone that he has the administration, to whom the primacy and guardianship of all Ireland is entrusted. One, therefore, in a thousand had to be chosen, suited to bear so great a burden. That one you have found: one than whom none other better or more pleasing could be found; with whom (that your wise solicitude for our distracted and afflicted country should be wanting in nothing) you have been pleased to associate his Suffragan of Ardagh, a most worthy and grave man.\* With what

\* Gerard Farrell, O.S.D., who for a short time had acted in the Roman Curia as agent of Dr. Edmund O'Reilly, was on the same day appointed Vicar Apostolic of Ardagh.

thanksgiving, then, or praises I should extol you, I know not, for your benefits exceed all thanks and all praise. I therefore supplicate you yourself to return due thanks, that thus those whom you have eternally bound to you by your benefits may be still more closely bound by your becoming minister of their thanksgiving; whilst I, the last of your disciples, who am not worthy to be called your disciple, shall never be unmindful of your benefits, but will ever be your Excellency's

“Most obliged servant,

“J. O'MOLONY.

“Paris, 16th Aug., 1669.”

More interesting still is the letter addressed to the Secretary of Propaganda, Monsignor Baldeschi, by the illustrious Archbishop of Dublin, who rejoices in like manner in the happy choice of the Holy Father, and assigns, as his motive for not having already proposed Dr. Plunket in the first place for the See of Armagh, the request of that Prelate, who had expressed his desire to prolong yet awhile his stay in the Eternal City.

“MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND REV. LORD—Most agreeable to me were the Roman letters by which I learned the promotion of the most Illustrious and Reverend Oliver Plunket to the See of Armagh; nor less pleasing to all good men was the announcement of what had been done against the Remonstrants as well in Spain

as in Ireland, although as yet we are ignorant of the particulars, for which I anxiously look forward; and all this must be attributed to the piety and zeal of your Excellency. Certainly no one could be appointed better suited than Dr. Oliver Plunket, whom I myself would have proposed in the first place, were it not that he had written to me, stating his desire not to enter for some years on the Irish mission, until he should have completed some works which he was preparing for the press . . . . .

“In the month of October the Parliament will assemble, and we are in dread of persecution if liberty of conscience be not granted. The King, however, has little to fear, for he has won over some of the heads of the different factions. I have hurriedly written these few lines, as the bearer is taking his departure; but I shall write at greater length from Dublin. In the meantime, &c., &c.

“ ✱ PETER OF DUBLIN.

“ Primate of Ireland.

“ London, 11th Aug. (styl. vet.), 1669.”

The Bulls appointing Dr. Plunket Archbishop of Armagh were despatched to the Internunzio in Brussels, and the decree of the Sacred Congregation was conveyed to him, destining Belgium as the place of consecration. This had already been deemed the more prudent course in the case of the Bishops appointed in the preceding January; for it was supposed that by



being consecrated in Rome the prejudices of the Government would be more awakened, and the Bishops rendered more obnoxious to persecution in their future labours. But Dr. Plunket was too attached to Rome not to ardently desire to receive the sacred consecration within its hallowed walls, amidst its sanctuaries and shrines. He wished to go forth from Rome fully armed for the spiritual fight, as so many Apostles and martyrs had hitherto gone forth, to scatter the heavenly seed, to reap the good harvest; and perhaps, too, consummating his course like them, to receive the martyr's crown. Hence, he addressed an energetic petition to the Sacred Congregation, to have its order reversed, and sacred consecration imparted to him in the Eternal city. "No one," he thus concludes, "was ever known to be obliged to leave Rome and seek elsewhere the holy gift of consecration, save, perhaps, Dr. Burgatt; and, as if by fate, his brief strayed from place to place, and only after great delay, and beset by many dangers, could that Prelate receive consecration; let then, this crowning favour be added to the many others I have received, and I shall ever more and more be bound in union with the Holy See and the Sacred Congregation." There are many incidental passages of this letter which disclose further particulars connected with the subject of this work, and some facts relating to the history of our Irish Church, which are otherwise unrecorded:—

“The whole Irish nation,” he says, “and especially the house of Plunket, have received so many favours and benefits from your Excellency, that neither heart, nor tongue, nor deeds can ever render due thanks to so pious and beneficent a protector.

“Dr. Patrick Plunket obtained the Episcopate of Meath, which is the richest and largest in the whole kingdom, and where his nephews have the greatest part of their lands.

“Lord Fingall, nephew of Monsignor Plunket, whilst commanding the infantry in the Royal army, was made prisoner by the Cromwellians not far from Dublin, and put to death in the tower of Dublin. Monsignor Plunket then, with Sir Nicholas, his brother, and Lord Fingall, his grand-nephew, lived in exile in France and Flanders during the whole time of the Cromwellians. The king being restored, the Bishop returned without delay, and being the only bishop capable of performing the Pontifical functions, he ordained in the very capital during many years, *two hundred and fifty priests*, from all parts of the kingdom, administered the sacrament of confirmation to a large number, and faithfully carried out the commands of the Sacred Congregation. . . .

“It is, indeed, true that it is not a matter of prudence to promote those who took a prominent part in the various factions during the late war, and are held in positive abhorrence by the king; but I believe that it is not desirable

to advance those who seek for promotion through the English Court, for such persons always adopt the doctrines of the Sorbonne, and should any question arise, they will adhere to the king and not to the Apostolic See; and ordinarily speaking, they are restless, ambitious, and flatterers; seeking evil report, and listening not to truth, and pursuing their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. . . . And, were the Holy Father to appoint persons truly great and affectionate towards the Holy See, such as the late Primate and the Bishop of Ferns, and two other Bishops put to death in Ireland, even though they should find little favour at court, I am sure that their death or exile would be of great glory and honour to the Apostolic Church, which by the blood and sufferings of her confessors and martyrs ever increased for the past, even now increases, and will so too increase for the future. Thrasamund, Arian King of the Vandals, in Africa, in order to root out the Catholics, published a decree, that no more Catholic Bishops should be consecrated. What then did the Catholic Bishops do? They consecrated in one day seventy-two bishops; wherefore the infuriated Thrasamund sent them and many others into exile, into Sardinia. And yet, Symmachus, writing to St. Fulgentius, and to the other exiled bishops, deemed the Church of Christ triumphant in these her glorious champions."

Dr. Plunket, however, appealed in vain; the

decision had been made, and the Sacred Congregation was inexorable. Thus frustrated in his holy design, he wished, at least, to be the bearer to his afflicted Church of a sacred treasure, of which, through the violence of the persecution, it had been long deprived. Its history is as follows:—

In 1648, the Most Rev. John Bapt. Scanarola, a noble citizen of Modena and Bishop of Sidonia, admiring the generous spirit of self-sacrifice and religious zeal which the Irish nation then displayed, whilst combating around the altar and the throne, presented to the Primatial See of Armagh a cross of massive gold, containing relics of the holy wood of the Cross, of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and other saints, and entrusted it to the care of the illustrious Bishop of Ferns, Dr. French, who was then in Rome on an embassy from the Confederate Council to the Holy Father. It was a condition, however, of this gift, that it should be ever preserved in the Cathedral Church, and with due solemnity exposed to the veneration of the faithful. But Dr. French knew too well the sad condition of the Church of Armagh, at that period, to guarantee these conditions. He had seen the fury of the storm, which had lately swept unchecked over the Northern Province, and hence he recommended a delay of a little while till order should be again restored and religious liberty be achieved by the arms of the Confederates. In 1654, Monsignor Scana-

rola formally renewed his donation to the Cathedral of Armagh, and by act of public notary, declared Father Luke Wadding and other members of the Franciscan Convent of St. Isidore, the depositaries and guardians of his gift, until the conditions referred to above could safely be carried out.

Dr. Plunket deemed that such a time had now arrived, and anxious to be himself the bearer of this precious relic to his afflicted flock, addressed the following petition to the Holy Father:—

. “In the 10th year of the happy memory of Innocent X., when Cromwell drove the clergy of Ireland into exile, and destroyed our church, Monsignor Scanarola presented a cross of gold, with a relic of the most Holy Cross, to the Church of Armagh, with the annexed condition that it should be publicly exposed for veneration. Now that, through the mercy of God, the persecution of Cromwell has passed, and as, through the clemency of his present Majesty, we enjoy such liberty that the Catholics have public oratories, and even the Regular Clergy have opened their novitiates, your petitioner most humbly supplicates your Holiness to command the Friars of the Reformed Order at St. Isidore’s, who hold that cross in their custody, to consign it to me for the consolation and devotion of the Catholics in the province of Armagh, who will ever pray for the welfare of your Holiness.”

As in his subsequent letters, Dr. Plunket never renews his solicitations for this holy relic, it seems probable that his petition had a favourable result, but I have been unable to find any certain record of his success.

Before we come to the consecration of this successor of our glorious Apostle, one other fact remains to be recorded. Dr. Plunket had acquired, during his residence in Rome, a small vineyard on the declivity of the hill whose summit is crowned by Castle Gandolfo, and adjoining the farm then belonging to the Irish College, but known in after years as the *villeggiatura* of the novitiate of the Jesuits of St. Andrew's on the Quirinal. Before taking his departure from the Eternal City, Dr. Plunket presented this vineyard to the Irish College, anxious to testify his affection for that nursery of his youth, in which he had been trained to the sacred ministry, and whose brightest glory he himself was soon to become by his apostolic labours and heroic martyrdom. It seems that he left several of his books to the same college, many of which were lost when its library was scattered during the French invasion of Rome. Some, however, still remain, and one in particular is carefully treasured in its archives, having the simple record written with his own hand; "Oliver Plunkette, Collegio Hibern. dedit." We shall hereafter see that in his last letter addressed to his relative Michael Plunket, then student of the college, the only dying memorial

which he bequeaths, is one to the same loved abode of his early years. "The pictures which are there I leave to the place where you are, and where I got my first education; would that there were *cornici* (frames) to them." How dear these paintings would now be to every Irish Catholic, and how sad that they, as most of the other memorials of the Old Irish College, should have been lost to our nation at the period of the invasion of Rome by the French republicans towards the close of the last century.

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## CHAPTER V.

### CONSECRATION OF DR. PLUNKET.

FROM a commendatory letter addressed by the General Superior of the Dominicans, Father Peter Mary Passerino, to the Provincial of the Order in Ireland, we learn that Dr. Plunket took his departure from the Eternal City towards the close of August, 1669. Father Passerino, in this letter, extols the virtues of the Archbishop elect, and speaks of his merits as known to the whole city:—

"The bearer of this letter, the Most Rev. and Illustrious Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of the Kingdom of Ireland, departs from Rome, and as we wish him a happy journey to

his destination, so we desire that he may be greeted on his arrival with your reverential homage, and that of your subjects. In this matter, to remind you of the obligation by which all are bound, it would suffice to recall to mind the exalted dignity of so great a Primate and Archbishop; but even this dignity is equalled by the many and great merits of the same most worthy Prelate, which are known to the whole city of Rome, so that on this account our devoted homage must be in every respect redoubled. Let, therefore, your paternity be attentive, that on all occasions our Order may display peculiar devotion and reverence towards so excellent a Prelate, and that the most benign affection which he openly professes for the Dominican family may never be defrauded of the due return of gratitude and recognition. Thus may you prosper with those subject to your care, and be often mindful of us and our companions in your Masses and prayers.

“FR. PETER MARY PASSERINO.

“Rome, 24th Aug., 1669.”

The incidents of Dr. Plunket's journey from Rome to Brussels are unknown to us. It was not an age of railways and steamboats, when that road may be run over in little more than two days and a-half. Two months at least were then required for that journey, and it was only in the beginning of November, 1669, that



the Archbishop Elect entered the city of Brussels. A few months earlier in the same year Dr. Burgatt, the Archbishop Elect of Cashel, pursued the same homeward course, and from a letter of his, written at Milan, we may learn the difficulties which beset travellers in those days, from the want of conveyances, the impracticability of the roads, and the continual overflowing of the rivers:—

“It was not without difficulty that we arrived here on yesterday, the little mountain streams being swollen into torrents by the heavy rains, and consequently impeding our progress. We remained at Bologna eight days (all the vehicles being engaged by the local nobility, I know not for what feast or amusement): the overflowing of the Po detained us two days in Padua: yesterday our boat sailed for five entire miles over trees and corn-fields and vineyards, the whole country being inundated by the river. Neither is it possible for us to get away from this, the same cause preventing us. I hope in the divine mercy that all these obstacles will prepare at least a peaceful port for us at the close of our journey. We have learned nothing from Ireland or other parts, worth communicating. We shall leave as soon as possible. In the meantime your Excellency will be pleased to expedite everything connected with the progress and peace of our Church, which also Dr. Plunket will take care to suggest . . . .

“Milan, 5th May, 1669.”

It was in the beginning of November that the Internunzio in Brussels welcomed our Archbishop Elect to his hospitality,\* and this worthy representative of the Holy See soon discovered that his guest was truly what his Roman friends had already proclaimed him to be, full of zeal for the propagation of the faith, and one who, by his merits and wisdom, would render still more illustrious the exalted dignity to which he had been destined:

“I was in Liege (he thus writes to the Sacred Congregation) when Dr. Oliver Plunket arrived here. On my return to Brussels I welcomed him to my house, where he still remains. I have written to the Bishop of Ghent to arrange for his consecration, as from that city he can without delay continue his journey to Ireland. I am still awaiting his answer. I have found in Dr. Plunket most excellent qualities, and his zeal to labour for the glory of God gives grounds for the greatest hopes. I am consoled, and rejoice that the favours of our Holy Father are so well conferred.”

The Bishop of Ghent was invited to consecrate the Elect of Armagh, and an illustrious member of the Irish Hierarchy, Dr. French, Bishop of Ferns, then living in exile in that

\* Dr. Plunket, writing on the 22nd September, (styl. vet.,) 1672 (that is, 2nd October), says, “three years all to one month have now elapsed since I had the honour of being caressed by your Excellency in your Palace at Brussels.”

city, was to be among the assistants. This glorious confessor hastened to Brussels to welcome one whom he had long admired, and who was now about to become the pillar of our ancient Church. On Saturday, the 22nd of November, he once more hastened back from Brussels towards Ghent, accompanied by Dr. Plunket, as the following day was destined for the consecration. But a slight illness of the consecrating Prelate supervened, and it was only on the 30th of November, 1669, in the private chapel of the Episcopal Palace, that Dr. Plunket at length received from the Bishop of Ghent the solemn imposition of hands, and was consecrated Archbishop of Armagh. But the Bishop of Ferns claims it as his special right to announce the consecration of his illustrious friend, and we must now allow him to speak for himself:

“I present a concise narrative of the consecration of the most illustrious Archbishop of Armagh. His Excellency the Internunzio wrote most kind letters to the Bishop of this diocese, requesting him to perform it, and he most readily acquiesced. But I, on receiving this news, set out at once for Brussels to conduct hither his Grace of Armagh, bound by gratitude to render him this homage. A slight fever seized our excellent Bishop on the Saturday before the 24th Sunday after Pentecost, which had been fixed for Dr. Plunket's consecration; wherefore that ceremony was deferred till the first Sunday in Advent, on which day it

was devoutly and happily performed in the Capella of the Palace, without noise, and with closed doors, for such was the desire of the Archbishop of Armagh. Remaining here for eight days after his consecration, he passed his time in dispatching letters and examining my writings. These are two small works, viz.: 'A Refutation of the wicked Remonstrance, or the Protestation of Walsh;' and 'A Bulwark for the House of God:' that is, a just defence of the Religious Congregations profanely lacerated with the greatest impiety, fury, and madness by those who envied the innocence, probity, and efforts of the Clergy of Ireland, who strenuously laboured to sustain the Kingdom of Christ, and earnestly asserted the honour, and dignity, and power of the Holy See. In the foremost rank of these persecutors Peter Walsh led the way, not only amongst the orthodox, but also amongst the Protestants. His Grace of Armagh left with me in writing his testimony as to the irreproachable integrity of the aforesaid works, in point of morality and faith.

"These things I deemed proper to state to you, regarding the consecration, delay, and occupation in this city of his Grace of Armagh, to whom I pray all things most prosperous, as also to your Excellency, who by your influence caused him to be placed as a pillar in the Church of God. I most reverently kiss your sacred hands.

"✠ NICHOLAS OF FERNS.

"Ghent, 19th Dec., 1669."

During the age of persecution the Bishops of Belgium displayed for the persecuted members of our Irish Church true Christian sympathy and charity; and we learn from some letters of those times, that they not only admitted to their hospitality the Irish Prelates who sought consecration at their hands, but, moreover, on the day of consecration, presented to them rich gifts, generally a precious ring, and other ornaments for the sacred functions of their ministry. Dr. Plunket continued in Ghent for eight days after his consecration, and thence setting out for England, arrived in London about the middle of December, 1669. Even during his short stay in Belgium, his attention was wholly engaged in the promotion of the interests of our holy faith. Through his solicitations, the learned Jesuit, Arsdekin, a native of Kilkenny, and at this time lecturing on divinity in the University of Louvain, composed a course of Theology, which acquired for the author a universal fame, in a few years passing through more than ten editions on the Continent. From the letter of Dr. French, we also see with what an interest he encouraged that exiled Prelate in his invaluable writings, which are all so replete with the love of our country and of our holy faith.

Before hastening to the scene of his future labours, Dr. Plunket delayed some time in London, and it was only about the month of March, 1670, that he arrived in Ireland. He had many

relatives and acquaintances at Court, and as the opening of Parliament was fixed for the beginning of February, he awaited there, anxious to use his influence in seeking to mitigate the rigour of those measures which many members had already vauntingly prepared for his suffering country. His letter, addressed from London, to the Cardinal Protector of Ireland, Cardinal Barberini, presents a most interesting narrative :—

“ I presented the letters of your Eminence to the Queen, who gave me a most gratifying audience, and passed a high eulogium on your Eminence. I also consigned your Eminence’s letter to the Rev. Father Howard, Grand Almoner, a truly worthy man. He secretly lodged me for ten days in his own apartments in the Royal Palace ; with great kindness he often, too, conducted me in his carriage to see the principal curiosities of the city ; he is truly hospitable and munificent, and the refuge of all foreign Catholics, and he enjoys great favour with the King and Queen, and is loved by all, even by the Protestants, for his great gentleness and courtesy. I request your Eminence to thank him in your next letters for the kindness which he showed me, through esteem for your Eminence. F. Fernandez also, in consequence of your Eminence’s letters, made many professions of readiness to serve me, and showed great courtesy. In my opinion he is not very influential, and has but little weight with the Queen : he is a good, simple man.

“The Parliament will re-assemble on the 14th of February, which was the day fixed in the prorogation ; when the Parliament is prorogued the preceding sessions are of little avail. The King asked for eight millions of scudi,\* in order to pay his debts ; but the Parliament declared they would only grant one million of scudi, and two hundred thousand more should France declare war against the Dutch. As the Government has no money we shall continue neutral. The Parliament often engages the King in foreign wars, and then refuses to grant supplies, in order that in his need he may be dependent on them ; and King James (the First), in order that he should not be thus dependent on the Parliament, never consented to embark in war, though he was instigated to it by the Parliament, in favour of the heretics of France and Germany. General Monk died this morning, lamented by all ; he was a man of moderation and courage. It is thought that Prince Rupert or the Duke of Monmouth (natural son of the King) will be the future General. Here the cold is so intense that the wine of Spain was frozen in my chalice ; for many years they have not experienced so rigid a season. A heavy fall of snow succeeded the ice, so that it is morally impossible to travel till this cold shall have passed. I have no desire, however, to remain in London, knowing the intention of the

\* Two millions of pounds sterling.

Court. The adherents of Walsh, or rather Walsh himself, sends to some of the Ministers of Court anonymous letters, full of falsehoods, about my presence here; but their malignity is known and they themselves are despised. A letter was written to the King stating that F. Howard concealed three hundred priests in the Royal Palace, who made their rounds every night seeking to make proselytes for the Pope. These fabulous stories do this much good, that no credence is given to the writers even when they tell a little truth. The Duke of Ormond will do his utmost to excite some storm against the clergy, in order to molest Monsignor Talbot, Archbishop of Dublin, for whom he entertains a mortal hatred. Not to tire you further, I make a profound reverence.

“Your most devoted and obliged servant,

“*OLIVER*, Archbishop of Armagh,  
“and Primate of Ireland.

“London, 30th December, 1669.”

On the 18th of June, in the following year, Dr. Plunket again writes to the same Cardinal as follows:—

“The continual favours which I received from your Eminence in Rome, encourage me to lay before you a brief narrative of what has occurred since my departure from that city. Being arrived in London (as I already notified to your Eminence), I received that courtesy



from the Queen which she professes to be her desire to show to all who come under the protection of your Eminence. I found that the gentlemen of this Court, who have been in Rome, proclaim to all the great kindness and generosity of your Eminence, and profess their obligations for the attention they received in that city, on account of which the Catholics in England receive many favours from them.

“I afterwards arrived in Ireland, in the month of March, and hastened immediately to my residence; and I held two Synods, and two Ordinations, and in a month and a half I administered Confirmation to more than ten thousand persons, though throughout my province I think there yet remain more than fifty thousand persons to be confirmed. I remarked throughout the country, wherever I went, that for every heretic there are twenty Catholics. The new Viceroy is a man of great moderation. . . . I found that four of the principal persons in Court were secretly Catholics, and these maintain the Viceroy in his favourable sentiments and esteem for the Catholics, so much so, that not long since he wrote a whole letter to the King in favour of the Irish clergy, declaring that they were good subjects, and worthy of the favour of his Majesty.”

Despite the intense cold which then prevailed, Dr. Plunket resolved to delay no longer in the English capital, anxious to avail himself of the approaching Lent to visit and console his flock,

and administer to them the consolations of our holy religion. At Holyhead he was detained for twelve days by contrary winds, but at length, on Monday, about the middle of March, 1670, he was welcomed by his many friends who awaited his arrival on our Irish shores. Before the close of the week he thus announced to Monsignor Baldeschi the various incidents of his journey from London to our Irish capital:—

“ I at length arrived in this city on Monday last, and I may say that I suffered more from London to Holyhead (where I went on board a vessel) than during the remainder of the journey from Rome to London—excessive cold, stormy winds, and a heavy fall of snow: and then when a thaw set in, the rivers became so swollen that three times I was up to my knees in water in the carriage: I was detained twelve days at Holyhead in consequence of contrary winds; and then, after a sail of ten hours, I arrived in this port, where the many welcomes and caresses of my friends mitigated the grief with which I was oppressed on account of my departure from Rome.

“ Sir Nicholas Plunket at once invited me to his house, and gave me his carriage: the Earl of Fingall, who is my cousin, invited me to his country seat. The Baron of Louth will give me board and lodging in my own diocese as long as I please, and I am resolved to accept the invitation of this gentleman, as he lives in

the very centre of my mission : there are also three other gentlemen who are married to three of my cousins, and who vie with each other in seeing who shall receive me into his house.

“I was also consoled to find the Bishop of Meath, though sixty-eight years old, yet so robust and fresh, that he seemed to be no more than fifty : he has scarcely a grey hair in his head, and he sends his sincere respects to your Excellency. I write about these matters knowing that you will be pleased to learn the happy success of one who reveres and loves you.

“I set out upon my journey despite the severity of the weather, that during the Lent I might be able to discharge part of my duty in my province ; but I shall find it difficult to assemble five Priests when consecrating the Holy Oils, especially during Holy Week, when all are occupied in hearing confessions : so I pray your Excellency to obtain for me the privilege of consecrating the Holy Oils with the assistance of only two Priests.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND AT THE  
BEGINNING OF DR. PLUNKET'S EPISCOPATE.

AT this period the storm of persecution had begun to subside, which, from the first landing of Cromwell on the Irish shore, had laid

waste our island. The Puritanical fanaticism of the Protestant faction required indeed the enactment from year to year of new penal and oppressive laws ; but the administration of the Government being entrusted to wiser and less bigoted men, and better lovers of Ireland, these strokes fell more lightly upon the people, and at intervals Catholics were enabled to practise in peace the holy exercises of their religion. The Duke of Ormond, indeed, to the last, proved himself an insidious enemy of the Irish Catholics, and, ever intent on his own personal aggrandizement, unceasingly laboured to root out Catholicity and lay desolate the sanctuary ; and it was only when he saw the reins of power about to fall from his grasp, and rival statesmen gaining the favour of the King, that he began to deem it necessary to conciliate the Catholics, and hold out to them some hopes of a liberal administration.

We have seen in the third chapter how, on the dawn of peace upon our horizon, it was the first care of the Holy See—ever watchful of the interests of our afflicted Church—to appoint pastors to the widowed Sees of Ireland. Its hierarchy had remained unbroken despite the efforts of persecution, and when, on the 21st of January, 1669, the Archbishops of Dublin, Cashel, and Tuam, and the Bishop of Ossory, were appointed by Rome, there were yet five bishops who had survived the scenes of suffering and trial, and now handed down to

new champions that precious inheritance of unsullied faith which they themselves had received from their fathers. It was the same temporary calm that enabled the Sacred Congregation of Cardinals, on the demise of Dr. O'Reilly, to deliberate without delay on the appointment of his successor in the person of Dr. Plunket to the Primatial See of Armagh.

On the 14th of February, 1669, Ormond was deprived of the Lord Lieutenancy, and this disgrace of their insidious enemy, inspired with new hopes the great body of the Catholics. The appointment of John Lord Roberts, of Truro, was hailed as the dawn of a more impartial administration; he is described by his biographers as a staunch Presbyterian, obstinate, jealous, and proud, but at the same time just in his government. Some acts, however, of his Viceroyalty—if they may not be attributed to the fanaticism of individuals rather than to the Government—would not be out of place in the bitterest days of persecution. One instance connected with the subject of these memoirs will suffice.

Amongst the Rawdon papers we find a letter from Lord Conway to his brother-in-law, Sir George Rawdon, then residing near Lisburn, county Antrim, which discloses to us the designs of the Government officials in regard to the newly appointed Primate:—

“DEAR BROTHER—I have been all this day with my Lord Lieutenant, or employed about

his commands, and I am but newly come home from him. Though it be very late, yet I am to give you notice, by his command, that the King hath privately informed him of two persons sent from Rome, that lie lurking in this country to do mischief. One is Signore Agnetti, an Italian employed by the College de Propaganda Fide, the other is Plunket, a member of the same college, and designed titular Archbishop of Armagh. If you can dexterously find them out, and apprehend them, 'twill be an acceptable service. But I told him I did not think they kept their residence in our parts (about Lisburn); however, he thinks it is his duty to search everywhere.

“ CONWAY.

“ Dublin, 20th Nov., 1669.”

Such were the sentiments even of those who were esteemed the most just and impartial of our rulers ! The person who, in the above document, is indicated by the name *Agnetti*, is the canon *Claudius Agretti*, who for many years was first secretary of the Papal Internunzio in Brussels, and for some time, too, discharged the office of pro-Internunzio. At the period of which we speak he had been sent on a mission to Ireland with instructions from the Holy See connected with the forgeries of Taafe and the Remonstrance of Peter Walsh. He was probably as yet in Ireland at the date of Lord Conway's letter, though on the eve of his departure from

it; as we find that on the 14th of December following he writes to Rome announcing his return to Brussels, and transmitting a paper, which he styles 'a narrative of his pilgrimage to Ireland.' The Government, however, was misinformed as to the presence of Dr. Plunket in the country, and though they had received intelligence of his appointment to the Primatial See, yet they were wholly astray as to his movements; and at the date of Lord Conway's despatch he was living with the Internunzio in Brussels, awaiting in peace the day appointed for his consecration. Aware of the feelings that existed, Dr. Plunket, on his arrival in Ireland, some months later, considered it prudent to avoid appearing in public as long as this administration lasted, and only performed his sacred functions, and visited his flock, by night or in disguise.

The Government of Lord Roberts was of short duration, and on the 21st of May, 1670, Lord Berkeley, of Stratton, was sworn in as Viceroy of Ireland. The private instructions which he then received inculcated the necessity of showing special favour to those who had signed the Remonstrance of Peter Walsh, and of shielding them from their more orthodox opponents. The twentieth article of these instructions was as follows:—

"Several popish clergy, since the return of the Duke of Ormond hither, have exercised their jurisdiction, to the great grief of the Re-

monstrants. If so, execute the laws against the titular Archbishops, Bishops, and Vicars-General that have threatened or excommunicated the Remonstrants; and see that you protect such Remonstrants as have not withdrawn their subscriptions."

The other articles recommend energy and zeal in the propagation of the Protestant religion; thus, in the 14th article we read, "Endeavour to bring all to a conformity in the religion by law established, and acquaint us with what difficulties you meet with therein." And in the very beginning of the instructions: "Forasmuch as all good success doth rest upon the service of God above all things, you are to settle good orders in the Church, that God may be better served in the true established religion, and the people by that means be reduced from their errors in religion, wherein they have been too long most unhappily and perniciously seduced; and never more than since the late fatal rebellion, which hath produced too plentiful a seed-time of atheism, superstition, and schism."\*

A special subject of these Instructions is *the building and repairing of Protestant Churches*. The wars of Cromwell not only laid in ruins the few places of Catholic worship which, despite the preceding persecutions, had remained in the hands of the Catholics, but involved in

\* Cox, *Charles II.*, page 9.



the same destruction those venerable structures, which, though raised by our Catholic forefathers, had, nevertheless, been appropriated to Protestant worship. Dean Swift, in a sermon on the martyrdom of King Charles I., whilst delineating the evils of Puritanical zeal, presents a vivid description of the utter demolition of the Irish churches:—

“Another consequence,” he says, “of this horrid rebellion and murder, was the destroying or defacing of such vast numbers of God’s houses. If a stranger should now travel in England, and observe the churches in his way, he could not otherwise conclude than that some vast army of Turks or heathens had been sent on purpose to ruin and blot out all marks of Christianity. They spared neither the statues of saints, nor ancient prelates, nor kings, nor benefactors: broke down the tombs and monuments of men famous in their generations: seized the vessels of silver set apart for the holiest use: tore down the most innocent ornaments both within and without: made the houses of prayer dens of thieves or stables for cattle. These were the mildest effects of Puritan zeal, and this was what themselves affected to call a thorough reformation. In this kingdom (Ireland), those ravages were not so easily seen, for the people here being too poor to raise such noble temples, *the mean ones we had were not defaced, but totally destroyed.*”

The spiritual decay of the Protestant Church

at the time of which we speak, was not less apparent than the ruin of its material edifices ; and the instructions given to Lord Berkeley justly speak of *the atheism, superstition, and schism* which had desolated their establishment since the era of the Revolution. Dr. Williams, Protestant Bishop of Ossory, who died in 1672, has left us a tract in which he details the sad condition both of the Protestant clergy and people in his diocese, and he adds that it was *not much better in all Ireland*. We shall give one extract, which fully confirms the foregoing statement of Dean Swift :—

“If you walk through Ireland, as I rode, from Carlingford to Dublin, and from Dublin to Kilkenny, and in my visitation thrice over the diocese of Ossory, I believe that throughout all your travel you shall find it as I found it in all ways that I went, scarce one church standing and sufficiently repaired, for seven (I speak within compass) that are ruined and have only walls without ornaments, and most of them without roofs, without doors, without windows, but the holes to receive the winds, to entertain the congregation. . . . . I do believe that out of about a hundred churches that our (Catholic) forefathers built and sufficiently endowed in the diocese of Ossory, there are not twenty standing, nor ten well repaired at this day . . . . . As God is without churches for His people to meet in—to serve Him, so He is without servants enabled to do Him service, to

praise His name, and to teach His people." (page 2-6.)

The conclusion to which this learned Bishop arrives is identical with what is still oftentimes proclaimed in Protestant meetings, namely, that "Popery can never be suppressed, and the true Protestant religion planted," without an augmentation of the means and livings of the Protestant clergy, and without new grants to the Protestant Establishment. Even the most thoroughly Protestant districts were no better circumstanced, and the Protestant Bishop of Derry, in a statement made to the King in council, on the 13th of May, 1670, gives a forcible description of the sad spiritual condition even of the city and county of Londonderry.\*

The documents, indeed, to which we have just referred, seem to limit this spiritual decay in the Protestant Church of Ireland to the period of Cromwell's invasion, and ascribe it to the persecution of the Puritans, and to the want of means in the Protestant clergy. But impartial history testifies far otherwise. Thus, in the diocese of Meath in 1622, according to Usher's own report, though there were 243 livings, there were only half-a-dozen churches in good repair, ninety churches being in ruins, and sixty others in a ruinous condition; we learn also from Leland, that long before the Revolution of 1641, "ignorance, negligence, and corruption of man-

\* Mant's History of the Church of Ireland, vol. i.

ners prevailed among the established clergy ;”\* and Stuart, in his Historical Memoirs of Armagh, is not less explicit. “The parishes,” he says, “were either filled with careless and immoral pastors, or sequestered by avaricious bishops in commendam. Divine service was not performed except in great towns and cities.” Even the Lord Deputy Wentworth styles “the clergy unlearned,” and “the people untaught ;” and assigns as its cause “the non-residence of the Protestant clergy, occasioned by unlimited shameful numbers of spiritual promotions, with care of souls which they hold by commendams, the rites and ceremonies of the church run over, without decency of habit, order, or gravity in the course of their service ; the (Protestant) bishops alienating their very houses and demesnes to their children, and farming out their jurisdiction to mean and unworthy persons.”† As to the number of those who had embraced the Protestant doctrines, they must have been but few indeed. Stuart, in the work already referred to (page 266), informs us that forty years after the commencement of the Reformation an inquiry was made into the religious state of the country, from which it resulted “*that the people had not adopted the Protestant religion.*” Dr. Kelly, the late lamented Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the College of

\* History of Ireland, vol. iii.

† See State Letters, vol. i., page 187.

Maynooth, calculated the relative proportion of Catholics to Protestants in 1630 to have been eleven to two.\* Dr. Plunket, however, more than once states, that with the exception of Dublin, the Catholics were in his time, as compared to Protestants, as twenty to one.† Such, then, were the fruits of Protestantism in Ireland, after a struggle of more than one hundred years, though it was ever supported by all the wealth and power which earth could command. And what were the effects of the boasted Reformation? The temples of the living God were destroyed; divine service was interrupted; ignorance and immorality were spread through the land; and the endowments of the Catholic Church, destined for the support of religion and the poor, were now handed over to foreign Protestant bishops and ministers, whose only object it was to aggrandize themselves, and to transmit large properties to their children, accumulated from the spoils of the Catholic Church.

Without attaching much importance to the instructions which he had received, Lord Berkeley seems to have devoted all his energies to the unbiassed administration of justice and the consolidation of public order in the kingdom. Dr. Plunket often speaks of him as a man nowise hostile to the Catholics, but, on the contrary, anxious to show them favour and pro-

\* O'Sullivan's *Hist. Cath.*, page 343, in not. (Dublin, 1850).

† See Letters, 18th June, 1670, and 20th June, 1670.

tection. Thus, in his letter of the 18th of June, 1670, addressed to the Cardinal Protector of Ireland, he states :—

“The Viceroy of this kingdom shows himself favourable to the Catholics, not only in consequence of his natural mildness of disposition, but still more on account of his being acquainted with the benign intentions of his Majesty in reference to his Catholic subjects, so that ecclesiastics may freely appear in public without suffering any annoyance, even when they are recognised as such. I perceive that some of his court are secretly Catholics, as are also some of the principal members of the Government, who suggest to him kind measures for the Catholics. May God grant us a long enjoyment of this calm, and bestow many years on your Eminence for the public good of the Christian Church.”

Writing on the 16th of April, 1671, he styles Lord Berkeley *a moderate and prudent man*, and adds, “should our Viceroy be changed, God alone knows what may come to pass.” At this time the leaders of the bigoted faction left no stone unturned to achieve the ruin of the Viceroy, and to substitute in his stead his avowed enemy,—who was at the same time the mortal enemy of the Catholics,—the Earl of Orrery. In a postscript to his letter of 27th September, 1671, Dr. Plunket states the following fact regarding Orrery :—“As I have already made known to you, the Earl of Orrery a few days since expelled from Limerick, by a public edict,

all the Catholics: a nice gain we would have made, had this man been appointed our Viceroy, as some persons most anxiously desired."

This fact of the edict published against the Catholics by Lord Orrery is further explained by Dr. Plunket in a letter written on the following day, the 28th September, 1671:—

"I sent another parcel to Dr. Dowley; Bishop of Limerick. This poor man is yet in trouble; the Earl of Orrery having published a few days ago an edict commanding all Catholics, ecclesiastics or laymen, to depart from, and live no longer in, that city. Some desired that he, instead of Berkeley, should be our Viceroy: a good bargain we would have made. I do not know how our Viceroy Berkeley, who is now returned to the helm, will take these proceedings of Orrery. Orrery is no friend of the Viceroy, and some are of opinion that these edicts are published by Orrery on purpose. He is a cunning politician; should the Viceroy recall these decrees, then Orrery may assail him as being a patron of the Catholics, and already in various meetings he has styled Lord Berkeley a *Catholic*, that thus he might excite against him the enmity of the heretics, who hate the Catholics."

At length, by misrepresentation and calumny, the enemies of Lord Berkeley succeeded in obtaining an order for his removal, and though he did not actually abandon the reins of government till August, 1672, his removal was determined on, and notified to him as early as the

preceding May, as we learn from Dr. Plunket, who thus writes to the Internunzio on the 14th May, 1672:—

“At length we have a certainty of the removal of our good Viceroy, as he himself has communicated the intelligence to me on yesterday morning, when I was with him for two hours. His departure is a great loss to us: he would have promoted our interests, and carried out punctually in the cities the last proclamation of the King in our favour, for in some cities it meets with opposition, which, however, I hope, will be overcome. His successor, the Earl of Essex, is represented to us as a moderate and prudent man; but by his fruits we shall know him. The Lord Chancellor, who is’ also the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, had great differences with the present Viceroy about the government of this city, which matter did but little service to the good Viceroy, and at length they have come to an open rupture. The next Viceroy will arrive about the middle of June. We shall never have one like to the present.”

The character of Lord Berkeley is admirably drawn by Mr. O’Conor in his *History of the Irish Catholics* (page 104):—

“Lord Berkeley was a man of probity and moderate principles, who substituted a mild and merciful administration for the unrelenting tyranny of oppressors; the penal statutes of Elizabeth were relaxed, the public exercise of the Catholic religion allowed, its professors



were admitted to all situations of trust and emolument, civil and military, to all franchises and corporations, to the rights and privileges of subjects, protected in their persons and properties, invested with political power, with shrievalties and magistracies, to secure them against oppression and injustice. Under this system Ireland began to flourish and prosper, to recover from the miseries of the late war, and the desolation of Cromwell; arts and manufactures revived."

We cannot be surprised that such a Viceroy should secretly encourage Dr. Plunket, not only in the correction of public abuses, but also in the establishment of schools, for which purpose he even seems to have placed various sums of money at the disposal of the Primate.

Arthur, Earl of Essex, assumed the Lord Lieutenancy on the 5th of August, 1672. Howsoever desirous he may have been to pursue the conciliatory course of his predecessor, he was soon compelled by the jealous bigotry of the Protestant faction, and the Puritanical fanaticism of the English Parliament, to lay aside all semblance of toleration, and seek by stringent measures to compel the Bishops to fly for safety to the Continent, and abandon the flocks entrusted to their care. Dr. Plunket exhorted his fellow pastors to remain in the country and conceal themselves till the storm should have passed, or, if necessity should be, to imitate the example of the Bishops of the

first centuries, and fearlessly lay down their lives for their flocks. In company with Dr. Brennan, his former companion in the Irish College in Rome, and now Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, he chose a place of retreat in his own diocese; the only provision which he had made, was one of *books and candles*, as he states in one of his letters, and often did he and his companion run the risk of death from fatigue and the want of the necessary means of subsistence. This storm, too, subsided, and the latter days of Essex's administration were comparatively mild, or at least not marked by any special deeds of hostility towards the Catholics. This Viceroy seems to have entertained a high personal esteem for the Primate, and when Mac Moyer and his fellow-apostates had, by their perjured testimony, procured sentence of death against Dr. Plunket, Essex joined with Lord Berkeley in soliciting his pardon, and, as Echard informs us, "told his Majesty the witnesses must needs be perjured, for these things sworn against him could not possibly be true."

Even when the Duke of Ormond resumed the viceroyalty in August, 1677, he was compelled for a while to hold out the hand of friendship to the Catholics, and to assume the mask of moderation and impartial justice. Dr. Plunket often speaks of his government as being at this period peaceful and mild, but when in the following year circumstances began

to change, and the court party in England proclaimed their hostility to the Catholic faith, this old betrayer of Ireland hesitated not to sacrifice his convictions to interest, and inaugurate and promote that persecution whose crowning deed was the glorious martyrdom of the Archbishop of Armagh.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### APOSTOLIC LABOURS OF DR. PLUNKET.

WE have seen, towards the close of the fifth chapter, how the newly consecrated Primate, as soon as circumstances permitted, abandoned the British capital and hastened to his diocese, anxious to enter, without delay, on the field of his spiritual labours, and break to the flock intrusted to him the bread of eternal life. The first fruits of his pastoral zeal are thus briefly enumerated in the letter already cited of the 18th June, 1670:—"I held two Synods and two Ordinations, and in a month and a-half I administered Confirmation to more than ten thousand persons, though throughout my province I think there yet remain more than fifty thousand to be confirmed." Nor was this fervour of a momentary impulse: it was the fruit of the ardent zeal and humble spirit of self-sacrifice which he had so long cherished at the

tombs of the Apostles. His subsequent career reveals to us at every step manifest traces of the same Apostolic spirit, and it seems difficult to conceive how one man could, in so short a career, effect so much good, overcome so many difficulties, and undergo so many trials. "How great his industry," cries out his learned contemporary and friend, Father Arsdekin, "in appointing fit pastors to guard the fold: how wondrous his labours throughout the vast districts of Ulster to strengthen the faith of its people, ever devoted children of the Roman Church; and what was still more arduous, how untiring his vigilance to preserve from the teeth of the wolves and from the errors of heresy the fold entrusted to his care."\*

In like manner the Oratorian Father, to whose sketch of Dr. Plunket's life we have already referred, exclaims: "Who can worthily relate with what solicitude he laboured to restore piety and raise up religion, and with what care he sought to appoint worthy pastors to his flock, and to confirm in the faith the Catholics scattered through the vast province of Ulster."

Indeed the labours of Dr. Plunket, even in the first months of his Episcopate, would have sufficed to render his name illustrious in the Irish Church, and entitle him to the veneration of posterity. Before three months had passed

\* Theol. Tripart., tom. 3, page 227.

from his arrival on our shores—that is, before the close of June, 1670—he had already solemnized two Synods of his Clergy, and, moreover, convened and presided at a general Synod of the Irish Bishops which was held in Dublin: and before the month of September in the same year we find him summoning a Provincial Council of Ulster, and enacting many salutary decrees for the correction of abuses and the advancement of ecclesiastical discipline in that province. This Synod, justly celebrated in the ecclesiastical annals of our country, was held at Clones, and the representatives of the respective dioceses soon after re-assembled privately in Armagh, and thence addressed a letter of thanksgiving to the authorities in Rome for having destined as their Primate a Prelate of such ability and piety. No words can better describe the untiring labours of Dr. Plunket, and the fruitful efforts of his zeal during the first months of his Episcopate, than this letter of the assembled Clergy of the province of Armagh; it is dated the 8th of October, 1670, and is as follows:—

“MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND MOST REVEREND LORD,

“When we send letters to your Excellency we regard ourselves as addressing the Apostolic See. We have not written sooner to your Excellency regarding our most illustrious Primate, for we waited till his merits should be known to us by experience. And now that we have

had this experience we render exceeding thanks to the Apostolic See for having placed over us such a pastor and teacher. Since his arrival in the province of Armagh he has been unceasing in his labours: to the great utility of the province he convoked Diocesan Synods, and instructed the Clergy by word and by example, and in the Ordinations which he held he promoted none but such as were worthy, and only after they had passed a rigorous examination. He celebrated a Provincial Council in the town of Clones, in which many salutary decrees were made. He introduced the Fathers of the Society of Jesus into the diocese of Armagh to educate the youth and instruct the younger clergy, and built for them a house and schools at his own expense. In the dioceses of Armagh, Kilmore, Clogher, Derry, Down, Connor, and Dromore, although far separated from each other, he administered Confirmation to thousands in the woods and mountains, heedless of winds and rain. Lately, too, he achieved a work from which great advantage will be derived by the Catholic body, for there were many of the more noble families who had lost their properties, and, being proclaimed outlaws in public edicts, were subsequently guilty of many outrages; these, by his admonitions, he brought back to a better course; he, moreover, obtained pardon for their crimes, and not only procured this pardon for themselves, but also for all their receivers, and thus hundreds and hundreds of

Catholic families have been freed from imminent danger to their body and soul, and property. Truly, he is so assiduous in good works, and his life and conduct are so exemplary, that he has won for himself and clergy the love and reverence even of the enemies of our faith: and since his arrival amongst us the clergy have not been subject to persecution.

“We, therefore, return repeated thanks to the Apostolic See for having promoted him to this dignity, and we shall ever pray for the repose of the soul of that holy Pontiff who sent such a man amongst us, as likewise for all who concurred in his promotion, amongst whom we do not hesitate to reckon your Excellency, whose most obedient servants we shall ever remain.

“PATRICK DALY, Vic.-Gen., of Armagh.

“PATRICK MOLDERG, Vic.-Gen., Down and Connor.

“RONAN MAGIN, Dean and Vic.-Gen., Dro-more.

“EUGENE CONNALL, Vic.-Gen., Derry and Raphoe.

“THOMAS FITZSYMONS, Archdeac. and Vic.-Gen., Kilmore.

“PATRICK COLLYN, Vic.-Gen., Clogher.

“To the Most Illustrious Monsig. Baldeschi, &c., &c., &c.

“Armagh, 8th Oct., 1670.”

One of the crowning deeds of Dr. Plunket's

Episcopate was another Provincial Synod, which, despite the fury of the persecution then let loose against the Catholics, was convened in Ardpatrick, in August, 1678. Once more the assembled Prelates and Clergy resolved to testify their affection for this worthy successor of St. Patrick, and their admiration of his untiring zeal. Their letter is addressed to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, and is dated 27th August, 1678 :—

“ We, the undersigned, have assembled in Provincial Council, being convoked by the Most Illustrious and Rev. Oliver Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland, and our Metropolitan, for the purpose of correcting many and grave abuses.

“ How great was the necessity for this Council, is proved by the Decrees which we have enacted, and which our Metropolitan will transmit to your Eminences to be examined, and, should you so judge, approved, as calculated to remedy the abuses, and suited to the circumstances of the times.

“ Moreover, to silence those who speak evil things, we have deemed it our duty to make known to your Eminences the manner of government of the same Most Illustrious and Rev. Metropolitan, who was sent amongst us about nine years since by his Holiness and your Eminences.

“ We, therefore, declare that the aforesaid Most Illustrious Metropolitan has laboured



much, exercising his sacred functions, not only in his own, but also in other dioceses ; during the late persecution he abandoned not the flock entrusted to him, though he was exposed to extreme danger of losing his life : he erected schools, and provided masters and teachers, that the clergy and youth might be instructed in literature, piety, cases of conscience, and other matters relating to their office : he held two Provincial Councils, in which salutary decrees were enacted for the reformation of morals : he, moreover, rewarded the good and punished the bad, as far as circumstances, and the laws of this kingdom allowed : he laboured much, and not without praise, in preaching the word of God : he instructed the people by word and example : he also exercised hospitality, so as to excite the admiration of all, although he scarcely received annually 200 crowns from his diocese : and he performed all other things which became an Archbishop and Metropolitan, as far as they could be done in this kingdom : in fine, to our great service and consolation he renewed, or rather established anew, at great expense, correspondence with the Holy See, which for many years before his arrival had been interrupted, or rather become extinct. For all which things we gratefully acknowledge ourselves indebted to his Holiness and to your Eminences, who, by your solicitude, provided for us so learned and vigilant a Metropolitan : and we shall ever pray the divine Majesty to preserve his Holiness and your Eminences.

"From the Provincial Council, held in Ardpatrick, the 27th day of August, 1678, we, your most humble and obsequious children and servants,

"✠ PATRICK, Bishop of Meath.

"✠ FR. PATRICK, Bishop of Clogher, and Administrator of Kilmore.

"PATRICK O'MULDERG, Vicar-General of Connor.

"LUKE PLUNKET, Vicar-General of Derry, and Procurator of the Diocese of Raphoe.

"JAMES CUSACK, Procurator of the Vicar Apostolic of Ardagh.

"PATRICK O'BRUIN, Vicar-General of Down, and Procurator of Rev. Henry Mackey, Vicar-General of Dromore.

"CHRISTOPHER PLUNKET, Archdeacon of Meath.

"HENRY HUGO, Procurator of Chapter of Armagh.

"PATRICK PLUNKET, Vicar-General of County Louth.

"BERNARD MAGORKE, Dean of Armagh, and Consultor in the Council.

"ARNOLD MATTHEWS, Archdeacon of Clogher."

The date of this letter brings us within a few months of the imprisonment of Dr. Plunket, and during this interval he was engaged, as we learn from his subsequent correspondence, in a

laborious visitation of the Suffragan Dioceses of Armagh, as had been determined on by the assembled Prelates at the Council to which we have just referred.

In the letter addressed from the Synod of Clones, mention is made of the blessing he conferred on many Catholic families, by obtaining their pardon from the Government. They were the descendants of those whose lands and properties had been seized on in the Confiscation of Ulster. Vowing revenge on their oppressors, they had formed themselves into predatory bands, and sought subsistence by making incessant inroads on, and plundering the holders of their former possessions. They were known as *Tories*, and were proclaimed outlaws by the Government, whilst all who harboured them were subjected to fines and imprisonment, and sometimes even to death. Whosoever was guilty of any crime, and fled from justice—all who could escape from prison, or might prefer to peaceful labour a bandit career, were received with welcome by the *Tories*. Degenerating, too, from their original purpose, they often levied taxes on whole districts, and, plundering whithersoever they went, involved innocent and guilty in one common ruin. Those who escaped from the *Tories* were sure to feel the hand of the military sent in pursuit of them, and the guilt of being favourers or harbourers of bandits was often deemed sufficiently proved by the fact of being spared in their devastations. Thus many

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districts, especially of Armagh, were kept in continual terror, and none could devise means for establishing tranquillity and peace. Dr. Plunket, immediately after his arrival in his diocese, went in person to seek out these bands of Tories in their hiding places: having found them, he made known to them the wickedness of their career, and exhorted them to desist from their guilty course. They listened to the voice of their Pastor, and promised obedience. He then hastened to the Viceroy, and did not cease his solicitations till he was himself the bearer of a Proclamation announcing pardon to all who should submit. Those who were most guilty, and were looked up to as the leaders of the bands, he himself conducted to Dublin, and placed on board of vessels bound for France. The names of many of these outlaws soon became illustrious in the military service of France or Spain.

This was not the only occasion in which Dr. Plunket procured the peace of the northern districts. In the province of Ulster there was a numerous family which for years had received the opprobrious name of *Magonna*. They were descended from the ancient sept of the O'Reillys, and had received that surname on account of some members of the family who apostatized from the faith of their fathers in the time of Elizabeth. In vain did the descendants of these families, when they returned to the bosom of the Catholic Church, seek to resume their ancient

name. The O'Reillys refused to acknowledge them as members of their illustrious sept, and continued to address them as a dishonoured branch by the epithet *Magonna*. Many quarrels and continual disputes and recriminations hence arose, and the whole Catholic body seemed split into two irreconcilable factions, some defending the apostate family, others continuing its reproach. The Primate long sought to reconcile the conflicting parties, and terminate this quarrel. At length, in 1672, he published a decree, which he caused to be privately printed in Dublin, and afterwards communicated to all the contentious leaders, by which he prohibited, under pain of censure, the future application of the opprobrious epithet to the converted family, commanding that their original name of O'Reilly should be restored to them. All parties respected this solemn decision of the Primate, and thus this controversy disappears from our history. There were some indeed who deemed this decree imprudent, and even made it a subject of accusation against Dr. Plunket, as if he had usurped the King's prerogative, to whom was reserved by law the privilege of changing family names; but the decree of the Primate was dictated by zeal for the welfare of the flock intrusted to him, and whilst he thus healed their dissensions, and re-established charity and peace, he merely restored to prodigal but repentant children the inheritance of their true family name, which, *in the eyes of the law*, they had never lost.

Another occasion presented itself, about the same period, for displaying his pastoral love for his suffering people. We shall present it in the words of the Primate, from his letter of the 14th of May, 1672 :—

“ In part of my diocese, and in all the diocese of Clogher, the Chancellor of the Protestant Bishop frequently molested, and still molests, in a most tyrannical manner, the poor Catholic farmers, as also some of the priests of that diocese. It is the custom here that for the baptism of Catholic children two giulj\* should be paid to the priest, and four giulj to the Protestant minister. This latter payment is commanded by law, and although a great grievance, yet it has been tolerated and paid. But in addition to this, the said Chancellor, whose name is John Linsy, cited to the tribunals and prosecuted the poor Catholics for bringing their children to the priests to be baptized, and thus procured the ruin of many poor Catholic families in the diocese referred to. I yesterday drew up a memorial to the Viceroy and Supreme Council against this extortion, and I showed it to the Protestant Primate and to the Protestant Bishop of Clogher. Both besought me not to present the memorial to the Viceroy, and promised that within fifteen days the Chancellor would be compelled to desist from this tyrannical manner of proceeding, by which he impoverished more than three hundred Catholic families.”

\* A giulio was at this time equal to 6d. ; a scudo to 5s. ; four scudi to £1.



Surely no people ever suffered more for their religion, and with more Christian patience, than the Irish. What was originally presented by Catholic parents, as a free and religious offering, for the support of their devoted clergy, was now insisted on as a legal right by the ministers of the Protestant Establishment, and an action at law was granted to them for the recovery of such fees even from the Catholics. Curry, in his "Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland," states, in the words of Sir Edward Walker, that in the reign of Charles I. the Catholics of Ireland prayed "to be relieved from those exorbitant sums which they were obliged to pay for their christenings and marriages to the Protestant clergy, and particularly to have the extravagant surplice fees, and the extraordinary warrants for levying them, abolished." The Irish Commons, too, in a Remonstrance in 1640, distinctly charge the Ecclesiastical Courts of that period as guilty of "*barbarous and unjust exactions*," and give the following particulars of the extortions which were practised by the Protestant clergy:—

"In Connaught and elsewhere, sixpence per annum of every couple is paid for holy-water clerk; of every man that dies, a *multue*, by the name of *anointing money*; from a poor man that has but one cow they take that cow for *mortuary*; from one that is better able, his best garment for *mortuary*. If a woman, her best garment for *mortuary*; and a gallon of drink for every brew-

ing by the name of *Mary-gallons*; for every beef that is killed for the funeral of any man, the hide and tallow, and they challenge a quarter besides; fourpence or sixpence per annum from every parishioner for soul-money; a ridge of winter corn, and a ridge of oats, for every plough, by the name of *St. Patrick's ridges*; for *portion-canons*, the tenth part of the goods, after debts paid, &c."

Thus, whilst they stigmatized the Catholic doctrines and practices as superstitious and idolatrous, they nevertheless insisted on receiving ten-fold the offerings which in Catholic times were wont to accompany Catholic devotions.\* The Chancellor Linsy, however, was not content with these exactions; he wished that, besides paying the Parson, Catholics should

\* From the character of the Protestant clergy, given in the preceding chapter, these exactions cannot surprise us. In this same Remonstrance of the House of Commons (Commons' Journal, vol. i., pp. 258-261), it is added that "*the exorbitant and barbarous exactions of the Protestant clergy were levied especially on the poorer sort.*" Indeed the Protestant mission was carried on as a mere money-making speculation. Burnet tells us that "the Chancellor bought his place, and hence thought he had a right to all the profits he could make out of it;" and this writer adds that "in the Bishop's Court bribes went about almost barefaced."—(Life of Bedel. See also Mason's Life of Bedel). The statement of Usher confirms Burnet's testimony, for writing to Archbishop Laud he says, that "such is the venality of all things sacred here (in Ireland) that I fear to mention anything about them."

become Protestants into the bargain, and because they resolved to listen to God rather than man, this so-called Minister of the Gospel of charity, till checked in his ruthless career by the true pastoral zeal of our Primate, succeeded in reducing to abject misery and ruin more than three hundred poor families !

Dr. Plunket, writing to Rome on the 18th June, 1670, estimates the number of those to whom he had already administered the sacrament of Confirmation at about ten thousand; and adds, that no fewer than fifty thousand persons yet remained to receive it. By frequent visitations he sought to place within the reach of all, the consolations of that holy sacrament; and so untiring were his labours that on the 15th December, 1673, he announces to the Secretary of Propaganda :—“ *During the past four years I confirmed forty-eight thousand six hundred and fifty-five.*” And what renders this more surprising is, the many toils he had to undergo in order to administer this sacrament to them; for often, with no other food than a little oaten bread, he had to seek out their abodes in the mountains and in the woods, and often, too, was this sacrament administered under the broad canopy of heaven, both flock and pastor being alike exposed to the winds and rain.

The Synodical letter which we have cited refers also to the zealous solicitude of the Primate in instructing the faithful, and announcing

to them the saving doctrines of eternal life.\* He allowed no motive to excuse him from this pastoral duty, and even when suffering from bodily sickness he continued to pursue the same career of love. Writing on the 2nd of August, 1678, he thus makes known to the Sacred Congregation his labours during the preceding months :—

“The past two months were spent in a fatiguing and most laborious visitation of my diocese, of which I shall shortly give a full account to your Excellency. . . . The distillation from my eyes, which was greatly increased by the laborious visitation in the mountains of the northern districts, scarcely allows me to write or read letters even as large as a snuff-box, but still it did not impede my tongue from preaching in both the English and Irish languages.”

We shall afterwards have occasion to commemorate his sacrifices, in order to maintain the schools which he opened for the education of the youthful portion of his flock, and which he intrusted to the Jesuit Fathers. It will suffice at present to quote a few words from his letter of the 22nd September, 1672, in which, speaking of these schools, he says : “Oh ! what labours, what expenses did I sustain in

\* The Internunzio, Airoidi, on the 19th September, 1671, acknowledges the receipt of a Brief from the Holy See through the Sacred Congregation, congratulating Dr. Plunket on his zeal and labours.

order to support them : how many memorials were presented against me, and against the Viceroy, even to the Supreme Council. . . . I solemnly avow, Monsignore, that I expended for them, during the past two years and two months, more than 400 scudi : and, moreover, they and I are in debt 200 scudi. I dressed in cloth of two shillings a yard : I had but one servant, and a boy to look after the horses, and I kept a most sparing table, in order to aid them."

Elsewhere Dr. Plunket details the vast labour and expense which he incurred in corresponding with the Holy See ; whilst he also declares that in the commissions which he received from Rome it was his firm resolution to face all dangers, and to submit to calumny and persecution rather than betray the cause of justice which was entrusted to him. His letter is as follows :—

" I have received your most welcome letter, and I can avow to your Excellency that I toil night and day in the affairs of my mission, and that I give no rest to my brows, or repose to my eyes, and let all be for the greater glory of God, and the service of the Apostolic See—that is, the propagation and preservation of the Faith. For the future, however, I shall not have to labour so much, as I now live with the Fathers of the Society in the house which I built near Dundalk ; they assist me in resolving difficult cases, and in writing letters to different parts of

the kingdom when necessary: hitherto, whilst living in the house of a friend, I was without any assistance. The schools, too, succeed so well that even Protestant gentlemen send their children to them, and defend them when some ministers seek to molest us. . . . And I shall ever be, your most affectionate and obliged servant,

“ ✠ OLIVER OF ARMAGH.

“ 7th June, 1671.”

The spirit of religion—the desire to promote God’s glory and propagate the blessings of our holy faith—which was the moving spring of all Dr. Plunket’s labours, is here transparent in every line. In another letter addressed to the Internunzio, on the 28th September, 1671, he again avows these holy desires, and presents in detail the motives which spurred him on to toil incessantly in guarding the flock intrusted to him:—

“ The despatches which I received (he says) were accompanied by a most kind letter from your Excellency, dated the 12th of August, and full of such courteous expressions, as would suffice to move the very travertine to activity and action. I will not fail to work with the pen, with the tongue, with all my slender energies, and this for three motives—1st, To serve the Divine Majesty; 2nd, Through gratitude and the reverence which I owe to the Apostolic See for the education and honours which it conferred

on me; 3rd, Because God commands me to obey and serve the Holy See, and its service is inseparable from that of Christ."

During the years of persecution which preceded the arrival of Dr. Plunket in Ireland, the priesthood had been so thinned by exile and the sword that many districts were left wholly destitute of pastors. Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath, was, for a time, the only Bishop in the country able to confer ordination, and during his Episcopate of Ardagh alone, no fewer than 250 priests received at his hands the sacrament of Holy Orders.\* In the list of Irish priests registered in the year 1704, and published by the Government,† there were yet living more than ninety who represented themselves as ordained by this Prelate. It is certain, however, that some of these must be referred to the Primate, as the date of ordination is more than once subsequent to the demise of the Bishop of Meath; and about 120 others of the registered clergy refer their ordination to Dr. Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh. From the letters of the Primate, which we have already quoted, it is certain that, immediately on his arrival in Ireland in 1670, he held two ordinations; and from the synodical letters of Clones and Ardpatrick, it is sufficiently clear that he continued without intermission, during the sub-

\* Letter of Dr. Patrick Plunket to Sacred Congregation, 1669.

† See reprint in Battersby's Directory for 1838.

sequent years of his Episcopate, to promote worthy ministers to the holy order of priesthood.

The Holy Sacrifice seems to have been at this period for the most part celebrated in private houses, and such was the fury of the persecutors, that it was deemed a criminal offence in Catholics to seek to erect a public edifice for the service of God. Hence but few chapels were to be met with through the country, excepting those which, with the connivance of Ormond, had been erected by the Valesians. He wished by this privilege to win for Walsh and his fellow-Remonstrants special favour amongst the Catholics; but the people of Ireland were too devoted to the See of St. Peter to offer insult to his successor, no matter what might be the bribe held out to them. The Remonstrants soon ceased to hold any position among the Catholics, and the churches they erected passed into the hands of their orthodox opponents. We shall allow the Archbishop to describe the happy result as to his diocese in the following extract from his letter to the Internunzio, dated Dublin, 26th September, 1671:—

“To say the truth, our just and good God has drawn good from the evil deeds of Walsh. This man, about eight years ago, anxious to make a display of zeal, and thus more easily gain followers and attract the people, obtained from Ormond a toleration for chapels and



convents in Dublin, and many other cities, but he wished that all the convents, and even all the provinces should be governed by his own adherents. Ormond being removed from the Viceroyalty, through the mercy of God, no other Viceroy molested or molests, either the chapels or the convents."

Before the close of 1673 the storm of persecution was once more let loose upon our country. The bishops and regular clergy were those against whom its fury was chiefly levelled. Incredible were the privations and sufferings which Dr. Plunket was compelled to endure; but what most afflicted the tender heart of the good shepherd was to see his fold laid waste by the devouring wolves, and all the institutions, the fruits of years of unceasing toil, reduced to ruin. He seems, indeed, in the zealous labours of his early Episcopate, to have foreseen the coming persecution, and in his letter of 29th September, 1671, he thus expresses himself:—

"I pray your Excellency to expedite the matters which I wrote to you about. This is the time for doing good whilst the present Viceroy is with us. We must act as the mariners at sea, who, when the wind is favourable, unfurl all their sail, and sweep the ocean with great velocity, but when the wind becomes contrary, they lower the sails, and seek some little port for refuge. Whilst we have the present Viceroy, *we may sail*, and I will do all in my power to advance our spiritual interests, instruct the clergy, and educate them in science and theology."

His anticipations were too soon to be realised, and, writing on the 15th of December, 1673, he draws a vivid picture of the sufferings he had then to undergo, and the poverty to which he was reduced:—

“Matters here have been very severe, the more so as the meeting of Parliament is at hand on the 7th of January next, so that I am in concealment, and Dr. Brennan is with me. The lay Catholics are so much afraid of losing their property that no one with anything to lose will give refuge to either ordinary or regulars, and although the regular clergy have some connivance to remain, yet the Catholics dread almost to admit them to say Mass in their houses. The priests, too, give nothing to the bishops. Hence I sometimes find it difficult to procure even oaten-bread, and the house where I and Dr. Brennan are, is of straw, and covered or thatched in such a manner that from our bed we may see the stars, and at the head of our bed every slightest shower *refreshes* us, but we are resolved rather to die from hunger and cold than to abandon our flocks. It would be a shame for spiritual soldiers, educated in Rome, to become mercenaries. We shall take no step without the order of your Eminences.

“There is nothing that occasions me more inward grief than to see the schools which were instituted by me, now destroyed after so many toils. Oh! what will the Catholic youth do, which is both numerous and full of talent? The

schools continued till the close of November last, and commenced about the beginning of July, 1670: so that they lasted three years and five months, and indeed the Fathers of the Society behaved well, and toiled exceedingly in them, and they generally had about 150 Catholic boys. I procured also a Master to instruct the young Priests of the Province of Armagh in cases of conscience, and in the manner of teaching the catechism, &c. The Sacred Congregation assigned 150 scudi per annum to the Fathers. . . . Modesty prevents me from speaking, but nevertheless, as it is the truth, I will say it, I gave more 'Reports' to your Eminences, and corresponded better than all the Prelates of Ireland for the past 30 years, and Monsignors Baldeschi, Airoidi, and Falconieri can testify to the truth of this: I gave no rest to my brows and pen, or even to my horses, during the past four years, in a vast Province of eleven Dioceses, in all of which, besides myself, there was only one. Bishop, and he old and half decrepit, Dr. Plunket, Bishop of Meath, until the arrival, a short time ago, of the Bishop of Clogher, and of the Bishop of Down a little before him. I confirmed, during the past four years, forty-eight thousand six hundred and fifty-five, of whom I have kept the list, and there are some Dioceses here that have not seen a Bishop for forty years, though the Catholics are numerous in them. . . . Since the dread of the Parliament commenced in the month of February last, I did not receive

10 scudi from my Diocese, and at present, since the publication of the edict, not a coin is to be seen: with difficulty can a piece of oaten-bread be found, and a hut of straw. May the Lord God be ever praised, and the most holy Mary.—I am, &c.,

“\* OLIVER OF ARMAGH.

“15th December, 1673.

“To Monsignor Cerri,

“Secretary of Propaganda.”

Dr. Plunket, in many of his letters, had already announced this coming storm, and he received in return a consolatory letter from the Sacred Congregation, exhorting him to courage and fortitude of soul.\* The letter of Dr. Plunket, to which this consolatory brief was more immediately sent as a reply, is as follows:

“I have received your letter of the 3rd inst., and I am rejoiced that your Excellency was pleased with the ‘*Report*’ which I sent regarding the state of Catholic affairs in this kingdom; but I am sorry that this is far worse now than heretofore. The Bishops are all now proscribed, as also the Vicars-General, and all the heads of the clergy. No Catholics can keep or carry fire-arms; and they would not have been allowed even to retain their swords, were it not that the Viceroy was resolute, and at the same time inclined to clemency. It is now expected that no

\* So we find recorded amongst the Diaries of the Congregation, held 26th February, 1674.

Catholic will be allowed to live in the cities. You must have heard from London with what audacity the Parliament sought to prevent the marriage of the Duke of York with a Catholic, although the marriage contract had been made with the consent of the King. The House of Commons also wished that no Catholic lord—that is, no marquis, earl, or baron—should have a vote in Parliament; and, moreover, it refused supplies for carrying on the war against the Dutch. It also desired that no Catholic should reside within five miles of London, and that all Catholics should have some distinctive mark, as the Jews in Rome. Similar were the beginnings of the Parliament in 1640 and 1641, which, with unheard of tyranny, beheaded the father of the present King, who is a wise and clement sovereign. These unreasonable demands obliged the King to prorogue the Parliament till the 7th of January, and he would have dissolved it altogether were it not for two counsellors who dissuaded him. The Government here dare not moderate in any way our sentence of banishment, or give us a longer respite than the 1st of December, through dread of the Parliament, which is so severe against the Catholics. I exhort my brethren to constancy, and not to abandon their flocks, but imitating the pastors of the three first centuries, to retire to some corner of their districts till the storm shall have passed. I shall retire to some little hut in the woods or mountains of my diocese, with a supply of can-

dles and books. Nevertheless, you can continue to send your letters as usual, and I will try occasionally to send some account to you. . . . Since May, I only received 80 scudi from my diocese, and were it not for Sir Nicholas Plunket, who gave me lodging and support, I would be rather a pilgrim than a Prelate. The poverty of the Catholics, occasioned by the many taxes, and by the last war with the Dutch, is inconceivable and indescribable, and the priests are poor, having nothing but the offerings of the faithful to support them: the poverty of the priests occasions the poverty of the bishops, for they have nothing but their proxies—that is, four or five scudi from each priest—but since the edict was published, the bishops cannot make any visitations, or receive any proxies, and hence they are in a most miserable condition.

“ & OLIVER OF ARMAGH.

“ 12th November, 1673.”

“ P.S—The Bishop of Waterford will come to my district to conceal himself, as his own city is full of fanatics and furious Presbyterians. The Bishop of Meath is old, and attacked with the gout, and unable to move about. I think the Viceroy will have compassion on him, on account of the esteem he has for Sir Nicholas, brother of the Bishop.”

The alarm consequent on the renewal of the persecution lasted till the close of the following

year. During this time Dr. Plunket, with the Bishop of Waterford, lay concealed in the woods and mountainous districts. He found opportunity, however, in the beginning of 1674, to undertake a journey to the Province of Tuam, having been commissioned by the Holy See to confer the Pallium on Dr. Lynch, the Archbishop of that Province; in this excursion he penetrated as far as Galway; and in his letter to the S. Congregation he extols the devotion and hospitality of the people of that fine old Catholic town.

Calumny seems to have been added to the sufferings of our Irish Bishops, and some individuals represented to the Holy See that the Pastors of the Irish Church were abandoning their flocks, and that no fewer than fourteen Bishops had left that island on their way to Rome. Nothing could be more false than this calumnious assertion. Dr. Plunket expresses his surprise how such a tale could be invented; and writing on the 15th of September, 1674, whilst he repeats his solicitations for assistance, and details the sufferings to which he and Dr. Brennan were exposed, he declares, at the same time, their firm resolve to run all risks, and to endure imprisonment and torture sooner than abandon the flocks entrusted to their charge.

“During the past month, he says, I received two of your letters, but the judges of assizes being on circuit in my district, I retired to my usual place of concealment in the most remote

parts of the province, and hence I was not able to correspond as I desired, nor can I even at present do so, for during the past two months and a-half I ceased to correspond with my friends in Dublin and London, as also with those in the provinces of Cashel and Tuam, so that I can give no 'reports' except in regard of my own diocese, and the cause of all this is the lightness of my purse. I declare to your Excellency that all I have in this world does not exceed 80 scudi, and the usual charities of the faithful have ceased since the edicts, nor is there any chance, as far as I see, that the sums which I expended in serving their Eminences will be repaid to me, so that I find myself in a deplorable condition; but let all be for the glory of God and the salvation of my soul. Had I served the Duke of Mirandola, in correspondence and otherwise, as I served the Sacred Congregation these five years past, the baker's account would have been long since settled; had I the means I would spare no labour or industry in serving their Eminences, being obliged to it by every law of justice and gratitude; but what is out of my power I cannot do. . . . .

"God knows that I gave no rest to my brows to my pen, or to my horses, in serving their Eminences, and I should ever continue to do so with alacrity and joy were it possible for me, but, as I have no means, how can you expect that I should do so? I was in Rome for twenty



five years, and for twelve of these I served the Sacred Congregation in the Chairs of Theology and Conferences. . . Then their Eminences destined me to the principal Church in this kingdom, and God knows in what manner I laboured, and with what toils I promoted and preserved the cause of the Church. I moreover wrote to some of their Eminences, as to Cardinals Barberini, Azzolini, and others, concerning the persecution and the misery of this country, which was so great, that in my diocese, more than 500 Catholics died from starvation,\* and the Bishop of Waterford and I were glad to get a morsel of oaten-bread. But enough of these matters.

“As to the subject of your letters, I sent a copy of the last edict through two different channels, that is, by the post, and by a friend who was going to London. As to the story you heard of our Prelates being on their way to Rome to take up their residence there, I cannot understand it; there is no Bishop here who knows the language of Rome, or has friends there, excepting the Bishop of Waterford and myself, and we will not abandon our flocks till we are compelled to do so; we will first suffer imprisonment and other torments; we have already suffered so much on the mountains, in huts, and caverns, and we have acquired such

\* The Internunzio, writing in August, 1674, announces that “a dreadful famine had set in in Ireland, and laid the whole country desolate.”

a habit of it, that, for the future, suffering will be less severe and less troublesome."

From the facts incidentally mentioned in this letter, we may form some idea of the misery to which our country was now reduced by continued oppression and the renewal of the persecution. In one diocese alone, more than five hundred persons fell victims to famine, choosing rather to suffer death itself than to barter, for the mess of pottage which was held out to them, the precious inheritance of their faith. Amidst all their sufferings, however, the good Shepherd clung to his sheep, their sorrows were his sorrows, their trials were his trials.

In the following years, though the Catholics at intervals enjoyed a partial calm, yet their sad condition and misery continued unabated. A little while before his arrest in 1679, Dr. Plunket wrote to the Secretary of Propaganda, that all he possessed in this world did not exceed 50 scudi; and in another letter written at the same time, he attests the desolation of his flock, occasioned by famine and the sword, and declares his resolution to sell even the sacred vessels themselves in order to relieve their misery. The continuance of persecution produced no change in his holy resolve to cling inseparably to his flock, and on the 15th of May, 1679, in his letter to the Internunzio, he calmly announces to him, "so many are the spies in search of me, that I am morally certain I shall

be apprehended; but, nevertheless, I will remain with my own, nor will I abandon them till I be dragged to the sea-shore."

Many were the calumnies which, from time to time, were published against our Primate. However, they only caused his true merit to shine forth with renewed brilliancy and lustre. We shall more than once have occasion to refer to these accusations hereafter: for the present we will merely cite a few testimonies of those best acquainted with our Irish Church as to his zeal and untiring labours. Thus, the Internunzio, Falconieri, writes to the Sacred Congregation on the 9th November, 1673: "*I cannot here omit to represent to the Sacred Congregation the zeal with which the Archbishop of Armagh labours for the propagation of the Catholic religion in his diocese, of which I have received most indubious proofs from various quarters*; and again, on 24th February, 1674, transmitting to Rome a letter of the Primate, he adds: "Chiefly by his zeal are the affairs of the Catholic religion maintained in the kingdom of Ireland." Peter Creagh, who was so distinguished towards the close of the 17th century, as Archbishop of Dublin, also expresses himself in the same strain in his letter of the 24th January, 1671, to Dr. Brennan, the agent of the Irish clergy in Rome:—

"I was in Dublin (he writes) during the Assembly of our Bishops, and though there was some difference between the Archbishops of

Armagh and Dublin as to the order of signature to the decrees, nevertheless this controversy was carried on so peaceably that its echo was scarcely heard beyond the precincts of the place of assembly. We experience great benefit from the formula of allegiance which the Prelates presented to the Viceroy, and we are allowed to enjoy great liberty.

“All that has been written against the Archbishop of Armagh is mere calumny, proceeding from envy. He administers his province with great zeal and devotedness: he has put an end to many quarrels and scandals, and he has reduced to submission certain bands of outlaws, who were a perpetual annoyance to the Catholics of the province. Now, thanks to God, there is nothing to disturb our tranquillity and peace.”

The Archbishop of Cashel, too, in his letter of 6th April, 1677, after rejecting several calumnies with which Dr. Plunket was assailed, thus briefly adds his own invaluable testimony as to the zealous labours of the Primate:—

“In my opinion, the present Archbishop of Armagh has attended more to the spiritual administration of that province than any of his predecessors for many years; and I say this without wishing to lower in any way the merit of the preceding Primates.”

And again, after the glorious martyrdom of Dr. Plunket, the same Archbishop, when transmitting to Rome a narrative of his imprisonment and execution, writes:—

“In truth, his holy life merited for him this glorious death ; for during the twelve years of his residence here, he showed himself vigilant, zealous, and indefatigable above his predecessors, nor do we find within the memory of any of the present century that any Primate or Metropolitan visited his diocese and province with such solicitude and pastoral zeal as he did, reforming depraved morals amongst the people, and the scandalous lives of some of the clergy, chastising the guilty, rewarding the meritorious, consoling all, and benefiting, as far as was in his power, and succouring the needy : wherefore he was applauded and honoured by the clergy and people, with the exception of some wicked enemies of virtue and religious observance.”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### DR. PLUNKET'S ZEAL IN CORRECTING ABUSES.

FROM the zeal displayed by Dr. Plunket in advancing the cause of God, and promoting the spiritual welfare of his flock, we may easily conclude with what ardour he would seek to root out any prevailing abuses, and bring back to the right path the straying sheep of his fold. Considering the circumstances of the times, these abuses were indeed but few ; and very many of the Irish people in the fulness of

faith, and simplicity of heart, received with submission the teaching of their pastors, and realized in their lives, amidst the afflictions of this world, and the trials of persecution, all the sublime perfection of the Gospel. Nevertheless, there were those who neglected the practises of faith—prodigal children in the spiritual household, and these became the special objects of the good Prelate's care. Several instances of this kind have already presented themselves in the preceding pages; and we have also seen, when attempts were made to sow dissensions amongst the faithful, with what zealous ardour he laboured to reconcile his children and to preserve amongst them the blessings of peace.

In some districts of his province, Dr. Plunket found that drunkenness—that accursed vice which for so many centuries has brought disgrace and ruin on our people—had cast deep root, and immediately all the energies of his soul were directed to eradicate it, and introduce holy temperance in its place. The better to effect that object, he resolved to propose in his own life a model of abstemiousness, which all might imitate, and not only did he avoid all excess, but, moreover, even at his meals he abstained altogether from the use of every intoxicating drink. All excesses in the clergy were, in like manner, most strictly prohibited, and he interdicted, under the severest censures, their frequenting drinking-houses; his exhortations, confirmed by his own example, and by

that of his clergy, were happily successful in converting many of the people from their evil ways, and in winning them back to the observance of the precepts of the Gospel. No words can better attest his zeal in correcting this abuse than his own letter to the Sacred Congregation—from which, too, we learn how successfully he strove to present in his own life, and that of his clergy, a model of temperance to the faithful :—

“ Whilst visiting six dioceses of this province,” he writes, “ I applied myself especially to root out the cursed vice of drunkenness, which is the parent, and the nurse of all scandals and contentions. I commanded also, under penalty of privation of benefice, that no priest should frequent public houses, or drink whiskey, &c., &c. Indeed I have derived great fruit from this order, and, as it is of little use to teach without practising, I myself never drink at meals. Give me an Irish priest without this vice, and he is assuredly a saint.”

Dr. Plunket was also untiring in his endeavours to introduce regularity and discipline into those houses of the Religious orders, where inobservance had crept in during the years of persecution. No spiritual labourers had cultivated with greater zeal this portion of the vineyard of the Lord than the children of St. Francis. Not only had many illustrious members of the Irish hierarchy come forth from their ranks, but in the days of Ireland's peril,

when the sword was unsheathed to smite the shepherds of the fold, the convents of St. Francis, scattered through the Continent, sent to our shores, band after band of devoted champions of the cross, who kept alive the flame of faith, and often, too, sealing their testimony with their blood, led on their faithful flocks to martyrdom. The glory of these heroic soldiers of Christ, is nowise obscured by the corrupt lives of some few apostates, who sought to make this holy habit a mask for their ambition.

At the time of which we speak, it cannot at all surprise us that the seed sown by Peter Walsh and Taafe should bear its evil fruits; and that, whilst the learning of Wadding in Rome, and the evangelical labours of Dr. Tyrrell in Ireland, added new glories to the pages of the Franciscan annals, some unworthy brethren bringing contumely upon that name, and violating their most sacred vows, should, Judas-like, consummate their wickedness by renouncing their saving faith, and even hesitate not to persecute the most zealous of their fellow-labourers in the ministry, and bring their saintly chief-pastor to the scaffold. The superiors of the Franciscan order were, indeed, no less desirous than the Archbishop that these disorders should be checked; and when, in 1669, the first measures were taken by the Holy See to re-establish the purity of religious discipline in Ireland, we find that the then Guardian of the Franciscans in Louvain addressed a letter, in the name of his



fellow-religious, to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, thanking him for his solicitude and watchfulness in promoting that holy work :

“ When the Irish Franciscan province,” he says, “ weakened by so many assaults, tossed about by so many contrary winds, lacerated by the dissensions of the wicked, disturbed by the ambition of some, was hastening to its ruin, and seemed even on the brink of destruction, our good God, who rejects not, nor despises those who hope in Him, but from on high looks on them with an eye of mercy, and protects and defends them with his omnipotence, at length was pleased to stretch forth to us His assisting hand ; and you were the chief instrument he made use of, by whose energy and prudence the waves were calmed, the clouds scattered, and peace restored, our province was re-established, religion promoted, the lovers of observance comforted, the contumacious repressed and humbled. Wherefore, in most humble sentiments, prostrate before your Excellency, mindful of so great a blessing, whose remembrance shall be undying amongst us, we render to you all the thanks that are in our power ; and we offer up our prayers to God that He who is omnipotent may deign to long preserve your Excellency for the propagation of his Holy Church and the preserving of our province.”

The persecution, however, which soon burst upon the country, blasted at once all the hopes of the re-establishment of discipline, and in a

postscript to his letter of the 15th December, 1673, Dr. Plunket briefly remarks that "all the convents and novitiates are destroyed, and the novices are scattered throughout the country."

Whilst the good Archbishop zealously laboured to effect these reforms, the enemies of our Church deemed it a fit opportunity to bring reproach upon the Irish Catholics, and heap calumny upon the Primate himself; and thus, whilst on the one hand the evils were exaggerated, on the other, the manner of acting of the Archbishop was represented as most arbitrary and oppressive. To one of the accusations made against him Dr. Plunket thus alludes, when writing to the Internunzio on the 26th of September, 1673:—

"Your letter of the 8th inst. wisely admonishes me to avoid all occasions which might give pretext to the threatened persecution. I will be sure to carry it out to the letter, and, indeed, during the whole past year, I took care that no Synods or Provincial Councils, or assemblies of the Clergy should be held by the Bishops, which indeed proved of great advantage to those who conformed to my council. . . .

"As to the dissensions of the Catholics, of which you speak, I see here, on the contrary, great concord; nor do I see any divisions whatsoever amongst ecclesiastics, and did such exist I should know it, as I receive letters every week from all the Archbishops and Bishops, and when any discord arises, they write to me at once, and you may rest assured that, of all

that happens, you shall have a sincere and perfect account, without any partiality or passion."

The zeal of Dr. Plunket was tempered by prudence and charity, and even those who were most irregular and disorderly in their conduct were, on their conversion, treated by him with special kindness and regard. We have an illustrious example of this in his receiving back to the bosom of the Church a wretched apostate named Martin French. This man had been a member of the Augustinian order, but setting aside all laws, ecclesiastical and divine, had refused to listen to the voice of his legitimate superiors, and even summoned the Archbishop of Tuam before the secular courts, accusing him under the statute, of *praemunire*—that is, of exercising foreign jurisdiction in the British dominions. In consequence of these accusations the Archbishop was detained for many months in prison, and even for some time was in great danger of being led to the scaffold. Dr. Plunket, on the 24th of April, 1671, thus refers to the sufferings of this Archbishop:—

"The good Archbishop of Tuam was imprisoned anew during the past Lent, on the accusations of Martin French, and was found guilty of *praemunire*—that is, of exercising foreign jurisdiction, but now, having given security, he is allowed to be at liberty till the next sessions of August; but Nicholas Plunket, who is the best lawyer in the kingdom, and the only defender that the poor ecclesiastics have in such

circumstances, writes that he should appeal from the courts of Galway to the supreme jurisdiction of Dublin, in which there is greater equity."

On the trial being sent to Dublin, French did not appear to prosecute, and soon afterwards, touched by repentance, petitioned the Primate to pardon him his guilt and re-admit him to the bosom of the holy Church. The good prelate, moved by his prayers, and still more by the tears which testified his horror for the course of crime he had pursued, absolved him, in the name of the Holy See, from the censures he had incurred, and wrote most pressing letters to the Archbishop of Tuam, praying him to receive back the prodigal child, and reinstate him in the household of God. It was thus Dr. Lynch himself wrote, on the 17th of September, 1671, to the Internunzio in Brussels. After stating that French had repented of his crimes, he adds:—

"He had recourse to the most illustrious Lord Primate, who freed him from censures, and more than once notified the same to us by letters, praying also and beseeching us that we would admit to our communion this man, no longer subject to censures or irregularities, and that we would cast every fault, if there were any, upon his own shoulders; and to this testimony we have given every credence."

Thus, the interests of religion and the glory of God were the sole springs of every action of the Primate, and a paternal affection was sure

to greet the sinner on his repentance. This truly divine, not human, zeal, implied another feature, which is not less clearly recognized in the actions of Dr. Plunket, namely, that when he discovered himself in error he did not hesitate to avow it, and retract the injury which, perchance, he might have done. A noble instance of this is presented in his letter of 21st September, 1678 :—

“Some time since you asked me for an account of Dr. Cornelius Daly, but as he was then in Paris, I besought you to write to that city, and soon after I received information that he was a Jansenist, factious, &c. I now find that the information thus conveyed to me was false, for as he at present is here in Ireland, I conversed with him ; and I find him wholly opposed to the Jansenists, and he subscribed in my presence the formula condemnatory of Jansenism ; and I find him well versed in theology, and in the canons, and in cases of conscience, and he is, in my opinion, a modest, exact, and exemplary ecclesiastic, of grave and good deportment, being about forty years of age ; and to say the truth, I saw but few returning from Paris with better ecclesiastical qualities ; and in my humble opinion he is deserving of any dignity that he may be promoted to. I pray your Excellency to write to Monsignor Cerri in his favour, that he may be appointed Vicar Apostolic of Ardfert and Aghadoe, which two small dioceses have been united for forty years, as

also to send this letter to Monsignor Cerri. Dr. Daly can effect great good in these dioceses; he is a good preacher, and can labour well in propagating and preserving the faith."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### EFFORTS OF DR. PLUNKET TO EDUCATE HIS FLOCK.

THE thirst for knowledge ever displayed by the people of Ireland, from the first era of their enlightenment by Catholic faith, is proverbial. During her ages of peace and prosperity, Seminaries and other Institutions of learning were everywhere scattered throughout the land. Science, exiled from the Continent, found a secure asylum on our shores; and from the Monasteries and Schools of Ireland went forth an innumerable host of holy and learned men, to rekindle in the kingdoms of Europe the lamp of knowledge, and to confer on them the blessings of civilization and religion. St. Bernard writes that "from Ireland, as from an overflowing stream, crowds of holy men descended on foreign nations;" and a Saxon writer, Aldhelm, describes our country as "rich in the wealth of science," and "as thickly set with learned men as the poles are with stars." The German his-

torian, Gorres, contemplating the Irish Church at that period, cries out—"while flames of war were blazing round her, the green isle enjoyed the sweets of repose. When we look into the ecclesiastical life of this people, we are almost tempted to believe that some potent spirits transported over the sea the cells of the valley of the Nile, with all their hermits—its monasteries, with all their inmates, and had settled down in the Western Isle!—an Isle which in the lapse of three centuries gave eight hundred and fifty saints to the Church—won over to Christianity the north of Britain, and soon after a large portion of the yet Pagan Germany; and while it devoted the utmost attention to the sciences, cultivated with special care mystical contemplation in her religious communities as well as in the saints whom they produced." Eric, of Auxerre, and other writers, speak with rapture of the learned men who, in the reign of Charlemagne, hastened "in swarms" to the shores of France; and even as late as the eleventh century, we find that Sulgen, the holy Bishop of St. David's, went to Ireland to cultivate the pursuits of literature; "for that country," adds his cotemporary biographer, "is renowned for its wondrous wisdom."

Six centuries of devastation, of plunder, and of ruin ensued; religious persecution was added to national strife, and soon the garden became as a wilderness, and learning seemed exiled from the land. In the year 1581, it was enacted by Parliament, that—

“Any person keeping a schoolmaster who shall not repair to the Established Church, shall forfeit £10 per month.”

Other acts of Parliament followed in quick succession. We shall give but a brief epitome of them:—

“If a Catholic kept a school, or taught any person—Protestant or Catholic—any species of literature or science, such teacher was, for the crime of teaching, punishable by law by banishment; and if he returned from banishment, he was subject to be hanged as a felon.”

“If a Catholic, whether a child or adult, attended, in Ireland, a school kept by a Catholic, or was privately instructed by a Catholic, such Catholic, although a child in its early infancy, incurred a penalty of all its property present or future.”

“If a Catholic child, however young, was sent to any foreign country for education, such infant child incurred a similar penalty—that is, a forfeiture of all right to property, present or prospective.”

“If any person in Ireland made any remittance in money or goods for the maintenance of any Irish child educated in a foreign country, such person incurred a similar forfeiture.”\*

All this, however, did not suffice; and British

\* “Memoirs of Ireland, &c.,” by D. O’Connell.



legislation was said to have attained its perfection, and *pacified Ireland*, only when all our Catholic inhabitants were pent up in the various precincts of Connaught;—when emigration from the immediate districts assigned to them was made punishable with death, without trial or form of law; when it was commanded that all priests should be hanged without mercy; that all the inhabitants should take the oath of abjuration, if presented to them, under penalty of forfeiting two-thirds of their goods and chattels; and when, in fine, its legislature enacted regarding education—“that all Catholic children attaining the age of twelve years were to be taken from their parents and educated in England in the principles of the Protestant religion.\*” Thus nothing remained for our forefathers but to renounce the pursuit of learning, or to drink in, at poisoned sources, the waters of knowledge. The eager desire of some to penetrate the depths of science induced them to frequent Protestant schools, and imperil the precious treasure of their faith. Often, however, even during this period of persecution, did the Pastors raise their warning voices to make known to their flocks the snare which was laid for them; and often did they lament the dread evils which

\* See O’Conor’s “History of the Irish Catholics.” The last ordinance of Parliament referred to was sanctioned in 1657.

threatened our country, and which it seemed beyond their power to avert. Thus the bosom friend of our Primate, Dr. Brennan, then Bishop of Waterford, giving a "Report" of his Diocese to the Sacred Congregation, on the 20th September, 1675, writes:—

"A good education and instruction is much wanting for the Catholic youth of this country, for, in consequence of the penal laws, no Catholic is allowed to act as schoolmaster; so that our youth are obliged to seek instruction from Protestant teachers—a sad misfortune indeed, which will one day produce great evils."

When he was transferred to Cashel his sentiments remained unchanged, and in another "Report" to the Holy See, dated from Kilcash, 9th November, 1687, he thus writes:—

"By the penal laws Catholics are prohibited to keep schools, in order that our students may be compelled to frequent the schools of Lutheran masters, to be there imbued with Protestant doctrine and morality. To repel this danger, some Catholic masters kept private schools, to instruct the Catholic children in letters and in the principles of faith—not without their own great risk; and many of them, on this account, have suffered imprisonment and pecuniary fines."

Dr. Plunket lamented no less than the Archbishop of Cashel the dangers arising from irreligious instruction. In one of his letters he writes that "*Irish talent is excellent and acute,*

*especially that of Ulster ;”* and adds, “ but what does this avail when it cannot be cultivated ; the richest land without the plough-share or the spade can yield but little fruit ; and here, in consequence of the penal laws, we can have no fixed Catholic schools ;” and again, writing to the Internunzio on the 22nd September, 1672, he states that before the opening of his schools the Catholics were obliged “ *to send their children to Protestant masters, and thus incur great danger as to their faith ; for you can well understand how easily young shoots receive a wrong bent, unless they be properly trained from the commencement.*” In a preceding letter, too (26th April, 1671), when praying for some assistance to support Catholic teachers, he adds—“ *Let us aid the poor children, many of whom have been perverted by going to Protestant schools.*”

At every interval of peace and toleration, it was the first thought of the Catholic prelates to establish colleges and schools. Thus, in 1641, before the threats of extermination compelled the Irish to rise in arms, and plunged once more our country into all the horrors of invasion and civil strife, the Jesuit Fathers had opened schools, *to the great joy* of all the Catholics in Dublin, Drogheda, Kilkenny, Ross, Wexford, Clonmel, Waterford, Cashel, Cork, Limerick, and Galway.

From a paper written not long after by Father William Salinger, S.J., and entitled “An

Answer to some Calumnies against the Jesuit Order," we learn that Dr. Hugh O'Reilly, Archbishop of Armagh, had resolved on the establishment of two colleges, one of which should be placed at Armagh. Dr. Thomas Walsh, Archbishop of Cashel, founded one College, and collected a large sum of money for the establishment of another, but the sums collected by him were appropriated to other objects in consequence of the war. Dr. John De Burgo was engaged preparing for a like foundation; the Bishop of Meath had already opened one such institution, and contemplated the establishment of another. Dr. Francis Kirwan, Bishop of Killala, had promoted the foundation of another seminary.

A like spirit seems to have animated the lay leaders of the Catholic party, and the renowned General of Ulster, Owen Roe O'Neil, who for his martial spirit and continual life in the camp, and struggles in the field of battle, we should suppose would have little leisure for reflecting on the necessity of Catholic instruction, had resolved on the establishment in Ulster of four colleges, "that from them, as he alleged, might proceed the reformation of morals, and the due and sufficient Christian education of the youth and people." He even had marked out the place and site for these colleges, and often publicly spoke of them.

It cannot, then, surprise us that one of the first thoughts of Dr. Plunket on his arrival in

Ireland should be to procure such Catholic schools, and to realise, at least in part, the project of the great Ulster leader of the Catholic interests. Before the month of July, 1670, he had completed a college for three Jesuit Fathers, and it soon numbered no fewer than 150 pupils within its walls. To maintain this college, the good Prelate often deprived himself even of the necessities of life, and clothed himself in the plainest raiment. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda soon came to his aid; and till the time when a new outburst of persecution scattered to the winds this noble work of the Primate, 150 scudi were allowed each year for the maintenance of his teachers. The Lord Lieutenant gave a tacit consent to the erection of this college, and many of the Protestant gentry, on witnessing its fruits, became its warm advocates, and even sought for their children the benefits of its instruction. But the happy results and success of these schools will be best learned from the letters of the Archbishop himself.

One of the most interesting of these letters is addressed to Father Oliva, General of the Society of Jesus, and in it he acquaints him with the establishment of the college, and the happy fruits which were there produced by the zealous members of his order. It is a curious incident that the original of this letter is now preserved in the library of Trinity College; it seems to have never reached its destination, having been,

probably, intercepted by the Government. It is as follows :—

“VERY REVEREND FATHER.—Dr. Creagh, the agent of the Prelates of this kingdom in the Roman court, has written to me declaring his many obligations to your Paternity for your affability, kindness, and patronage in his regard, which is of great assistance to him. By long experience in Rome, I learned how great a benefactor you were, and your kindness has been experienced in like manner by all my fellow-countrymen in Rome; each and every one of whom attest your anxiety in their regard, and as they cannot otherwise correspond with this kindness, and prove their gratitude, than by loving and doing good to the members of your Order in this kingdom, I can assure you that in this they are not cold or negligent, and the Fathers, on the other hand, by the great good which they do, merit to be thus loved, praised, and caressed. I have three Fathers in the diocese of Armagh, who by their virtue, learning, and labours, would suffice to enrich a kingdom.

“The founder of the Armagh residence is Father Stephen Rice, a learned man, successful in preaching, prudent in his labours, and of profound religious virtue, nor is he ever weary of teaching, instructing, and attending to the pupils and to the young priests, of whom he is the examiner and director. Oh! how much he had to suffer during the past two years and four months, in founding that residence, and yet he

is so modest and so reserved, that he seems as though he had come on yesterday from the novitiate of St. Andrew's. He was educated in Flanders, where, indeed, he was imbued with the true spirit of the society; he retains that spirit, and is a son worthy of such a Father as St. Ignatius; in a word, Father Rice is another Father Young.\* . . . . .

"In the schools there are 150 boys, for the greater part children of the Catholic nobility and gentry, and there are also about 40 children of the Protestant gentry. You may imagine what envy it excites in the Protestant masters and ministers to see the Protestant children coming to the Catholic schools.

"In the city of my diocese, where their residence is, there are also houses of the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Capuchins; the city is called Drogheda, or *Dreat* in our English and Irish languages, and *Pontana* in Latin: it is distant from Dublin as far as Tivoli from Rome; it is a maritime port, situated on the noble river Boyne, or *Boina*, and from its bridge (*pons*) it derives its Latin name Pontana. It is well supplied with corn, with flesh of every description, and with fish. The country around is for the most part inhabited by orthodox noblemen and gentlemen, and in the city there are rich merchants and respectable artisans.

\* A distinguished Irish Jesuit, who had been Rector of the Irish College in Rome.

“ When I introduced the Fathers to my diocese, and the schools commenced to flourish, Dr. Talbot reprehended the undertaking as rash, imprudent, precipitous, and vain, and said that it would be short-lived, especially in such a busy city. . . . But be this as it may, whilst the wind is favourable, we must raise the sails and pursue our course, and when it becomes contrary or tempestuous, we shall lower them and seek shelter in some small port beneath a mountain or rock.

“ Your most affectionate and obliged servant,

“ OLIVER OF ARMAGH,

“ Primate of Ireland.

“ Dublin, 22nd Nov., 1672.”

At the date of this letter the schools had lasted two years and four months, and the fifth month was hastening to its close; for another year they continued to flourish and diffuse through the diocese of Armagh the blessings of Catholic education. But on the renewal of the persecution, towards the close of November, 1673, this work, the fruit of so much toil, was levelled to the ground, and the good Primate was forced to cry out in anguish of soul, “ What shall the Catholic youth now do entrusted to my care?” So well had these schools succeeded, that even Protestant gentlemen sent their children to them, and defended them when they were assailed by the ministers of the Estab-



lished Church. (Letter of 7th June, 1761.) In his letter of the 12th November, 1673, Dr. Plunket mentions that when at first the Viceroy and those of the court took umbrage at the establishment of the schools, the more moderate amongst them were satisfied on his making known to them that the only object he had in view in instituting these schools "was to imbue the youth with a knowledge of the Christian doctrine, and to communicate instruction to them; and thus render them useful for the State and the service of the King, whilst otherwise they would become noxious members, rogues, highway robbers, and disturbers of the peace and social order."

A promise of an annual sum of 800 scudi for these schools had been held out to Dr. Plunket by the court, probably as a sort of bait to win his favour for the doings of the Government; but finding that all the efforts of the Primate's zeal were directed to promote the glory of God and the interests of the Church, and that he was resolved to fearlessly denounce all obstacles to these holy ends, no matter whence they might proceed, this sum soon ceased to be paid to him. He had mainly relied on this Government aid for the maintenance of his schools; but when this hope was blasted, incredible were the privations that he endured, and the efforts which he made to carry them on, till at length the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda granted to the Jesuit Fathers connected with the schools

the annual sum of 150 scudi, to be dated from their first establishment in his diocese.

When soliciting this aid from the Sacred Congregation, by letter of 26th April, 1671, Dr. Plunket gives many interesting details as to the manner in which the schools were carried on:—

“The nobility and gentry of the whole province of Ulster, excepting three, are deprived of their lands, and from being proprietors, have become tenants; they have now no means to educate their children. The young priests who were ordained during the past seven years, in order to fill the places of those who were deceased, are very backward in learning, as they had no proper master to instruct them; in fact Catholic teachers were not at all tolerated.

“I undertook an arduous work: I invited the Jesuit Fathers to my diocese; I built from the foundation a commodious house for them, as also two schools, where about 150 boys are educated, and 25 ecclesiastics; and during the past nine months I supported two very learned and laborious Jesuits, with one lay-brother, and one servant. One of the Fathers instructs, for an hour in the morning and another hour in the afternoon, the ecclesiastics in cases of morality, as also in the manner of preaching and catechising; the same Father teaches the rhetoricians for two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening; on the feast days and vacations he teaches the ceremonies and the manner of administering the sacraments, &c.

The other Jesuit is occupied in teaching syntax and grammar, &c. Both, moreover, are engaged in preaching. For nine months I have supported them, and I had to purchase even the smallest articles of furniture for them."

On the long-wished for aid being granted, Dr. Plunket thus commences his letter of thanksgiving, addressed to the Internunzio, on 22nd September, 1672:—

"I have received your most welcome letter of the 2nd September, and this whole kingdom is indebted to you for the stipend procured for the Jesuits. They do a great deal of good: they have in Drogheda, in my diocese, 160 students. Oh! what toils had I to undergo, what efforts had I to make, to sustain them! how many memorials were forwarded to the Viceroy and Supreme Council against me and against them; and they give the more annoyance to our adversaries because they are in Drogheda, only four hours' journey from Dublin, where no Catholic school is allowed. And then to have there the Jesuits, whom they hate above all others, was the greatest eye-sore possible; but now the very adversaries caress both me and them, in order to have permission for their children to come to them; and in reality many Protestant boys come to them belonging to the principal families, who afterwards assist us in defending them. . . . I dressed in cloth of one-half scudo a yard, I kept only one servant, and a boy to look after my horses, and

my table was most sparing, in order to assist the Jesuits. The Viceroy gave me half a promise that he would not disturb them, but as the money promised by the King was not granted, I confess that I found myself in difficulty to carry them on, and I was overwhelmed with melancholy; but now your letter imparts great consolation. . . . The Catholic gentry lost their possessions and estates in this kingdom, and for the most part have become tenants; it would be impossible for them to send their children to the Catholic kingdoms. Hence it is a great relief to them to have Catholic masters here. Before my arrival they were obliged to send their children to Protestant teachers, exposing their faith to great risk; for, as you will well understand, young plants easily receive a bad direction unless they be attended to from the beginning. . . . The money can be sent to Mr. Daniel Arthur, an Irish Catholic merchant in London, and it may be consigned to Father Perez in Brussels, or to the Provincial of the English Jesuits, to be sent to Mr. Daniel Arthur, and thus I shall receive it here with some advantage, to compensate the difference of exchange between Brussels and London."

It was not, however, the local schools alone that engaged the attention of the zealous Primate. When visiting his own diocese, and the other dioceses of his province, he found many of the clergy lamentably deficient in those

higher studies which should render them fitted to discharge the office of chief pastors, and rule with wisdom the Church of God. It was, indeed, impossible that our country, so continually disturbed by wars and persecutions, could supply these studies, and hence Dr. Plunket turned his eyes to the continent, and especially to Rome, earnestly soliciting the Sacred Congregation to have students sent to him from its colleges; and praying, at the same time, that the number of students and efficiency of our national college in that city might be increased. This esteem for education in Rome was not a mere abstract sentiment in our Primate; we have seen that he was imbued with the conviction that his being educated at the fountain head of Catholic truth, was a special blessing which he had received from God, and which imposed many special obligations on him; and hence, when overwhelmed by afflictions and persecutions, he was accustomed to re-awaken his courage by the reflection: "*it would be a shame for spiritual soldiers, educated in Rome, ever to become mercenaries.*" (Letter, 15th December, 1673.)

Writing on the 27th of September, 1671, Dr. Plunket thus declares to the Sacred Congregation the wants of his province and diocese, and his anxious desire to receive some priests from Rome:—

"I am now in this kingdom for one year and seven months, and I think I presented so many

relations of the spiritual affairs of my province that their Eminences may almost touch with their hands, and see with their eyes the condition in which it is, and the state of matters here; it is in many parts infirm, and there is danger that the malady will go on spreading and increasing, if their Eminences, the chief physicians, do not give some healing and preservative remedies. The ignorance, in general, is great, although the Irish talent is excellent and acute; but what does this avail when it cannot be cultivated; the best soil without the spade or plough can produce but little fruit, and in consequence of the penal laws we cannot have fixed schools, and are in continual alarm. . . . Before the war, the Catholic gentry of Ulster held their properties and estates, but now only a few of them retain anything, such as the Marquis of Antrim, whose property extends for about thirty miles, and embraces vast estates and many castles, such as the Orsini and Savelli in Latium, but even as these, so is he also up to his eyes in debt: Sir Henry O'Neile re-acquired about 4,000 scudi per annum, and a certain Maginis about 2,000 scudi; these are the only three Irish Catholic gentlemen who re-acquired their property; all the others must seek as a favour to be allowed to hold by lease a small portion of their former estates, and it is deemed a great favour when this is granted to them. The people, that is, those who cultivate the land, are well off, and

it is from these that the priests and friars receive their maintenance, and the same persons give some relief to those upon whom they were once dependent: but as to the nobility and gentry, they are wholly ruined, so that they can no longer maintain the children in Catholic Universities, and, what is still more deplorable, they cannot give them even the necessary means to go to the Continental Colleges without great difficulty, and hence their condition merits compassion and assistance, for they lost all in order not to lose their faith in God, or their reverence in spiritual things for the Apostolic See.

“In my humble opinion it would be a great charity to aid the children and grant them an education in Catholic countries, and especially in Rome. Those who are educated there are less suspected by government, Rome being a neutral country, neither attached to Spain nor to France, and, moreover, they are more faithful to the spiritual interests of the Holy See. It is seen by experience that no priest or friar educated in Rome ever became an adherent of Walsh or any other schismatic, but only such as received their education in France, Spain, or Louvain. Moreover, those educated in Rome are better acquainted with the desires of the Apostolic See, they know its principles, and are better able to correspond with it, the ‘Piazza di Spagna,’ the Propaganda, and, in a word, all Rome is a great book: how many nations with

their various customs are seen. Poles, Germans, Spaniards, French, Indians, Turks, Ethiopians, Africans, Americans, are met with, and one learns in what manner and with what judgment the varying opinions and conflicting interests of so many contrary nations are harmonized. A great deal, too, is learned in the changes of government: thus, one day it is seen with what modesty and wisdom and moderation those deport themselves who, the day before, or under another Pontiff, ruled everything, and were honoured by every one. I especially remarked the prelates, Cajetan Massimi and another from Modena who was governor of Rome in the time of Alexander the 7th, of happy memory, and many others in the time of Innocent and Urban. One treats with Cardinals and Prelates of great wisdom and prudence, well versed and experienced in spiritual matters, and in the temporal affairs of so many monarchs and princes; and it is impossible that a person of moderate talent would not derive great profit, as well in science as in experience. And, indeed, to educate a missionary priest, there is no college in the world better suited than the Propaganda, where they are instructed for two hours every morning in theology, and after dinner for one hour in controversy, and afterwards, for half an hour or an hour, in cases of conscience. They learn to preach, and become masters of the Hebrew and Greek; they officiate in the Church, and are also exer-



cised in Gregorian Chant: they receive, in a word, an education better suited for missionaries than that of any other college. And hence, I anxiously supplicate that I may be allowed to send *half a dozen of the most talented young priests that I can find to be educated in that college*, that thus my miserable province of Ulster may have persons able to govern its churches, for if it pleased God to remove from us three who are in Ulster, Thomas Fitzsymons, Dr. Conwell, and Dr. Ronan Magin, there would be no others who, either by their learning or experience, would be adapted for, or capable of governing these churches. If you do not grant me this favour, we shall be without leaders, without pastors, and the wolves will devour our flocks."

Not long after the Primate addressed another letter to the Internunzio, in which we find detailed many particulars connected with the various colleges scattered through the Continent:—

"In your last letter you commanded me to give you some account of the Irish Colleges in the kingdoms governed by the orthodox princes, and I now obey in the best manner I can; but I must imitate the painters of scenery, who present some objects most vividly and clearly, and others only in outline and obscurely; or the historians, such as Guicciardino and others, who described matters, and especially the wars in Tuscany, and, indeed, of all Italy, in a most vivid manner, but not in so prominent a manner,

the victories of Spain and France. Had I now the notes which I left at home, I would be able to give a more precise narrative, but I believe I shall err in very few points of any importance.

“And to begin with the Irish College in Rome, it was founded by Cardinal Ludovisi, nephew of Gregory the Fifteenth : he bequeathed to it a thousand scudi a year, besides a good house and a good vineyard in Castle Gandolfo, and it maintains about seven or eight students, three Jesuits, and two servants. But in a separate letter, I shall write more particularly about the College. Its revenue is capable of supporting twelve students, who would be better prepared for this mission than they now are. In Spain there are four Colleges, all directed by the Fathers of the Society ; one of them is in St. Jago, which supports at one time six, at another seven students ; another in Salamanca of the same kind, and another in Lisbon, which maintains eight or ten students. These three Colleges were founded by Philip the Second, and in doing so he proved himself a zealous Catholic and a good politician ; by this means he won the affection of the Irish, and when the students returned to Ireland, they won for the Spaniards the hearts and the esteem of all their friends ; in a word, they could speak of nothing but Spain, whence it happens that the Irish go more freely to serve the King of Spain than any other Prince.

“In France there is a College at Bordeaux

which maintains twenty-four students, as I have heard, founded by the Archbishops of Bordeaux and others ; but contrary to the institution and intention of the founders, this College does not admit any excepting from Cashel and Munster; and the colleges of Spain do not willingly receive students from Ulster, which is a serious injury and a manifest injustice. It truly moves one to compassion to see high families of the house of O'Neil, O'Donnel, Maguire, MacMahon, Maginnis, O'Cahan, O'Kelly, O'Ferrall, who were great Princes till the time of Elizabeth and King James, in the memory of my father, and of many who are yet living ; it moves one to compassion, I say, to see their children without property and without maintenance, and without means of education, and yet for the faith they suffered joyfully the loss of property : but it is intolerable that they should be excluded from College education, for the Colleges were not founded for this or that province, but for the whole Kingdom.

“ There is a College at Seville which maintains sixteen students, and is supported by alms.

“ The Bishop of Ferns can give better information about the Colleges in Spain, and perhaps, also, about that in France. There is a College, as I hear, in Toulouse, but I do not know in what state it is ; I believe it is of little importance.

“ \* OLIVER PLUNKET.

“ 30th September, 1671.”

In another letter written on the same day, he adds a postscript, in which he says :—

“I forgot a College founded in Alcala, by George de Passe Silviera, a Portuguese ; he left 5,000 scudi a-year, but a great deal has been expended in building.”

It was about this period that another college first sprung into existence, which was destined in after times to hold an important position in our Irish Church. I refer to the College of our nation in Paris. We mainly owe the foundation of this college to the Right Rev. John O'Molony, Bishop of Killaloe. Before his appointment to that See in May, 1671, he had been for many years a distinguished student and professor in the seminary of St. Sulpice. The schools of that seminary were frequented by many youths from Ireland, anxious to prepare themselves for the ministry of the altar ; and Dr. O'Molony had frequent occasions to lament the many distractions and dangers to which they were exposed, living scattered through that gay and populous city, which, too, at this period, numbered amongst its clergy many warm advocates of the condemned doctrines of Jansenius. After his consecration, he continued for many months to reside in Paris, anxious to organize a special college in that city, into which his countrymen might be received. The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, however, repeatedly urged him to hasten to his flock, and share with them the threatened

dangers of persecution, and dispense to them the bread of life. Positive orders to that effect were sent to him on the 2nd of August, 1672 ; and in reply, the good prelate expressed his readiness to obey, but petitioned at the same time to be allowed to remain some time longer, as his labours were all directed to obtain this college for the Irish Church. This petition was seconded by letters of Dr. Plunket of Armagh, and Dr. Brennan of Waterford, as we find commemorated in a minute of Propaganda. Nevertheless, the Sacred Congregation remained inexorable, and we find Dr. O'Molony before the close of this year zealously labouring in many parts of our island. The Irish bishops, however, had warmly entered into his views regarding the establishment of a National College in Paris, and early in the following year they deputed Dr. O'Molony to return as their deputy to that city, and urge the authorities there to patronize the institution of such a college.

No one was more zealous than Dr. Plunket in promoting this great work, and though the college was not opened till after his glorious martyrdom, yet our Irish Church owes in great part to his active co-operation and untiring zeal, that the chief obstacles were overcome, and that those difficulties were removed, which at first seemed to destroy all hopes of its future realization. His letter of the 24th of March, 1673, sufficiently evinces the interest which he

took in the institution of this college, and how earnestly he co-operated with Dr. O'Molony in seeking to effect its establishment; he thus writes:—

“All the prelates of this kingdom have subscribed an authorization for the Bishop of Killaloe to proceed to Paris, and procure for us a college; and it is certain that no one could be selected better suited to treat this matter, for he is a great friend of the Archbishop of Paris, and of the Ambassador of the King of France in London, and there are strong reasons and just grounds for hoping that the college will be founded. If so, it will be a great seminary for the missions of this kingdom, being in a city so rich, so desirous of procuring the propagation and maintenance of the faith, as their charity sufficiently proved during the late persecution of Cromwell, when the Parisians supported hundreds and hundreds of the ecclesiastics and students exiled during that tempest. It is certain that the Bishop of Killaloe will do more good by procuring for us that college, than he would did he remain in his diocese during his whole life-time; and hence I pray your Excellency to treat this matter with the Holy Father and the Sacred Congregation in such a manner that they may not be displeased with the Bishop of Killaloe for this journey to Paris, since he travels at his own cost, and with the desire of procuring so great an advantage for us. He is a great friend of

Colbert, the first Minister of state, and of the Archbishop of Paris, who will be the more favourable to him should he be allowed to exercise his functions (for the Archbishop will surely request him to do so on various occasions), and hence I pray you to procure from His Holiness and the Sacred Congregation permission for Dr. O'Molony, during his stay in Paris, on account of our ecclesiastical matters, to exercise the episcopal functions as often as he may be requested to do so by the Archbishop of that See. Monsignor, your Excellency has always favoured, in every emergency, this poor and afflicted Church, and we hope that there is no means conducive to the attainment of this great blessing, or tending to facilitate it, which you will not favour; and therefore I beseech you with the most urgent entreaties to lay this before the Sacred Congregation in such a manner, that it may allow the Bishop of Killaloe to remain in Paris while this matter is pending, and to exercise his episcopal functions when requested by the Archbishop, for it is on the aid of the Archbishop and the communications which he presents, that the success of this undertaking must in a great measure depend."

## CHAPTER X.

## COUNCILS CONVENED BY DR. PLUNKET.

A NATIONAL Council of the Irish Church began its deliberations in Dublin on the 17th of June, 1670. It was convened by Dr. Plunket for a twofold purpose; first, to correct some abuses which had crept in during the preceding persecutions; and secondly, to draw up an address to the king. At this period the Irish Church numbered but six bishops in its hierarchy, and all hastened to take part in the deliberations of the Synod. The six bishops then in Ireland were Dr. Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh; Dr. Peter Talbot, Archbishop of Dublin; Dr. Burgatt, Archbishop of Cashel; Dr. James Lynch, Archbishop of Tuam; Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath; and Dr. Phelan, Bishop of Ossory. The Vicars-General of the other Sees were also present, and since the days of Rinnuccini, this was the first assembly of clergy that merited the name of a national council.

On the 17th of June, 1670, these prelates assembled in Dublin, under the presidency of Dr. Oliver Plunket. Their deliberations were protracted for three days; and a note of the



archives of Propaganda describes the Synod as having been held "in Bridge-street, in the house of Mr. Reynolds, at the foot of the bridge." We shall see just now how the decrees of this council were adopted in the Provincial Synod of Clones, and republished amongst its statutes; for the present it will suffice to give a few of its enactments from the original paper transmitted to the Holy See.

"As we have been informed that the bodies of some deceased laymen, in various parts of this kingdom, have been laid out in public, on a bier, clothed in religious habits, we decree, and command, that for the future no corpse shall be thus laid out. . . . . ,

"We command abstinence from flesh-meat on the feast of St. Mark (as also on the three days preceding the Ascension), except when it falls on Sunday, or in Easter week.

"We command all the Parish Priests to use every endeavour to prevent the clamour and vociferations of the women who accompany the funerals of the deceased.

"We, moreover, decree that all the ordinaries shall command, in their respective dioceses, the Parish Priests and preachers to admonish and warn, under threat of the divine vengeance, the people subject to their charge, to give no favour, aid, or assistance to robbers, highwaymen, and other disturbers of the public peace, who are known as *Tories*.

"Since the Apostle commands supplications

and prayers to be offered up for all men, for kings, and for all who are placed in authority, let the parish clergy, and also the regulars in their convents, admonish the people on Sundays, that all should pray to God for the most serene Charles the Second and Catherine, our king and queen, that God may deign to grant to them prosperity and offspring, as also for our most excellent lord, the Viceroy of Ireland; and, moreover, for the good government of England, Ireland, and Scotland, and with the same intention let the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin be recited on the said days either before or after Mass."

Another matter which engaged the attention of the Bishops in the Synod, was the drawing up of an address to be presented to the Viceroy. Precisely four years had now elapsed since the Irish Prelates, convened in Dublin, at the desire of Ormond, had presented to the Crown a declaration of loyalty and allegiance. On the occasion they even appended to their address three propositions,\* which one would suppose any government hostile to the Holy See would be glad to find presented to them. Yet that address was rejected with disdain, and the

\* We may here remark that it was only by a deceptive explanation of these propositions that the Primate, Dr. Edmund O'Reilly, and the other members of the Synod, were induced to subscribe to them. Perhaps on some future occasion we may give further particulars regarding this assembly.

Viceroy ordered, without delay, the imprisonment of the assembled Bishops; and renewed hostility against the Catholic Priesthood seemed to be the only result of their well-intentioned deliberations. But what could not be obtained by petition, was won by the unflinching spirit of the Irish hierarchy, which, encouraged by the Holy See, refused to sacrifice to court-favour one jot of Catholic principle; and though the Primate died in exile, and the other Prelates were compelled to endure sufferings and persecutions, yet the cause for which they combatted was sure to triumph, and the English ministers were glad in 1670, to receive from the Irish Bishops that very address, which, even with its un-Irish appendix, they had disdainfully rejected four years before.

Some writers, confiding too much on the authority of historians who were alike the enemies of Ireland and of our Catholic faith, have broached assertions regarding this Synod which are wholly repugnant to truth, and are alike discreditable to the Archbishop of Dublin and to the subject of these memoirs. Thus, it is gravely asserted that Dr. Talbot, on arriving in Ireland, found the Prelates assembled in Dublin (and this, too, in 1669)—that he at once introduced himself amongst them, announcing that the King had appointed him to oversee them all: that Dr. Plunket, “considering this an unwarranted assumption, desired to see the authority on which it was advanced, alleging

that if there was in fact such an authority, he would submit to it. The other answered that he had not it under the great seal. To which Dr. Plunket replied, that the little seal would serve his turn, but until one or other was produced, he would take care to oversee Talbot, and expected to be obeyed."\*

All these assertions are most unfounded, and are as little consonant to truth as is the date 1669, which some of these writers assign to the National Synod. It was Dr. Plunket, indeed, that convoked this Synod, but Dr. Talbot, who was long in Ireland before the Synod, was the chief Bishop with whom he made arrangements for its convocation. The question of the Primacy being as yet undecided, and the presidency of the Synod depending on who was to be considered the Primate, Dr. Plunket proposed that the decision of the question should be left to the assembled Prelates; but Dr. Talbot chose rather to refer it to the decision of the Holy See; to which the Archbishop of Armagh readily assented; and in the meantime, with the protest which is usually made in such cases, that the rights of the respective parties should receive no prejudice from the order of subscribing to the decrees, &c., the presidency was ceded without any opposition to Dr. Plunket; and the Bishops proceeded with their delibera-

\* These assertions have been repeated, almost in the very words of the text, by most of the modern writers on our Irish history.

tions in a most perfect spirit of unity and peace.

On the second of day the Synod, a petition was drawn up and despatched to the Holy See, soliciting the appointment of some new Bishops to the vacant dioceses, and presenting at the same time the names of the clergymen whom they deemed most deserving of the episcopal dignity. Favours and dispensations are also solicited from the Holy Father, regarding the practice of abstinence as it then prevailed in Ireland, and various questions affecting the interests of our Church.

The dispensation as to the abstinence from meat on Wednesdays and from eggs on Fridays, which long usage had established in our Irish Church, was readily granted by the Sacred Congregation; and on the 3rd of August, 1671, we find a brief addressed to the Irish Bishops, absolving those who had violated the law for the past, and empowering the respective ordinaries, at any future time (*perpetuis futuris temporibus*), to dispense with such abstinence.

The indulgence for the feasts of Patron Saints was also granted; and, in compliance with the desire of the Council to have new members added to the Irish hierarchy, we find, in the following year, no fewer than six Bishops and five Vicars-Apostolic appointed to the Irish sees, viz. :—

Dr. John Brennan, to the united dioceses of Waterford and Lismore.

Dr. John O'Molony, to Killaloe.

Dr. Patrick Duffy, to Clogher.

Dr. Thaddeus Keogh, to Clonfert.

Dr. Dominick De Burgo, to Elphin.

Dr. Daniel Mackey, to Down and Connor.

Ronan Magin, Vicar-Apostolic of Dromore.

Eugene Conwell, Vicar-Apostolic of Derry.

Patrick Dempsey, Vicar-Apostolic of Kildare.

John De Burgo, Vicar-Apostolic of Killala.

Michael Lynch, Vicar-Apostolic of Kilmacduagh.

One of the first cares of Dr. Plunket, immediately on landing in Ireland, was to visit the different dioceses of the province of Ulster, convening their respective clergy, and deliberating on the reforms which it might be necessary to introduce; and afterwards, before the close of 1670, he summoned a general Synod of the whole province, to be held in the historic town of Clones, in the diocese of Clogher. Many of the Vicars-General who assisted at this Synod assembled soon after in the town of Armagh, and testified by letter their gratitude to the Holy See for having appointed so indefatigable a prelate to the Primatial see, and as we have seen, briefly stated the principal works which he had performed since his arrival in Ireland.

The Synod of Clones was held on the 23rd of August, 1670; and, in addition to our Archbishop and Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath, there were present at it—Patrick

Daly, Vicar-General of Armagh ; Oliver Dease, Vicar-General of Meath ; Terence O'Kelly, Vicar-Apostolic of Derry ; Cornelius Gaffney, Vicar-General of Ardagh ; Patrick O'Mulderig, Vicar-General of Down and Connor ; Ronan Magin, Dean and Vicar-General of Dromore ; Thomas Fitzsimons, Archdeacon and Vicar-General of Kilmore ; Patrick Cullen, Vicar-General of Clogher ; Edmund Jange, Vicar-General of Clonmacnoise ; Eugene Conwell, Vicar-General of Raphoe, and then elected Coadjutor Vicar of Derry. There were also present Father John Byrne, Superior of the Dominicans, and Father John Brady, Superior of the Franciscans.

Dr. Oliver Dease was appointed Procurator of the Synod, and Dr. Thomas Fitzsimons its Secretary ; and after the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice and the invocation of the Holy Ghost to guide them in their deliberations, the assembled Prelates formally protested that their only object in this Council was to promote the glory of the Almighty, the interests of the Catholic Church, and the tranquillity and peace of the kingdom ; that thus, whilst they rendered to Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's, they might render to God the things which were of God.

The decrees which were enacted, are twenty-eight in number, and are all directed to the removal of every scandal from the Sanctuary, the sanctification of the faithful, and the cele-

bration of the Holy Mysteries and Rites of the Church with due solemnity and decorum. The Parish Priests were commanded to have a fixed place of residence; the Vicars-General were prohibited to be absent from their dioceses, without special leave of their Metropolitan, for more than two months; and to all the clergy, it was interdicted to frequent public taverns and market-places, and after the third admonition, such as refused to obey, should be deprived of all ecclesiastical benefices. . . . All drinking at wakes, and all night-wakes again were prohibited. The decrees of the Council of Trent were declared to be received, as they had been hitherto received, in all the dioceses, and, in fine, the assembled Prelates gave their sanction to the various statutes which had been enacted in the Episcopal Synod of Dublin, in the month of June the same year.

Succeeding years bring with them new exigencies regarding the disciplinary laws of the Church; former decrees may be neglected, or perhaps have fallen into oblivion; new social circumstances may have arisen to require new arrangements in the outward discipline of the Church; and perhaps, too, abuses may have crept in to call for the pruning hand of the pastor, or demand the enactment of canonical punishments to chastise the guilty and check the vicious in their criminal career. Hence, wisely has the Church decreed that her provincial Synods should be renewed at stated



intervals, and that her pastors, assembled in the spirit of God, should deliberate together on the spiritual necessities of their flocks.

Though the year 1678 already presented forebodings of the approaching tempest which was soon to render desolate so many of our Irish sees, yet Dr. Plunket resolved not to defer any longer the celebration of his second provincial synod, and he accordingly convened it for the month of August, 1678. One Bishop had been added to the province of Armagh since its pastors had last assembled at Clones, viz., Dr. Patrick Tyrrell, Bishop of Clogher and Administrator of Kilmore, a man renowned, even on the Continent, for his knowledge of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, and at the same time a zealous co-operator with the primate in carrying into execution the disciplinary laws of the Church. Dr. Conwell had in the interval passed to a happy eternity, and his successor Luke Plunket, bore in the present synod not only the title of Vicar-General of Derry, but also of Procurator of the diocese of Raphoe. Dr. James Cusack, who took part in this synod as Procurator of the Vicar-Apostolic of Ardagh, had already been appointed Coadjutor of the Bishop of Meath, but was not as yet consecrated; and we find three others also present, Edward Dromgole, Henry Hugo, and Bernard Magork, whose names were afterwards transmitted to Rome as worthy to be successors of the martyred Primate, and the first of whom governed

the Church of Armagh for three years, as Vicar-Apostolic of that See.

This synod was opened with all solemnity ; first, the Litanies of the Saints were chanted ; then an exhortation was addressed to the assembled Prelates, and with the hymn of the Holy Ghost, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, they invoked the Father of heavenly councils to guide them in their deliberations. Afterwards was renewed the protest of the former council, that their only object in thus assembling was “to promote the glory of God, and promote the advancement of the Catholic faith, the salvation of souls, the tranquillity of king and kingdom, rendering to Cæsar the things which are of Cæsar, and to God the things which are of God.”

It was then decreed by the assembled Prelates :—

That the clergy should warn the faithful against aiding or countenancing the bodies of lawless bandits who were called *Tories*, and who, under the pretence of defending the national rights, then infested the country ; and that they should likewise make known to their flocks what dishonour the deeds of these wicked men brought upon their religion and country.

That the doctrine which declared that the appointments of the Holy See to particular dioceses, required for their validity the acceptance of the clergy and laity of these dioceses, was erroneous, and that the oaths taken not to acknowledge any who would not be thus ac-

cepted were damnable and not binding before God.

That, whilst they lament the ignorance of some who would fain affirm that the *postulation* of the clergy or laity, or of both, or the *presentation* of the lay nobility, is binding on the Holy Father when appointing bishops to the vacant Sees, they at the same time declare "such practise and doctrine to be schismatical and contrary to the canons," and decree that "such as, in consequence of similar presentations or postulations, impede the appointments made by the Holy See, are subjected to censures reserved to the Supreme Pontiff."

The fourth decree condemns "as perverse and erroneous, the ravings of those who affirm that it belongs to the people to choose their own pastors, and to fix for them, independently of the ordinary, the stipend to be given them."

That teaching is declared erroneous and contrary to the Scripture, which would affirm that no stipend is due by the faithful to their lawful pastors.

The doctrine is likewise condemned which declared it lawful to take the goods of Protestants, or of any others whosoever, the owners not being cognizant or willing; and, it is added, that such persons are obliged to restitution.

The clergy are prohibited to admit those pupils who are called *Dallas*; and the violators of this decree incurred the penalty of deprivation of benefice or office.

It was prohibited to priests to drink whiskey in any public house or public assembly, and any one guilty of this crime should be subjected to a fine of ten *solidi*,\* to be given to the Vicars-General, and Vicars-Forane of the diocese.

No priest should frequent the public markets without the permission of the ordinary, and the transgressors of this law were also subjected to a fine of ten *solidi*. . . . .

None of the laity should receive the aspersion, but only be sprinkled with holy water, according to the rite of the Church.

Each Parish Priest was commanded to have within three years, at least one silver chalice of the value of fifty *solidi*, with decent vestments, all which should be left to the parish on the demise or departure of the Parish Priest.

Those who should contract marriage within the prohibited degrees, without having received a dispensation, were to be excluded from the holy sacrifice, and the sacrament of the altar.

When controversies should arise between different dioceses, or between adjoining parishes of the same diocese, as to their respective limits, the *Ancient Register* should be followed.

The decree of the Council of Trent regarding clandestine marriages is enacted, that is—all marriages are declared null which should be celebrated without the presence of the parish priest, and of at least two witnesses. . . .

\* The *solidus* was equal to one shilling.

The Primate was requested to undertake a general visitation of the whole province.

In fine, it was decreed that all the clergy, whether present or absent, should unceasingly offer up their prayers to the Divine Majesty for the safety of the most serene King Charles II., of the Queen and Royal family, and especially of the then Viceroy, for the tranquillity of the nation, and for peace amongst Christian princes, and that they should command their flocks to offer similar prayers; and all these decrees are declared to be directed to the greater glory of God, of the Blessed Virgin, and of St. Patrick (the patron of Ireland), and St. Augustine, on whose feast, and under whose invocation, this holy Synod was concluded.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### VISITATION OF DIOCESES BY DR. PLUNKET.

ONE of the Synodical Decrees just cited reveals to us the important fact that the labours of Dr. Plunket were not confined to his own immediate diocese. According to the canonical legislation of those times it was a privilege attached to the dignity of Archbishop and Primate that he might perform a visitation in the dioceses subject to his Primacy; and Dr. Plunket, partly

resting on this privilege—partly through a special commission received from the Holy See, and sometimes, too, at the request of the local diocesan authorities—repeatedly made visitations of the dioceses of the province of Ulster. Indeed, this seems to have been one of the earliest cares of our Primate; and in his letter of the 16th of April, 1671, he speaks of the visitation which he had already made of six of his suffragan dioceses; in which visitation, as he in the same place informs us, he had principally directed his efforts to the rooting out of the cursed vice of drunkenness. The items of his Report, regarding the united dioceses of Down and Connor, are the only record of this visitation which we have been able to discover. The *Relation* is dated the 1st November, 1670, and is directed to Monsignor Baldeschi, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda:—

*“ Relation concerning the canonically united  
Dioceses of Down and Connor.*

“ These united dioceses are about fifty miles in length and fifteen in breadth: they are more mountainous than level; they abound in milk, oats, and barley. Great peace is enjoyed there.

“ There are about two thousand five hundred Catholic families. The Marquis of Antrim, a good Catholic, is very powerful and very

zealous ; there is no other Catholic that has property there. Thanks to God, the Catholics enjoy great toleration.

“There is no Bishop, but a Vicar-General, by name Patrick O’Mulderig, an old man sixty years of age, a good and practical priest, though not distinguished for literature ; he lives with his brother in a private house, and has converted many to the faith.

“The cathedral churches of Down and Connor are now roofless, but that of Down is very celebrated as being the burial place of Saint Patrick, Columba, and Bridget, according to the old distich—

*‘Hi tres in Duno, tumulo tumulantur in uno  
Brigida, Patritius atque Columba pius.’\**

In Down, also, was born the celebrated Doctor, Scotus.

“In the diocese of Down there is a convent of Dominicans, but the friars live at lodgings. There are five Dominicans ; only one is of great fame, viz., Clement O’Byrne, who is a good preacher, and produces much fruit.

“There is also a convent of Franciscans, who are twelve in number, and amongst them Paul O’Byrn, Paul O’Neill, and James O’Hiny, are the most distinguished for their preaching and spiritual fruit.

\* In Down three saints are buried in one grave, Patrick, Bridget, and Columkille.

“In the convent of Carrickfergus, in the diocese of Connor, there are ten Franciscans, of whom only five are priests; amongst these Hugh O’Dornan and Daniel O’Mellon are distinguished in preaching. There is also a certain Paul O’Haran, who is well versed in literature.

“The Dominicans have a convent in Culrahan, in which there are only four friars, and of these only two are priests, one of whom, James Crolly, is a good preacher. . . .

“There are many boys well suited for study, but there is a great want of Catholic schools, as the Protestants do not allow Catholic masters. There is, nevertheless, a certain William Flaherty, a priest, a good rhetorician, who keeps a school in Down.

“There are no nuns, excepting four of the Franciscan order.

“At the time of Cromwell there was a violent persecution, and whosoever brought in the head of a priest received 20 scudi (£5), but under the present King there is great toleration and sufficient connivance.”

It seems to have been during this first visitation that the Primate appointed a Vicar-General to administer the diocese of Raphoe, and also delivered to Eugene Conwell a Brief from the Holy See, constituting him Vicar-Apostolic of Derry. The latter wrote as follows to the Secretary of the Propaganda on the 1st of November, 1671;—

“A few years since, having completed my



studies in Brabant, and read the course of philosophy and theology, his Eminence Cardinal Rospigliosi, then Internunzio at Brussels, sent me to this kingdom, granting me the privilege of missionary Apostolic, and I, obeying his commands, laboured in this vineyard, instructing and preaching, not impelled indeed by any desire of promotion or impulse of ambition. Yet it pleased our most illustrious Primate to appoint me to the government of this diocese, about the end of August last year. . . . I confess that I laboured much in this diocese, with the sole hope of an eternal reward; but see how, even in this world, the few labours which I sustained are rewarded beyond their merit by the Brief of the Holy Father. And not only the Brief, but also the letters of Cardinal Anthony Barberini, signed also by your Excellency, were handed to me by our Primate, who indeed undertook a long and difficult journey to this northern district of this country, to be himself the bearer of this Brief and Letters, and the whole clergy of the Diocese being assembled, he read the Apostolic Brief and Letters together. . . . It cannot be said or imagined how great a benefit this Province has received from his continual labours—the erection of schools—the correction of the Clergy, whom he instructs both by word and example—his many journeys—and the decision of so many controversies, so that all this province enjoys peace and tranquillity. May I also mention

that he is so esteemed by the Protestants, that even the Protestant nobility vie with each other in receiving him as their guest, and enjoying his society; whence it happens that for his sake they do not molest our clergy. He had also a conference with the Protestant Bishop of Derry,\* who is eminent amongst his own for learning: they discussed several points of controversy, and the Primate so solved his doubts, that this Protestant Bishop afterwards declared that he had never received such satisfaction from any one; nor did he afterwards cease to extol him, and in my own hearing he declared that as *he was first in dignity, so too was he first in learning amongst the Papists*. I, as far as is in my power, will work and labour to walk in his footsteps, and I will strive to fulfil the duty imposed upon me. In the meantime I return to your Eminence all the thanks in my power, for whose safety and welfare all Ireland is bound to pray to the Most High, and above all others,

“Your most humble and devoted servant,

“EUGENE CONWELL, Vic. Ap. of Derry.

“Derry, 1st November, 1671.”

A letter of the Vicar-General of Raphoe, bearing the same date, is not less important, and details many interesting particulars regarding that ancient diocese:—

“For nineteen years I cultivated in France

\* Dr. Roger Boyle, who in the following year (1672), was transferred to Clogher.

and Italy the studies of speculative and moral divinity, as also those appertaining to ecclesiastical Jurisprudence; and whilst I was in Rome, Alexander VIII., of happy memory, granted to me, *in commendam*, the Abbey of St. Thomas, in Dublin. Six years since, I received the care of souls in the diocese of Meath, but I was not long allowed to remain in that diocese. For our most illustrious Primate called me to his diocese, and conferred on me the Priory of Rath, which had annexed to it the care of souls. How I would have wished that the Primate had allowed me thus to live in private, and attached to the service of one particular Church, and not place me on the eminence of an entire diocese. I was obliged to obey his Grace and accept the Vicar-Generalship of the diocese of Raphoe; and in order that I might obtain peaceable possession, the Primate himself accompanied me through these rugged paths, truly like to those of the Alps or Apennines. Here the spiritual harvest is great, and these districts, though otherwise abounding in sterile mountains, yet are ripe for the sickle, but the labourers are few, and even these are but little acquainted with the art of arts—that is, the guidance of souls. There are about fourteen priests, of whom one alone passed the boundaries of this kingdom. . . . The diocese itself is, for the most part, sterile, and produces only barley and oats, and its riches consist in oxen, horses and swine. The whole diocese does not annually yield more than £15.

of English money—that is, 60 Italian scudi. But the Primate promises me a better support, and has already given me in advance 20 scudi. Impelled solely by spiritual motives have I embraced this province in a region so sterile, rough, and rugged. I confess, too, that the exhortations of the most illustrious Primate, confirmed by his own example, moved me very much : for often has he confirmed the children in these mountains and woods, and often, too, has he had no other food than oaten bread, salt butter, and stirabout, and no drink but milk. We are all amazed how a man of such a delicate constitution, and so delicately (as I myself have known) reared in Rome, should be able to undergo so many labours, so many journeys, so many rugged and difficult things. Assuredly, unless he adopt another manner of living and acting, he will lose his health, and will become useless to himself and to others. Stimulated, therefore, by his example I will reside on these mountains, that thus I may merit our Redeemer's grace, and the esteem of the Holy See and the Sacred Congregation. I will make your Excellency acquainted with whatever occurs. One thing I forgot to mention, that the Presbyterians possess the better and more fertile part of this diocese, whilst the poor Catholics hold the mountains and woods, and have no other possessions than their flocks. According to the civil nomenclature, this district is called Tyrconnell, and its chieftain was a famous prince, the Earl

of Tyrconnell, of the illustrious family of O'Donnel, who, about the beginning of James the First's reign, after a long war, fled to Rome, where, if I mistake not, he died a youth of seventeen years of age. A scion of that so illustrious family yet remains, and is supported by his kinsmen and friends, all his possessions having been confiscated to the crown, and thus he is reduced to great straits. This being my first letter, I shall not detain your Excellency, and I ask your blessing, &c."

On the 28th of September, 1671, Dr. Plunket despatched a long letter to the Internunzio acknowledging the receipt of the nominations for Derry, Dromore, and Ardagh. One extract from it will suffice.

"I will not cease to work with the pen, with the tongue, and with all my slender faculties, and this for three motives:—1st. To serve the Divine Majesty. 2nd. Through gratitude and the duty which I owe to the Apostolic See for the education and honours which I received from it. 3rd. Because God commands that I should obey and serve the Holy See, its service being inseparable from that of Christ. I cannot complain of slowness in the despatch of business in Rome, knowing, as I do, by certain and attested experience, that more resolutions have been made since Monsignor Baldeschi was appointed Secretary, and your Excellency Internunzio, than during the twelve preceding years."

During the months of February and March of 1674, Dr. Plunket left his place of concealment in the remote parts of his diocese, and, despite the storm of persecution which then raged through the country, wished to be himself the bearer of the *Pallium* to the illustrious Archbishop of Tuam. In this visit the most distinguished ecclesiastics of that province hastened to welcome him amongst them, but he does not seem to have penetrated far into the country, probably not beyond the city of Galway, the religion and hospitality of whose inhabitants he especially extols. On the 10th of March, 1674, he sent the following narrative of this visitation to Monsignor Baldeschi, Secretary of Propaganda :—

“From the beginning of February to the 10th of March, I have been travelling in the Province of Tuam, to which I went in order to give the *Pallium* to the Archbishop of Tuam, who is a prelate most prudent and ecclesiastical. I spoke also with the Bishop of Clonfert, who is a grave and prudent man, and beloved by all. I saw Dr. Michael Lynch, Vicar-Apostolic of Kilmacduagh, a learned and grave man, and a famous preacher. I had also in my company for ten days, Maurice Durcan, the Vicar-General of Achonry, who is doctor in theology, and a grave man. I enjoyed the society, too, for fifteen days, of Dr. J. Dowley, who was Vicar-General of Tuam for thirty-five years, during the whole time of the persecution, and suffered

very much, and as the Catholics of the diocese inform me, despite the terrors of the persecution, kept alive the spark of religion in the diocese, and in the whole province, and he is the best theologian of the entire province, as I learned from the Archbishop. The city of Galway, although small, is very beautiful, and two-thirds of the inhabitants are Catholic, but they are poor, having lost all their property. Oh! what a devout and hospitable people. They support no less than three convents, one of the Dominicans, another of the Augustinians, and a third of the Franciscans. The Dominicans have the best and most ornamented church that is in the entire kingdom. All three convents live with the greatest regularity and decorum. The city is exceedingly strong, and is a maritime port. It was the last place in the kingdom attacked by Cromwell, and it resisted a long time. The Superior, or, as they call him, the Warden of the Secular Clergy in the city of Galway, and in nine or ten adjoining parishes, pretends to exemption from the jurisdiction of the Archbishop, and on this head disorders frequently arise; but as far as I could see, the Warden is in the wrong, and is not exempt from the jurisdiction of the ordinary, but regarding this matter I leave all to the Archbishop, as it is his business.

“The Parliament gave liberty of conscience to the Presbyterians, Protestants, Anabaptists, &c., but would not grant it to the Catholics;

may more, it seeks to induce the king to retract the declaration made in favour of the Catholics. The king, however, is firm, and does not wish to consent to the desires of parliament on that head, and we hope that he may continue in this good resolution, although some are of opinion that the want of money will oblige him to do what he would not otherwise consent to. I pray you to excuse this besmeared letter,\* as the servant, when making my bed, upset the ink-bottle, and as the post leaves in two hours, and is at a distance from me, I have no time to re-write the letter."

The only other *Relation* of the visitations performed by the Primate is dated 6th March, 1675. It regards the entire Province of Armagh, and is as follows:—

"1. The first diocese is Armagh, seventy miles in length, and about twenty in width. In it there are about forty Parish Priests, three convents of Franciscans, and two of Dominicans, one Augustinian, and one Carmelite convent, and a residence of the Capuchins. It is divided into three counties, Louth, Tyrone, and Armagh, and there are two Vicars-General, Patrick Plunket and Phelim O'Connogan.

"2. The diocese of Meath, which is the first suffragan diocese, is sixty miles in length and

\*The latter sheet of the original letter is all besmeared with ink, hence the remark in the text. The ink seems to have been wiped off whilst it was yet fresh, and thus the text is perfectly legible.



thirty in width; it has seventy Parish Priests, two convents of Dominicans, two of Franciscans, one of Augustinians, one of the discalced Carmelites, and two residences of the Capuchins. The Bishop is Dr. Patrick Plunket—an excellent and ecclesiastical prelate. The Catholics possess more property in this diocese than in all the other dioceses of the province.

“3. The diocese of Clogher is about fifty miles long, and sixteen wide; it has thirty-five Parish Priests, two convents of Franciscans, and one of the Dominicans. The Bishop is Dr. Patrick Duffy, formerly a Franciscan friar. No Catholic has any property in the diocese, and all are tenants under Protestant or Presbyterian landlords.

“4. The diocese of Derry is about fifty-five miles in length, and twenty in breadth; it has thirty Parish Priests; it has for Vicar-General, Luke Plunket, a man of learning, who governs it admirably. There are two convents of Dominicans. All the Catholics in it are tenants.

“5. The diocese of Kilmore is fifty miles in length, and twenty in breadth; there are in it about twenty-six Parish Priests, and two convents of Franciscans. All the Catholics, with the exception of two, are only tenants. The Vicar-General is Thomas Symons, a very learned and eloquent man. He was professor of theology in Belgium.

“6. The diocese of Raphoe is about forty miles

long, and sixteen wide; it has eighteen Parish Priests, and there is in it one convent of Franciscans. The Vicar-General is Bernard Magorck, a learned and exemplary man.

"7. The diocese of Connor is about thirty miles long, and fifteen wide; it has about twelve Parish Priests, and a convent of Franciscans; all its Catholics, with the exception of three, are tenants. The Vicar-General is Terence O'Mulderig, of fair learning, and of exemplary life.

"8. The diocese of Dromore is twenty miles long and twelve in breadth; there are sixteen Parish Priests, but no regulars. All the Catholics, with the exception of one, are tenants. The Vicar-General was appointed by Apostolic Brief, and is sufficiently learned; he studied theology and received the doctorate in Rome. His name is Ronan Magin.

"9. The diocese of Down is about thirty miles long, and fourteen wide; it has a convent of Franciscans, and one of Dominicans. All the Catholics, excepting one, are tenants; there are fourteen Parish Priests, and on account of its great vicinity, and of its having no one sufficiently qualified, it is administered by the aforesaid Ronan Magin.

"10. The diocese of Ardagh is about forty miles long, and sixteen wide; there are twenty-four Parish Priests, two convents of Franciscans, and one of the Dominicans. There are only four Catholic gentlemen of property, all the others

are tenants. The Vicar is Gerard Ferrall, who was appointed by Apostolic Brief.

“11. The diocese of Clonmacnoise is about twenty miles in length, and sixteen in width; it has seven Parish Priests, and one convent of Franciscans; all the Catholics there are tenants, with the exception of four. The Vicar-General is Dionysius Coffey, and although he does not possess great learning, he is, nevertheless, a man of saintly life.

“The Protestant Bishops and Ministers possess all the churches and ecclesiastical revenues; the Catholic Priests and Bishops have only the alms and offerings which are made by the poor Catholics; they are, indeed, like those of the early Church. All the above-mentioned dioceses, with the exception of Meath and Clonmacnoise, are in the northern division of Ireland, called Ulster. There are various sects in it, Protestants, Presbyterians (who reject episcopal government), Anabaptists, and Quakers. The Presbyterians prevail both in numbers and influence over the other three; they do not frequent the Protestant churches; they have their ministers chosen by the elders, or senior laymen of their sect, and they do not admit ordination from bishops; they hate the sign of the cross—they do not allow any fixed prayer, but only that which is dictated at the moment by the Holy Ghost—they do not even allow the ‘Our Father’—they have churches of their own, but use no bells.”

In his letter of 27th October, 1678, Dr. Plunket informs us that, at the request of the assembled prelates of Ardpatrik, he had again undertaken a visitation of his province; that he commenced with the Diocese of Meath; thence he proceeded to Clonmacnoise, and, whilst engaged in the visitation of this diocese, the news first reached him of the persecution having burst forth anew, and of the arrest of the Archbishop of Dublin. The months of June and July of the same year were spent in the visitation of his own immediate diocese, though at this time the Archbishop was suffering from a painful malady in the eyes. In his letter to the Internunzio, announcing this visitation, he details many further particulars regarding the diocese of Ardagh, Meath, Derry, Clogher, and Kilmore. It is dated the 2nd of August, 1678, and is especially interesting, as disclosing to us how little Dr. Plunket allowed himself to be biassed by family interests, when the cause of our holy religion was at stake.

“During the past two months I was engaged in a fatiguing and most laborious visitation of my diocese, of which I shall soon send a further narrative to your Excellency. After my return I received two letters of your Excellency of the 11th of June, and of the 16th of July, from which I learn that the Bishops of Meath and Kildare, and Dr. Cusack, have received your favours, and these favours have been conferred on truly worthy persons, and hence our whole

nation is obliged for them to their Eminences in Rome and to your Excellency. To his Eminence Cardinal Altieri and to Monsignor Cerri I shall reply in a few days; but the inflammation of my eyes, which was much increased by the laborious visitation of the northern mountains, scarcely allows me to write, or to read even letters as large as a snuff-box. It did not, however, prevent my tongue from preaching, in both the English and Irish languages.

“Christopher Ferrall, a Dominican,\* is a relative of mine; but, nevertheless, flesh and blood shall not guide me, contrary to the good of religion, and of the mission. He is not distinguished either by his learning or personal qualities. Moreover, the diocese of Ardagh has not a revenue of 80 scudi a year, and I think the resolution of their Eminences is wise, not to multiply our bishops without necessity. With every submission I state my humble opinion on this subject. The diocese of Ardagh is contiguous to and in a manner intermixed with the diocese of Meath, and has been for many years without a bishop, without confirmation, &c. Their Eminences might grant the administration of that diocese to Dr. Cusack, the coadjutor of the Bishop of Meath; thus the two difficulties prudently referred to by your Excellency would be removed, and that diocese would be provided with an active and learned superior. I do not

\* He had lately been petitioned for as Bishop by the Vicar-Apostolic and the clergy of Ardagh.

think that any further bishops are required for the province of Armagh, excepting in the diocese of Derry, which is very far to the North, and has been without a bishop for eighty years. Luke Plunket, the Vicar of Derry, during the past spring, when coming to me for the consecration of the chalices and altars, during the difficult journey, fell from his horse and broke his right arm in four places; now, however, thanks be to God, he is better. He is renowned for his labours, and by his good administration in six years he brought that uncouth people to great discipline and order.

“Dr. Tyrrell, by his last visitation restored the diocese of Clogher to such peace, concord, and ecclesiastical discipline, that he is deserving of every praise. He laboured very much, and also took possession of the diocese of Kilmore, and after performing a visitation of it, he will give a relation to your Excellency.”

In many of his letters Dr. Plunket refers to the great poverty which prevailed in several dioceses of Ireland, and this was the chief motive which impelled him, at different intervals during his episcopate, to urge on the Holy See the necessity of not adding new members to our hierarchy. As early as the 16th of March, 1672, he addressed a letter to the Internunzio most earnestly commending this matter, and suggesting, at the same time, an easy remedy for the administration of the vacant churches:—

“I have heard from different quarters (he

says) that Bishops are to be appointed for this province. I deem myself obliged in conscience to express my sentiment on this matter. There are in this province about ten dioceses, and it is as large as the provinces of Tuam and Dublin together. This province can afford competent support to five Bishops if they be distributed in a proper manner, and agreeably to the wants of the province. The Bishop of Meath can easily govern his diocese, and hold, at the same time, the administration of Clonmacnoise; the Bishop of Kilmore can, in the same way, administer the diocese of Ardagh; the Archbishop of Armagh that of Clogher; the Bishop of Derry that of Raphoe; and the Bishop of Down and Connor can administer Dromore; and thus five Bishops will suffice. The five Bishoprics which are given in administration are small and poor, and have but few priests."

Succeeding years did not produce any change in this sentiment of Dr. Plunket. In his letter of the 15th of September, 1677, he not only insists with greater earnestness on this measure, but more fully also declares to us the poverty to which the Bishops of Ireland were subject:—

"Neither in Munster nor in any other province is there a Bishopric now vacant that has an annual revenue of 100 scudi, with the exception of Derry. In Munster, that is the province of Cashel, two Bishoprics are vacant, namely, Ardfert and Emly. The richer of these does not annually yield 80 scudi; now you yourself will

judge, how could a Bishop (why do I say a Bishop, how could his servant) support and clothe himself with 80 scudi a year? They are obliged to support themselves here with shame and ignominy to the mitre and pastoral. You will be good enough to pay particular attention to what I am now going to say. No Bishop in Ireland has two servants, and it is one and the same that acts as his servant and stable-boy, and it is the stable-boy that serves the Bishop's mass. Moreover, none of them have their own house: to procure food they go to-day to the house of one gentleman, and to-morrow to the house of another, not without their shame; and indeed the gentry are now tired of these visits. Whether or not this be a humiliation of the pastoral, I will leave it to be decided by the prudence of your Excellency. From this it also arises that the poor Prelates are the servants of the gentry, and if they do not give the parishes according to the wishes of the gentry to persons often undeserving, they will incur their displeasure: and indeed poverty compels the Bishops to perform things unbecoming their dignity.

“These things being so, I beseech you, through the love of Christ, to represent to their Eminences what I write, with all reverence, as being well acquainted with all the different parts of this kingdom. I have three servants, but my friends support them, and give hay and oats to my horses: however, were it not for their charity, the stable-boy would also be the server of my



mass. I have never had 200 scudi of revenue, and the third part of that revenue (and even more) goes in the expense of correspondence within the kingdom and with foreign parts. Letters are sent to me from all parts, because they know that I alone keep a fixed and regular correspondence in Dublin, &c., and that my diocese is only half a day's journey from Dublin. I charge the Canon Joyce with many letters to be sent to Rome, and I do not pay him anything in return; I only apply all my masses during the year for his intention. Were their Eminences thoroughly acquainted with the state of the kingdom and the poverty of the Catholics, they would make no Bishops here excepting such as are absolutely necessary. In the province of Cashel there are at present living, besides the Archbishop, four suffragan Bishops, that is, in the sees of Killaloe, Kilfenora, Cork, and Limerick: they are sufficient, and more than sufficient."

Even when detained in prison, and awaiting his trial on a charge of high treason, Dr. Plunket had his thoughts fixed on the churches entrusted to him; and fearful lest new dangers might beset his spiritual charge, more than once addressed to the Sacred Congregation his ardent request that no new Bishops should be created for some time. The following extracts from his letters of the 19th and 24th of June, 1680, not only express this sentiment of the Primate, but, moreover, present some particulars connected

with other Prelates of our Irish Church, and the most distinguished of the clergy of Ulster at this period:—

“I declare and solemnly consider that nothing more injurious to the spiritual interest of the kingdom could be done, than to appoint new Bishops in these disastrous times; for this would provoke the government to enact more rigorous decrees, and would give further pretext to a renewal of the persecution, and all, as well the laity as the clergy, would exclaim that their Eminences were the cause of their tribulations; and it would seem that it was done on purpose to defy and goad on the Protestants. . . . Seek for further information on this subject from the Archbishop of Cashel and Dr. Forstall of Kildare, who are Prelates remarkable for their learning, prudence, gravity, and sanctity of life, and who would be not only fit, but would even deserve to be appointed to such sees as Toledo or Paris, and you will surely find that they share in my sentiments.”

He next assigns the subjects whom he deems most worthy to be chosen, should the Sacred Congregation deem it expedient to make any appointment to the vacant sees:—

“We have here Dr. Edward Dromgole, a preacher, and famous theologian and canonist; Bernard Magorke, Vicar of Armagh, a grave, learned, and exemplary man; Dr. Henry Hugo, my Vicar-General, who taught philosophy here, and also was educated at Rome; Luke Plunket,

a renowned canonist, and moral theologian, who suffered imprisonment and exile, and being full of zeal, returned to this country about six months since. All these bear the burden of the day and the heat; they defend the flock and feed it; they suffer in its defence; they toil and labour in the vineyard of the Lord."

The letters of Dr. Patrick Tyrrell, Bishop of Clogher, fully corroborate the statement of Dr. Plunket. On the 14th of February, 1677, he thus writes:—

"In a few days I start on the visitation of my diocese, that thus I may be able to detail more minutely its present state. Up to the present it was impossible to do so, partly on account of the disorders, and partly because the winter was exceedingly severe in these parts. I understand, however, that the diocese is very extensive and very poor. I have not received as yet, the value of one pin from it; and though I should receive all that is usual granted to the Bishop, it would not suffice for the maintenance of one priest, and much less for the support of a Bishop, who is obliged to keep, at least, one servant and a chaplain, no matter how poor he may be. I hear all the prelates lamenting the misery that they endure; may God compensate it by the abundance of His heavenly graces.

"The Parliament of England keeps us in apprehension of new persecutions, but the mercy of God comforts us with the firm resolution to either suffer or die for our spiritual flocks.

"Clogher, 14th Feb., 1677."

The name of Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Ardagh, and afterwards of Meath, has more than once been introduced in these pages. He it was that trained the opening intellect of his relative, the future Archbishop of Armagh: for many years he was almost the only Bishop in Ireland exercising episcopal functions, and if, at the time of his consecration, sunshine seemed to smile upon our island, the close of his eventful Episcopate was darkened by a gathering storm which, whilst he hastened to his eternal rest, held men's minds in suspense, and soon after burst forth in all its fury. The Primate, on 13th November, 1679, thus communicates to the Holy See the intelligence of the demise of this Holy Prelate:—

“To your most kind letter of the 10th of October I did not send an answer, not having any news of importance to communicate. But now I must give you the sad intelligence of the death of Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath, a Prelate distinguished by his birth, sincerity, integrity of life, his skill and experience in ecclesiastical matters, and his great watchfulness over his pastoral charge during the long space of thirty-three years; and although he was son of one of the first nobility of the kingdom, yet he never pursued any of the vain pleasures of this world. He was at first Abbot of St. Mary's, near Dublin. About thirty-three years ago Innocent the Tenth honoured him with the mitre of Ardagh, and Clement the Tenth transferred him to the diocese of Meath. For many years

there was no other Bishop in Ireland, all having fled in consequence of the fiery persecution of Cromwell. He continually enjoyed the protection, or, at least the connivance, of the state, on account of his birth and moderation; he was an enemy to all temporal and political intrigues, and his nephew being married to the niece of the Duke of Ormond, our Viceroy, and *vice versa*, one of his nieces having for husband the nephew of the Viceroy, he had a written protection during the two late persecutions. He died poor because he lived rich, and devoted to alms-deeds; his right hand knew not what his left hand performed; he never denied an alms to a poor man, and he gave many secret charities to the bashful poor, respectable men and widows, of whom we have now a large number, since the massacre of Cromwell. He had no more than 1,000 scudi dying. All the ornaments of his chapel, and his books and pontificals, he bequeathed to me during my life, and on my death to the diocese of Meath. He died on the 18th of this month, the day dedicated to the consecration of the Basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul (for whom he entertained a most ardent devotion), and in the seventy-sixth year of his age; and I recommend the soul of this great Prelate to your Excellency when offering the most holy sacrifice. . . .

“It is gradually becoming manifest that all this conspiracy, the cause of the shedding of so much Catholic blood, was got up by the Presbyterians, who are hostile both to the monarchy and to

the hierarchy. By the next post I shall write to Monsignor Cybo. His uncle acquired great fame for skill and goodness, and integrity, which makes us hope that his nephew, in an office so important for the Propagation of the Faith, shall be imitator of the heroic virtues of his uncle."

Letters of Dr. Conwell and of the Vicar-General of Raphoe, have been already given in the chapter on the zeal and apostolic labours of Dr. Plunket. Dr. Conwell is spoken of in the contemporary records as a man of distinguished zeal and learning, but his delicate constitution did not long sustain the incessant labours of the vast and important diocese of Derry. On his demise, Dr. Plunket transferred the Vicar-General of Raphoe, Dr. Luke Plunket, to the diocese, and when in 1677, a momentary calm seemed to smile upon our Irish Church, we find a petition presented by the Primate, that this Vicar-General should be consecrated Bishop for that ancient see.

A letter of the Nunzio, of 21st August, 1677, besides referring to this desire of the Archbishop of Armagh, presents many interesting particulars connected with this diocese :—

"The Vicar of Derry informs me, that through the mercy of God, great peace is enjoyed in that diocese, and that order is maintained there, not only by his own exertions, but by the union of the clergy, who, moreover, are not called on to contribute much for his support, as he possesses a sufficient private patrimony. For two years

he exercised the function of Vicar-General of Raphoe, and is for five years in his present position; he was twice cast into prison by the Protestants, and accused of acting with authority delegated by the Holy See, yet he was each time set at liberty, and declared innocent through the want of evidence against him. He laments his being at the distance of one hundred miles from the residence of the nearest Bishop, and this in a mountainous country, so that not being visited by other Bishops, and Derry itself being without a Bishop more than a hundred years, almost the whole mass of the people is without the sacrament of Confirmation, and deprived of those advantages which the presence of a Bishop would confer on it. He requested me to grant him the faculty of consecrating altars and chalices, but as I had no such power, I answered that I would petition your Excellency, as I do now to obtain it for him.

“All the preceding statements are confirmed by the Archbishop of Armagh, who, moreover, writes that he administered Confirmation in that diocese to old men sixty years of age; and after passing a high eulogy on the learning and merits of the Vicar-General, he declares that if the Sacred Congregation is desirous of appointing a Bishop to the see of Derry, he would be the best qualified both in regard of his own talents, and on account of his having sufficient private means: he adds that he has very few equals in Ireland, and that the only defect is his delicate constitution.”

We have also a letter of Dr. Plunket himself written on the 4th of August, 1677, to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, which gives some further details on the same subject:—

“It is my duty to represent to their Excellencies whatever may tend to promote the propagation of the faith, and ecclesiastical discipline in this kingdom, and especially in the province of Armagh. Now it is certain that great advantage would accrue to our holy religion by granting a Bishop to the diocese of Derry. This diocese is the most remote in this kingdom, and has about thirty Parish Priests and about six thousand Catholic families. These are at a distance of more than a hundred miles from me and from every other Bishop; and hence, for the consecration of chalices and altar-stones, as well as for the ordinations, they are obliged to make a long and difficult journey; and as there was no Bishop there for more than a hundred years, many persons are met with at a very advanced age who never received the sacrament of Confirmation. It was with difficulty that I found a proper Vicar who would undertake the mission in these remote districts, till about five years ago God moved Luke Plunket, a learned and exemplary man, to accept the burden of the government of that diocese: he passed nineteen years in Italy and France; he is rich in earthly wealth, but still more so in zeal for the glory of God: he suffered much in the exercise of his ministry: he was imprisoned and prosecuted by the Protestants, but his defence was so pru-



dent that he was liberated. On one occasion, though sick, he was dragged at midnight two miles away to prison; yet such was his zeal, that no persecution could force him to abandon his flock."

The plan proposed to the Holy See by the Primate could not be realised, for scarce were these letters received in Rome when intelligence was brought that the long-threatening storm of persecution had burst, with all its fury, upon our afflicted island; and from subsequent records we learn that the Vicar of Derry was one of those who enjoyed the happy honour of sharing with the Primate the sufferings and chains of his imprisonment.

In the letter of the Primate, 2nd August, 1678, mention is made of the requested favours having been granted, not only to the Bishop of Meath and Dr. Cusack, but also to Dr. Forstall, the Bishop of Kildare. The favour solicited by Dr. Plunket for this prelate was the administration of the adjoining diocese of Leighlin. Dr. Forstall was a prelate of great virtue and learning, and, before his appointment to the see of Kildare, had held high ecclesiastical offices in Vienna, in which he won for himself the esteem and favour of the Imperial Court. He was, however, a member of the Order of St. Augustine, all whose convents had been destroyed or impoverished throughout the kingdom; and, as the diocese of Kildare presented at this period no means of subsistence, yielding to the Bishop

a revenue of only 56 scudi per annum, that is to say, little more than £1 per month, he was obliged to have recourse to Rome, *the common mother of all*, soliciting aid in his distress. Dr. Plunket was mainly instrumental in procuring for him the administration of the diocese of Leighlin, and in his letter of the 20th of August, 1677, whilst suggesting the means by which this worthy prelate (whom he elsewhere declares fit to govern the most important dioceses of the world) might be relieved, he especially commends this provision for the diocese of Leighlin, as it not only succoured the indigence of the Bishop, but would at the same time, be a source of great spiritual blessings to that venerable see. The following is the letter of the Primate:—

“The great affection which your Eminence has ever displayed for me and for this nation, is the cause of my so often inconveniencing you, both for myself and for my friends, amongst whom is Dr. Forstall, a grave and learned prelate, and here esteemed by all; he is Bishop of Kildare, which diocese is amongst the poorest of this kingdom, having only fifteen priests, and yielding no more than £15, that is about 56 scudi of Roman money. It is certain that many of the chaplains of the ‘Madonna dei Monti’\* receive a great deal more. The manner of succouring this worthy Prelate is either to destine an annual

\* A church not far from the old Irish College in Rome; it is also at present the parochial church of our national college in that city.

sum for him from the Sacred Congregation, such as is granted to the Bishops of the East, or if not, to grant to him the administration of the diocese of Leighlin, adjoining that of Kildare, which, although it has no more than fifteen or sixteen priests, and gives a revenue of only 50 or 60 scudi, nevertheless will be a great relief to Dr. Forstall. This measure would be of great spiritual advantage to the Leighlin diocese, since the said Prelate could administer there the sacraments of confirmation and orders, and consecrate chalices or altars, &c.; and it is certain that it would be a source of greater profit and spiritual consolation to this diocese to be administered by a Bishop (since it cannot support a Bishop for itself), than by a Vicar-General, who with difficulty can be found with such learning, and cannot enjoy so great authority.

“I therefore pray your Eminence to propose to his Holiness and to the Sacred Congregation either to assign an annual sum to Dr. Forstall, or otherwise to grant him the administration of Leighlin diocese, which is contiguous to and adjoining the diocese of Kildare: this is a matter worthy of your charity and great zeal, and I remain, &c.”

This favour was soon accorded by the Holy See, but the diocese of Leighlin was not allowed to enjoy long this administration. Before the close of the year 1679, Dr. Forstall was cast into prison; and even after his liberation the

fury of persecution compelled him to seek for safety in the woods and mountains, till, in 1683, he closed his earthly career an exile in the diocese of Cashel.

On the 22nd of January, 1647, Dr. Andrew Lynch was elected by the Sacred Congregation Bishop of Kilfenora. His episcopate embraced one of the saddest epochs in the history of our Church. During the persecution consequent on the invasion of Cromwell, he fled to France, and acted for many years as suffragan or Assistant-Bishop to the Archbishop of Rouen.

In 1671 the Sacred Congregation deliberated on the propriety of transferring this Prelate to the then vacant see of Cork, and of uniting his small diocese with the adjoining see of Killaloe. The opinion of Dr. Plunket was solicited through the Nunzio as to the propriety of this union; and the following fragment of a letter, written by him in reply, was transmitted to the Sacred Congregation before the close of 1672:—

“31st Jan., 1672.—As regards the union of the diocese of Kilfenora with Killaloe, I think it would be well; for Kilfenora has no more than four or five priests.”

In the preceding months the Internunzio had presented a similar recommendation to Rome. His letter of 17th October, 1671, is as follows:—

“The Bishop of Kilfenora, who is now in France, and, though sixty-five years of age, is nevertheless robust and strong, was obliged to abandon his diocese, on account of its being so

reduced and impoverished, and retire to France to acquire subsistence, acting as suffragan of the Archbishop of Rouen. Moreover he had but little duty in his own diocese, as it is only ten Italian miles in extent, and even in the most flourishing times of the Church had only nine priests, that number being now reduced to four. It forms as if a corner of the diocese of Killaloe, and adjoins the diocese of Kilmacduagh, so that it would be well to have it incorporated with either of these dioceses, not to have a Bishop confined to so small a district, which is wholly insufficient for his support; for in Ireland the Bishops subsist by the charitable offerings of the people, and the voluntary contributions of the poor Priests. Should the Sacred Congregation adopt this plan, the present Bishop of Kilfenora might be transferred to the see of Cork, which is in the same province of Cashel, and is very extensive and rich, whilst it is, at the same time, very remote from the residence of the other Bishops who are now in Ireland. This sentiment has been approved by Dr. O'Molony (Bishop of Killaloe), the Bishop of Ferns, and Dr. Dempsey, who also requested me to supplicate your Excellency for this favour, as the Bishop of Kilfenora is most anxious to return to labour in Ireland, whilst it would be impossible for him to return to his former residence. The account I have received of this Bishop represents him as a man very learned and virtuous."

The good Bishop of Kilfenora, however, declined the proffered translation to the see of Cork, and continued to reside in France, some few years later, the diocese which had yielded him a refuge, gave him also a tomb.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### DR. PLUNKET'S MISSION TO THE SCOTO-IRISH OF THE HIGHLANDS AND HEBRIDES.

For some years before the departure of Dr. Plunket from the Eternal City, the missions in the Hebrides and Highlands of Scotland had engaged the attention of the Sacred Congregation; and he had not as yet reached Belgium, when, by order of the Holy Father, he was deputed, on the 17th of September, 1669, the superior of these missions, with an injunction to procure spiritual pastors for that desolate flock.

At an early period of the persecution against the Catholics of Great Britain, all priests were compelled to fly from the Scottish islands, and as these were too poor to attract the attention of the reformed ministers, their inhabitants were left almost wholly immersed in the grossest ignorance. We find at intervals, however, some heroic priests, especially from the neighbouring

shores of Ireland, fearlessly risking their lives in order to administer to these poor islanders the sacraments of the Church, and break to them the bread of life. The records of the Jesuit missions, as well as those of the Orders of St. Francis and St. Vincent,\* present illustrious examples of such true Christian heroism. We shall take one from the Annual Letters of the Jesuit Fathers. About the year 1650 Father David Galvins was renowned throughout the Irish province for his piety and zeal; three times did he set out for the missions of Scotland. On the first occasion he travelled as a merchant, yet could convert none of the islanders to the profession of the Catholic faith, such was their terror of the Duke of Argyle, a bitter enemy of the Catholics, and lord of that territory. When returning to Ireland, all sad for the bad success of his journey, the Scotch sailors, who themselves were imbued with Calvinism, surprised that though he styled himself a merchant, yet he had purchased no goods, asked him for what object he had undertaken so long

\* In the Life of St. Vincent, l. ii. c. 1, sect. xi., there is an account of the missionary labours of the Lazarists in the Hebrides, and of the success which they obtained. St. Vincent, it is there stated, selected two Irish priests for the mission of the Hebrides, to whom a third was added, Scotch by birth. There is an interesting letter inserted in the same chapter, written by one of those missionaries, the Rev. Mr. Duignin or Duggan, which gives an accurate account of his labours in the Western Highlands.

a journey? The good father replied that he was, indeed, a merchant, but of merchandize far more precious than all earthly goods, and that he sought for souls redeemed by the most precious blood of Jesus Christ. The sailors, reasoning amongst themselves, declared with one accord that that religion should be true which could inspire such a desire for the salvation of souls; and before the vessel reached the Irish coast, he had the consolation of receiving these straying children into the fold of Christ. On his second and third mission his labours were crowned with abundant fruit: in some districts, whole towns, parents as well as children, received the sacrament of Baptism; and on one occasion, so incessant was his toil in instructing the poor mountaineers, that for five months he never changed his garments, though often compelled to rest at night exposed to the rain and the inclemency of the weather. Such was the hatred conceived against him by the heretics, that they publicly sent round his likeness in order to secure his arrest. But the good father safely passed through their hands, though not without a manifest interposition of Providence; and sometimes, too, employing the artifice of declaring himself a merchant, and bringing around some sacks of corn, as if they were samples, the better to disguise his true mission.

In 1662 Alexander Winster was appointed prefect of all the Scottish missions, and in his "Report to the Sacred Congregation he states



that there were six thousand Catholics in Scotland, and that the Highlanders used the Irish language ; the clergy consisted of eleven Jesuits, three Dominicans, two Franciscans, and six secular Priests, all being maintained by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. These priests, however, were, for the most part, confined to the Lowlands, and but few could be found who would embrace the mission of the Scoto-Irish, as they called the inhabitants of the Hebrides and Highlands. We have seen in the second chapter how the Irish Bishops urged, as a motive for the establishment of the Irish College in Rome, that thus they might be the better able to supply missions for the Scotch districts. Dr. Burgatt, too, when agent of the Irish Clergy in Rome, petitioning the Holy Father, in 1668, that Bishops might be destined to the vacant sees in Ireland, assigns this, amongst other reasons, that thus the Scottish Church might be succoured, which was almost wholly destitute of Pastors. "The Scotch (he says) have but few ecclesiastics of their own nation ; fruitful missions, however, were often given there from Ireland : for they freely receive instruction from the Irish priests on account of their having the same language as well as the same origin. All, but especially the Scottish islanders, so hate the English that they even seem to abhor all who speak the English language."

As soon as Dr. Plunket had expedited mat-

ters more immediately connected with his own diocese, he resolved to visit and procure pastors for this scattered portion of Christ's fold:—

“The visitation of the Hebrides yet remains,” he thus writes on the 23rd February, 1671, “but if the Sacred Congregation does not write a letter to the Marquis of Antrim, we shall be able to effect nothing. This nobleman has great influence in these islands, but he is in every respect not unlike Mgr. Albrici, good and prudent, but slow and scrupulous in everything. I remember that Mgr. Albrici could not find in all Italy a servant to suit him: the Florentine was too talky; the Milanese was giddy; the Romagnese was stupid; the Neapolitan was quick with the fingers; the Roman was too sad. And so it is very difficult to find people to suit the Marquis of Antrim. I proposed to him no fewer than twenty priests, but he had something to say against every one of them; and in regard to Ronan Magin—a man truly suited for the task—he remarked that he seemed too hasty and presumptuous, and proud. The chief cause of the delay, however, is the treaty of union between Scotland and England, as I mentioned in a former letter. The Marquis sent three priests to these islands to administer the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist during the Lent; after Easter they returned, and they would not consent to remain in them for the whole year, as they have good parishes in the county Antrim. Moreover they are very old, and but

ill-suited for the labour of these islands. A courteous letter to this nobleman, commending his piety and his zeal for the spiritual profit of these souls, and commemorating also the piety of his ancestors, will be very efficacious in promoting this matter. I was with him for three days at his house in Dunluce; it is a noble building; the palace is perched on a high rock, which is lashed on every side by the sea; it is only twelve miles distant from the largest of the Hebrides. Mgr. this letter is necessary, as the Marquis is the only Catholic nobleman who can assist me in this mission, and without his aid I shall have to run many risks."

This letter of the primate was read in the Congregation of 13th of July, 1671, and at the same time that the wished-for letter was directed to the Marquis of Antrim, a missionary stipend was decreed to three priests whom the Archbishop of Armagh should destine for these missions.

Whatever may have been the judgment of the Marquis of Antrim in regard of the subjects proposed by Dr. Plunket for the Scottish mission, it is manifest from the letters of the primate, that he omitted no diligence, in choosing missionaries well suited for that holy work. Thus, he writes in 1670, immediately after his arrival in Ireland:

"When I assemble the vicars of the province, I shall send to your Excellency the names of the missionaries for the Scottish islands; three

have already offered themselves for that mission, but before I accept them, I will examine them as to learning, and I will go to their own district, in order to see what is the tenor of their lives. You may rest assured that those that I will send shall be men of sufficient learning and of holy life. Their stipend might be the same as is given to the other missionaries of Scotland, especially as these islands are even poorer than Scotland itself. When I transmit to you their names and the attestation of their merits, I am sure that your Excellency, in the fulness of your zeal, will do all that is necessary for the advancement of this holy work. There is one missionary in these islands named *White*, who is supported there by Daniel Arthur, an Irish merchant of London."

Before the above-mentioned decree was enacted by the Sacred Congregation, Dr. Plunket had addressed another letter respecting his former demands, and soliciting pecuniary aid to enable him to execute the commission entrusted to him by the Holy See.

"I need some assistance," he says, in his letter of 7th June, 1671, "to enable me to visit the Scottish islands, that is, the Hebrides; without your assistance I can do nothing. It will be necessary for me to bring a priest and a servant with me, and to dress after the manner of these people, which is very different from that of every other part of the globe."

In his subsequent letters, Dr. Plunket makes

no further petition for any aid; nevertheless, reference is made at a latter period to a *Relation* of these islands presented about this time by the Archbishop of Armagh; and hence we may conclude that before the close of 1671 he performed this visitation, and consoled the devoted children of that abandoned portion of Christ's flock, by appointing pastors to attend to their spiritual care. Indeed this mission seems to have been most dear to him; and writing to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation on the 29th September, 1671, he thus earnestly recommends it to their care:—

“I recommend to you the Scottish islands. The poor creatures are dying from spiritual hunger, having none to break to them the bread of Christ; let us reap the harvest whilst it is ripe, and let us gather in the vintage before it is destroyed by the hail and the tempest.”

In the absence of any fragments of the “*Relation*” of Dr. Plunket, we may present some extracts from two other narratives of these missions, presented to the Sacred Congregation in the year 1669. One of these was written by Dr. Winster, who, as we have seen, was for many years Prefect of the mission in the Scottish islands. He states that:—

“The mountainous districts are barren, and during five or six months of the year, scarcely yield to the inhabitants sufficient oaten or barley-bread; towards the sea there is an abundance of fish, and everywhere there are large flocks of

sheep and cattle; the people live on cheese, milk, and butter; the lower classes, however, are often without bread.

“The Highlands have no commerce with foreign nations, but sell their cattle to the inhabitants of the Lowlands, and are thus enabled to purchase flour; this is the reason why the missionaries who visit these districts are obliged not only to bring with them bread and wine for the Holy Sacrifice, but also food and every other necessary, not without very great inconvenience.

“There are no post-offices, and no means of sending letters unless a person sends them by hand to the chief city of the kingdom.

“The language of the inhabitants is the Irish, wherefore only natives of Ireland are suited for these missions, till such time as priests from the districts themselves be educated in the colleges on the Continent.

“The Catholics live in peace in the district of Glengarry, under Earl MacDonnell; also in those mountain districts which belong to the Marquis of Huntley, and in the islands of Uist, Barra, and Morar, which are the most remote from the government residences.

“Such is the severity of the laws, that the practice of the Catholic religion is not allowed; in the Highlands, however, and remote islands, these laws are not carried into execution.

“The present missionaries are two Franciscan friars, viz., Father Mark and Father Francis MacDonnell, sent thither by the Sacred Con-

gregation; there is also one secular priest (a missionary of the Sacred Congregation), whose name is Francis White,\* and a schoolmaster in the Glengarry district named Eugene MacAlaster. The Father White whom I have mentioned, often visits the islands and the lands of Glengarry and all the mountain districts, as far as he is able, and in doing so he endures great fatigue and suffering, willingly, however, on account of his great zeal for the salvation of souls; hence all this country is greatly indebted to him, and he is a native of Ireland.

“The schoolmaster is scarcely tolerated in Glengarry, despite the protection of the lord of that territory; and there is but little hope of another master being found to succeed the present one in that toilsome position.

“There was also another Irish missionary in the Highlands, named Duigen; he, however, has left that mission, and now Father White alone remains.

“The few missionaries who are in the mountainous districts, are wholly insufficient for the wants of the Catholics, especially in winter, when the roads are almost wholly impracticable; wherefore we pray that other Irish priests may be sent thither, and Father White undertakes

\* In a letter written 25th September, 1679, Dr. Winster announces the death of this missionary, and adds, that “he might justly be styled the Apostle of the Hebrides and neighbouring districts.”

to find such priests through his brother,\* who is Vicar in the diocese of Limerick, in Ireland; this is the more necessary as the Franciscans, on account of their bad health, cannot long continue on that mission."

The second Report was made by a Scotch priest, after visiting all the districts of this mission. He writes:—

"The Highland families are, for the most part, Catholic, or prepared to be so, if they had priests to instruct them; those, however, of the Lowlands are most fierce heretics, and hate the Highlanders on account of their religion.

"The Highlanders are of an excellent disposition, quick of intellect, and taking a special delight in the pursuit of knowledge; they are fond of novelties, and have an unbounded passion for ingenious inventions, so that no greater favour can be conferred on them than to educate their children, and render them suited to become priests or ecclesiastics.

"Their untiring constancy in all matters is truly surprising, and is admitted and extolled even by their enemies, particularly in regard of religion, which they continue to profess, as much as the severity of the persecution, and the total want of priests permit.

"Their arms are, two-edged swords, large shields, bows and arrows, which they still con-

\* This was Dr. Gaspar White, Vicar Capit. of Limerick, till the appointment of Dr. Dowley as Vicar-Apostolic in 1669.



tinue to use, adding to them, however, fire-arms, which they manage with admirable dexterity.

"They still retain the language and costume of their earliest forefathers, so that their dress is not very dissimilar from that of the ancient statues in Rome, loosely covered from the waist to the knee, and a *bonnet* on the head.

"Almost all the families are Catholic, or disposed to receive the Catholic faith, if, for no other reason, at least to imitate their ancestors, who were so zealous in the cause of religion. Nay more, many of these families have suffered, and actually suffer for this sole reason, not only in Parliament, where the nobility of the Lowlands have a large majority, but also in the Courts of Justice, where they are oppressed by the greater number and authority of their enemies; and the heretic judges give sentence against them, even though their cause be most just, deeming them rebels for not conforming to the established Religion.

"The remaining Scoto-Irish are heretics, more through ignorance than malice; they cease not, however, to cherish a great esteem for the Catholics, as appears in many things.

"If a priest visits them they show him more respect, and honour him more than their own ministers.\* In fact, the heretics amongst the

\* In an addition to this "Report," made, I presume, by the agent of the Scottish Church in Rome, it is said, "the priest is styled by the islanders, and known by the name *coronatus*; they venerate and caress him much more than their own preachers."

Highlanders surpass in reverence for our priests the very Catholics of the Lowlands.

“They, moreover, retain many Catholic usages, such as making the sign of the Cross, the invocation of Saints, and sprinkling themselves with holy water, which they anxiously ask from their Catholic neighbours.

“In sickness they make pilgrimages to the ruins of the old churches and chapels which yet remain, as of the most noble monastery of Iona, where St. Columba was Abbot, also of the chapels of Ghierlock, and Appecrosse, and Glogarry, which were once dedicated to the saints. They also visit the holy springs, which yet retain the names of the saints to whom they were dedicated; and it has often pleased the most High to restore to their health those who visited these ruins or drank at these springs, invoking the aid of the Saints.

“The enmity of the Lowlanders has been a source of great injury to the Scoto-Irish, especially since heresy began to domineer in Scotland; for the inhabitants of the Lowlands being most furious heretics (with the exception of some few whom the Catholic missionaries restored to the bosom of the Church), and seeing the Highlanders most constant in the faith, and that there is no hope of alienating them from the Catholic Church, seek, by all possible means, to excite odium against them, designating them barbarians, impious, enemies of the reformed creed, &c.; and they hesitate not to affirm of them everything that can be suggested by de-

traction and their own excessive hatred; and they even deem it a glorious deed to show contempt for, or cast ridicule on a Highlander.”\*

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE REVENUE OF THE IRISH SEES.

ONE of the first acts of the *reformed* Church in Ireland was to appropriate to itself everything that the piety of our forefathers had offered to God for the support of the ministers of the altar. Nor did this suffice; taxes were levied, new appropriations made, new government grants sanctioned, in order to advance the interests of the Protestant Church; however, all was fruitless; the ministers of that church could never say *enough*; when they were upbraided with the failure of their mission and preaching, they always imputed it to the want of sufficient means; but despite every additional increase, the curse of barrenness ever weighed upon their ministry.

As early as 1576, Sir Henry Sydney, who had six times been at the head of the Irish Government, in a report to the Queen, declares,

\* Lord Macaulay has manifested this same spirit in our own times, never omitting any opportunity to blacken the character and religion of the Scoto-Irish.

“your Majesty may believe it, that, upon the face of the earth where Christ is professed, there is not a church in so miserable a case, the misery of which consisteth in these three particulars—the ruin of the very temples themselves, the want of good ministers to serve in them, competent living for the ministers.” Thirty years later we find another *report* from Sir John Davies to Robert, Earl of Salisbury. Speaking of the Diocese of Kilmore and Ardagh, he says—“The vicarages are so poorly endowed that ten of them being united, will scarce suffice to maintain an honest minister. . . . But the incumbents, both parsons and vicars, did appear to be such poor, ragged, ignorant creatures, as we could not esteem any of them worthy of the meanest of these livings.” Nevertheless, in the same page he informs us that “the Bishop, Robert Draper, is a man of this country birth, worth well nigh £400 a-year. He doth live now in these parts, where he hath two bishoprics; but there is no divine service or sermon to be heard within either of his dioceses.” (Davies’ *Tracts*, page 266.)

Again, when Bishop Bedell complained to the Lord Deputy that “in this kingdom of his Majesty, the Pope hath another kingdom far greater in number” (Strafford *Letters*, i. 147,) in other words, that Protestantism had been as yet unable to make any progress in Ireland, the Parliament, without delay, “passed several acts for improving the temporal estates of the

church,"\* so much so, that the prelates and clergy assembled at Dublin presented an address to the King (Charles I.), in which, after commemorating how they had lately been "dejected and depressed to the lowest degree of misery† and contempt by the wars and confusion of former times, having their churches ruined, their habitations left desolate, their possessions alienated, their persons scorned, their very lives subject to the bloody attempts of rebellious traitors," they declare "that the bounty and piety of his sacred Majesty, and of his blessed father, had not only made restitution of that which the iniquity of former ages had robbed them of, but also enriched them with new and princely endowments, which favours did become more sweet whilst entertained by them as pledges of his future unexhausted goodness." The benevolence of the crown did not even stop here, and a little before Dr. Plunket's appointment to the see of Armagh, we find a large portion of the forfeited property of those who had lost their lives in defence of the royal cause, and who, nevertheless, were designated with an unheard-of ingratitude, *Irish Papists, rebels, and enemies*, allotted to increase the reve-

\* See Mant, i., 482.

† Thomas Moygne, Protestant Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh, in 1625, when giving a general prospect of the Irish establishment, declares that "in consequence of the poverty of the clergy, the church will soon be brought to decay." (See "Parr's Collections," page 322.)

nues of the ministers of the Protestant church. (14 & 15 Chas. II., chap. 2.)

In one of his letters Dr. Plunket values the revenues of the Protestant Archbishop of Armagh at 20,000 scudi, or £5,000. In 1539 the valuation of the see amounted to only £183 17s. 5½d.; in 1618 it had increased to £400; in 1635, as we learn from Sir James Ware, the rents amounted to £735 4s. 4d. per annum, and thus they gradually swelled, until, at the present day, we find the gross amount of the yearly revenues of the see, as stated in the Report of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, to be £17,669 16s. 7d.

Whilst, despite all human efforts, and this ever-increasing revenue, the Protestant Church in Ireland was seen subject to a gradual decay, we are supplied by Dr. Plunket with accurate intelligence as to the earthly means with which the Catholic Priests and Bishops were supported whilst they cheerfully led on their flocks to martyrdom, and overcame in an unceasing victory, all the powers of this world leagued against them. In many of his letters, the Primate will be found to dwell upon this subject; but we shall select two as sufficient for our present purpose; in one of these, whilst he petitions the Holy See to succour the Bishop of Kildare, he draws a general picture of the poverty of the Irish Church, and in the other he presents in detail the individual revenues of our various sees.

The first letter is dated from Dublin, the 13th of August, 1677 :—

“Since the beginning of the heresy and schism in this kingdom, no parish priest or prelate of the orthodox creed had any possessions, lands, or fixed revenue, the churches, with all their emoluments, being seized on by the Protestant ministers, who continue to enjoy them to the present day; so that our ecclesiastics are obliged to depend for their support on the oblations of the poor Catholic families, who, according to their means, make certain offerings to their parish priests, and, generally speaking, the bishops have no other revenue than the offering of £1 which is annually made by each of the parish priests, so that the greater the number of the parish priests, the larger will be the revenue of the bishops. Some dioceses have sixty priests; others forty; others thirty; others fifteen; others only seven, as Clonmacnoise, Kilfenora, &c. Hence it arises that in some dioceses it is impossible for a bishop to have sufficient revenue to support a clerk of S. Girolamo della Carità.\* It is certain that Dr. Forstall, of Kildare, whose little diocese is only five or six miles from Dublin, and, having only fifteen priests, yields him no more than £15 per annum, has not sufficient revenue to maintain a servant, even of a low grade. I don't

\* The Church to which Dr. Plunket was attached whilst in Rome.

know how poor religious subsist when they are appointed bishops, for such revenue cannot suffice to support a bishop's servant; and this extreme poverty renders their dignity despicable with Catholics as well as Protestants. The Viceroy on one occasion said to me that he was not, and never would be, a persecutor of ecclesiastics; but that he was surprised how bishops were sent to this kingdom without having sufficient means for their support. I told his Excellency in reply, that our prelates imitated those of the primitive Church. 'Yes,' he said, 'but they are far different from those of France and Spain.' 'But,' I replied, 'the bishops of France and Spain, when it may be necessary, are ready to act in the same manner.'"

Besides this general picture of the extreme poverty of our Irish sees, we have another letter of Dr. Plunket, in which he presents in detail the precise revenues of nearly all the various dioceses. It was written about the close of the year 1673, and is as follows:—

"On the Vigil of Christmas, Mgr. Daniel Makey, Bishop of Down and Connor, most perfectly obeyed the last edict, and departed not only from Ireland, but also from the world, to enjoy now, as we hope, a country and a kingdom, where he will be free from the Parliament of England and its edicts. He was a good theologian, educated in Spain, and chaplain for many years of D. Pedro, of Aragon. At his death he had no more than thirty-five bajocchi



(eighteen pence), so that to have even a private funeral it was necessary to sell a part of his goods.

“I take the present opportunity of sending to the Sacred Congregation an account of a matter of some importance, and the effect of this report will be, I hope, to prevent, for some time, the appointment of any more bishops for this kingdom, and my opinion is based on the poverty of the various dioceses, which is, indeed, astounding. The following is the annual revenue of all my suffragan sees:—

The Primatial See of Armagh ...	...£62	0
The Diocese of Meath, ...	... 70	0
„ „ of Clogher, ...	.. 45	0
„ „ of Derry, ...	... 40	0
„ United dioceses of Down and Connor,	25	0
„ The Diocese of Raphoe ...	... 20	0
„ „ of Kilmore, ...	... 35	0
„ „ of Ardagh, ...	... 30	0
„ „ of Dromore, ...	... 17	10
„ „ Clonmacnoise ...	... 7	10

These are all the sees, with their revenues, in the province of Armagh. You may hence reflect and ponder how little it becomes the dignity of the episcopal character to be bishops in dioceses which cannot yield a sufficient support.

“Moreover, I know for certain, that the Metropolitan sees of Dublin, and Cashel, and Tuam, do not yield £40 per annum. It is true that the diocese of Elphin, which is a suffragan

see of the Archbishop of Tuam, yields about £50, and the diocese of Killaloe, in the province of Cashel, yields about £55; but of the other dioceses not one exceeds £25.

“The churches of Ireland, however, as they are in the hands of the Protestants, are very rich; for instance, the Protestant Primate derives from the lands and possessions of the church of Armagh £5,000 per annum, and the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin has about £3,000. But the Catholic Primate and Archbishop have only the revenues which I mentioned above; whence you may conclude how inexpedient it is to appoint any more bishops in this kingdom: and should any such be appointed, it will be necessary for the Sacred Congregation to supply them with revenues, as it does for the bishops in the Indies and the East. . . .

“From this report a question of curiosity will, perhaps, suggest itself to your Excellency, how it is that I and the other prelates succeed in making out these few shillings? Each parish priest gives us per annum for *proxy* one pound sterling, which is equal to twenty shillings, or four scudi. But, you will ask, how is the parish priest maintained? I answer, that each family, or each head of a family, gives four juli, that is, two shillings per annum, to the parish priest; then for his trouble in baptism he receives one shilling; for every matrimony, one shilling and sixpence, or three juli. From

which it follows, that where there are most Catholic families, there the parish priest is richest; I should rather say, less poor and miserable. In the diocese of Down and Connor, as also in many other dioceses, there is a large number of Presbyterians (who are especially numerous in Ulster), of Anabaptists, and Quakers, and hence, these dioceses are exceedingly poor. And it must here be remarked, that the Presbyterians, who are an offshoot of Protestantism, are more numerous than Catholics and Protestants together.

“You thus see the state of the ecclesiastical riches of the Catholic bishops of this kingdom, and I assure you that during the past four years I would have been reduced to beggary were it not for a few pence that I had set aside, but which are now wholly exhausted.

“I pray you to send this letter to Mgr. Ravizza, who is the present Secretary of Propaganda, as I have been informed. I already requested you to direct your letters to me thus—*For Mr. Thomas Cox, Dublin*, and they will surely reach me without being intercepted. I now make my reverence to you from my hiding place, on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, 1673. I wish you a most happy new year, replete with every felicity.”

The revenue of £62 for the diocese of Armagh was the normal sum which the Archbishop should receive, considering the number of clergy in the diocese; but when the persecution was

let loose with redoubled fury against our Church, many of the priests were scattered, and all were reduced to such poverty that few could contribute anything to the support of their Chief Pastor; and hence, we more than once find Dr. Plunket, in his subsequent letters, declaring that at intervals he did not receive twenty scudi, that is, £5, per annum from his diocese, and, whilst a small thatched hut was his only residence, he eat oaten bread with avidity, which, with a little milk, was often his only sustenance.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### SOME SPECIAL EVENTS OF DR. PLUNKET'S EPISCOPATE.

1670. During the first months of his episcopate, whilst the Primate was visiting his diocese, and administering Confirmation, and convening diocesan synods, the sword of persecution was all the while suspended over his head, and he was obliged to disguise himself under the dress and manner of a layman, "I was obliged," he says in one of his letters, "to conceal myself by assuming the name of Captain Brown, wearing a sword and a wig and pistols; this lasted two or three months."

A little later, in consequence of some representations made in Rome, unfavourable to the

Primate, the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation deemed it his duty to convey to him a friendly admonition. This elicited the beautiful answer of Dr. Plunket, dated 23rd February, 1671:—

“I received your most welcome letter of the 20th of December, and I assure you that though it was conceived in strong terms, yet when I reflected on all the circumstances, it afforded me much more comfort than affliction; for I knew that the correction was truly fraternal, given by one who loved me with sincere affection, for I ever loved and revered your Excellency as my benefactor, and as the promoter of the spiritual good of my country, as is well known to all in this northern world. Moreover, I was well aware that all that was said against me was false, and that it proceeded merely from those who envied me; everything that I undertook as to the removal of abuses and the promotion of the spiritual good of my country being blessed with success by God; and this, although many of the things that I undertook were arduous, such as the opening of public schools, the holding of a Provincial Synod in the celebrated town of Clonés, and especially the obtaining pardon for a large number of outlawed gentlemen, and for hundreds of Catholic families who were prosecuted by government for having intercourse with them.

“The Earl of Charlemont has not molested even one ecclesiastic since my arrival here; he

is also so friendly with me, that on one occasion, seeing me somewhat afraid, he said to me, 'Have no fear, no one shall dare touch you; and when you want to administer confirmation don't go any more to the mountains, but come to the court-yard of my palace.' He made me a present during my life of a garden and excellent orchard, with two fields and a fine house. It is in an excellent position. As to the Viceroy, it is notorious that he has such an esteem for me, as even to conciliate in my behalf the favour of the King. Suffice it to say that he granted me the lives of three Catholics who had been prosecuted and condemned in the city of Enniskillen. The Earl of Drogheda allows me to have a public church, with bells, &c., in my diocese, within his districts, which are exempt from the royal jurisdiction. No fewer than nine times have I been accused before the Viceroy on account of the schools, and for exercising foreign jurisdiction. This nobleman, however, always brought the charges to his own court, and thus they were quashed.

"In the province of Munster the Earl of Orrery has prohibited assemblages for Mass: the Earl of Kingstown, too, has expelled the clergy from the city of Galway, the capital of the province of Tuam. In Dublin, the schools which were commenced at Saggart have been upset, and the Remonstrants give annoyance to the Archbishop and others, summoning them before the court of the Viceroy. Yet in my

province I have had no annoyance, nor has any accusation been admitted either against me or against any of my clergy, although I drove away all the Remonstrants, so that not one of them remains."

Another letter of Dr. Plunket, written on the 30th December, 1670, and addressed to Dr. Brennan, then agent for the Irish clergy in the Eternal City, gives the following additional particulars as to the events of this year:—

"The magistrate of the city of Armagh having made an order to the effect that all Catholics should accompany him to the heretical service every Sunday, under penalty of a half crown per head for each time they would absent themselves, I appealed to the president of the province against this decree, and he cancelled it, and commanded that neither clergy nor Catholic laity should be molested."

1671. The letters of the Primate commemorate many interesting facts connected with this year. Thus he writes on the 20th May, 1671:—

"The Earl of Inchiquin, a Catholic and influential nobleman, has a relative named Thady O'Brien, who is a good and learned man. All the Bishops of Ireland have prayed that this man might be promoted to the see of Cork, a favour for which the Earl is most desirous.

"This morning a serious accident occurred here (Dublin). The house within the Castle, in which the armour was deposited, took fire, and about 24,000 scudi worth of arms was consumed.

Our Viceroy did not merit this misfortune. Even his own palace ran great risk."

In another letter he writes (Oct., 1672):—

"You place reliance on the moderation of our future Viceroy, Essex. Up to the present we have enjoyed great peace, and I sailed along with the favourable wind with sails unfurled; but for the future, till I find what winds will blow, I will steer very cautiously. *In a certain emergency, when an outburst of persecution was feared in Armagh, I had to burn all my foreign letters, even the Brief of my Consecration. This happened last June twelve months, on the Vigil of St. John's, when it was circulated by the Presbyterians that the Catholics had conspired to murder on that night all the Protestants.* The Viceroy was then in London."

Writing on the 2nd August, 1671, he adds:—

"The good Archbishop of Tuam has suffered, and yet suffers, more than can be conceived; and it grieves the poor man more that he is not able to attend to the government of his province on account of so many summonses before the courts, than all his other sufferings.

"We are here awaiting from day to day the arrival of our Viceroy, Berkeley, which is wished for by all: those whom he left at the head of the Government acted with great moderation. The poor Catholic gentry laboured hard with their load of taxes this year; every one had to pay to the King an entire year's income; this reduced them to the straitest circumstances,



and also impoverished our clergy, which has no other revenue than the voluntary offerings of the faithful: we are here as in the primitive church. It is said that a similar tax will not be levied for the future. God grant it may be so."

Again, on the 9th of August, he writes to the Internunzio:—

"The Earl of Orrery, President of the province of Cashel, has published a most annoying edict against the clergy, in the cities of Cork and Limerick, prohibiting their saying Mass in these cities, and hence they have to go out to the country to celebrate Mass.

"As the Roman climate is not agreeing with Dr. Brennan, and he is, consequently, obliged to return to Ireland, the bishops of this kingdom send as their Agent to the Roman Court Dr. Peter Creagh: he studied in Rome, and knows the Italian language; he is a gentlemanly man, and I am sure that he will be esteemed by your Excellency, and that he will well discharge the office entrusted to him."

On the 17th of the same month he again writes:—

"A most painful event happened in the town of Ross, in the diocese of Ferns. A certain Nicholas Nugent, of the Society of Jesus, challenged the Protestant minister to a dispute. Amongst other things the Protestant minister asked him did he admit that the King was the head of the Church in this Kingdom. Father

Nicholas replied that the King was master in temporal or civil things, but that the Pope was head in spiritual matters. During the dispute Father Nicholas also called the Bible used by the Protestants a false Bible, full of errors, and hence not to be styled the word of God. The polite minister cited the good father in the month of July before the assizes of Ross. He was there tried for having used the above language, as also for having said Mass publicly, and was condemned to pay 130 scudi, as well as to one year's imprisonment, and the confiscation of all his goods. I must confess that the Father might have kept out of these questions, and avoided these odious disputes, from which little good ever results, as experience has convinced us. When a person is found guilty of *præmunire*, the King only can pardon him."

On the 2nd of October Dr. Plunket further informs the Internunzio :—

"Dr. Brennan wrote to me more than once that Monsignor Baldeschi would receive in Propaganda two youths of noble birth from my diocese : one is of the family of O'Neal, the noblest of this kingdom ; the other is nephew of the Earl of Fingall and of Sir Nicholas Plunket, a most zealous Catholic, as all allow : and as our Agent, Dr. Creagh, is about to start for Rome, and in two days will embark for Bordeaux, and as he knows the French and Italian well, and is of most gentlemanly deportment, they will travel in his company, and I hope that they will

become learned and prudent and good labourers and prelates in this kingdom, at their own good time."

1672. Early in February, 1672, the Papal Bull, granting a Jubilee to the faithful, in order to conciliate the aid of heaven in favour of the kingdom of Poland, was received by the Archbishops of Ireland. And though our records merely commemorate its having been received and published by them, yet we may rest assured that the heroic constancy which that nation displayed, and the severe persecutions which it endured, awakened a lively interest, and enkindled an ardent devotion in the faithful people of Ireland.

Before the close of this year the Internunzio Airoidi was promoted from Brussels to Florence. Dr. Plunket, whilst he rejoiced at his promotion, laments the loss of his services to the Irish Church, which had been productive of so much good:—

"I have received your letter," he says, "of the 6th of December, and it occasions consolation at the same time and affliction,—joy and sadness; and it gives occasion of congratulating your Excellency, and of condoling with this nation, which you found disturbed and agitated in spiritual matters, whilst you leave it in tranquillity and peace; and now that Coppinger has submitted, and that the Archbishop of Dublin and I are reconciled, I do not see what there is to disturb the kingdom. Even

the Dominicans and Franciscans are now at peace, of which matters I shall give a detailed account to Cardinals Altieri, Rospigliosi, and my other masters in the Eternal City.

“So then your Excellency goes to Florence, where Galileo and the Crusca are all the fashion; thence to Venice; afterwards to Madrid, and then to the Purple, which brings with it many other consequences. As hitherto I have been one of your most annoying correspondents from this kingdom, with my long and tedious letters, so I do not know if you will entirely get rid of me in Florence, and I will continue my correspondence, together with my affectionate devotedness to your Excellency.”

1673. On the 8th of October, 1673, the Archbishop of Armagh thus wrote to the Internunzio in Brussels:—

“Before my arrival in these northern kingdoms, there were but few Irish prelates that kept up correspondence with your predecessors; and I do not hesitate to say that I wrote more letters during the last four years than the Irish bishops during the preceding thirty years. I moreover stimulated the other prelates to write and to correspond with the Holy See, and I expended about 400 scudi (£100) in this correspondence.

“I found that the Catholic children were frequenting Protestant schools, and hence I brought the Jesuits hither, who, for three years and three months, have held schools, to the

great advantage of religion. In addition to the 500 scudi which I gave them in the first two years, God alone knows all that I expended, in frequent journeys to Dublin, to reply to the memorials which the Protestant ministers and teachers presented to the Viceroy against the Jesuit schools.

“The few pence that I put together are now all gone, and my diocese gives me only 240 scudi a year. The Protestant primate has all the revenue, which amounts to £20,000 per annum, so that we are precisely in the same condition as the bishops of the primitive Church.

“The whole kingdom, as far as regards ecclesiastical matters, enjoys at present the greatest peace. God grant that the next Parliament may give us no annoyance. Should anything of that nature happen you shall be informed of it, and in conclusion I make a profound reverence.”

1674. The long-threatened persecution against the Catholics was in this year let loose in all its fury. The clergy were everywhere obliged to fly to the woods and mountains to seek a refuge: still, as good shepherds, they did not neglect to visit and console their flocks, and often did they sacrifice their lives in this ministry of charity. The details of this persecution, as regards our primate, will be found in another chapter. Early in the year letters were addressed to him by the Sacred Congre-

gation extolling his zeal and courage in braving the threatening storm, and on the 8th of May, letters were again addressed to him renewing these commendations, and exhorting him to constancy and firmness of soul. Other afflictions were added to the sword, and the Internunzio writes on the 11th of August, 1674: "I received intelligence from various quarters that a great famine prevails in Ireland, and that the greater part of its prelates are reduced to a most miserable condition, as they endure not only persecution, but also the privation of those emoluments which they usually received from their dioceses."

1675. On the departure of the Internunzio, Falconieri, from Brussels, in the commencement of this year, Signor Agretti remained there as acting agent, with the title of Pro-Internunzio. Writing to the Sacred Congregation on 20th of April, 1675, he says:—

"Father Howard has written to state that the King of England made his excuses with him in regard of the late edict against the Catholics, saying that his intention in publishing this edict was to favour the Catholics; as, had he not published it, the parliament would assuredly have enacted a similar decree, which would be an irrevocable law; whilst, on the contrary, when published by the king, it was in his power to connive at the Catholics, and recall the edict when an occasion presented itself."

Whatever may have been the King's intentions, the storm of persecution continued to rage against the Irish Catholics, and in consequence of the imminent risks to which our bishops were exposed, the visiting of the sacred *Limina* was dispensed with in their regard for twenty-five years, and faculty was granted them of making this visit through their resident Procurator in the Roman court.

A paper presented to the Sacred Congregation in the following year by Father Molloy, of the order of St. Francis, records one of those arts by which the clergy, whilst they continued their usual functions, succeeded in eluding the vigilance of their persecutors :—

“In Ireland,” he says, “we are often obliged to celebrate our chapters in the mountains and woods, when forsooth there is danger in other parts. The last time, however, it was held in a city and on a fair day, for whilst the world was engaged in trafficking, the religious, with a holy cunning, feigned a similar occupation, but far different was their business, viz., the holding of the chapter; this happened in the month of August, 1675.”

1676. In a note of the archives of Propaganda for the Congregation of 10th February, 1675, we find the following reference to a letter of the Archbishop of Armagh, of which we have been unable to discover any further trace :—

“The Archbishop of Armagh writes for the

renewal of faculties for himself and the Bishop of Meath, as these faculties have almost expired. He writes, moreover, that De Burgo, formerly Vicar-Apostolic, has been imprisoned in the province of Tuam, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment and the confiscation of all his property; as he has no means of subsistence, Dr. Plunket supposes that he shall receive assistance from the Sacred Congregation."

In the preceding year the general Jubilee had been celebrated with great solemnity in Rome, but so violent was the persecution, so many the afflictions to which the Irish Catholics were subjected, that few could visit the sacred shrines of the Eternal City, and perform the works prescribed for gaining its Indulgences. The Archdeacon of Dublin, Isidore Bertach, had come to Rome, in the year of which we are now speaking (1676), to perform the visit *ad limina*, in the name of his venerable bishop; and the four archbishops of Ireland availed themselves of this opportunity to solicit through him that a special Jubilee should be granted to Ireland, so that all the indulgences of that holy time might be gained by the faithful without their being obliged to leave the shores of our island.

It was in this year, too, that Dr. John Brennan, Bishop of Waterford, and the bosom friend of our archbishop, was transferred to the see of Cashel. A little before this translation, Dr. Plunket went on a visit to some relatives



in these dioceses, and availed himself of the opportunity thus presented to him to examine the state of ecclesiastical discipline in these parts. "The Archbishop of Armagh, our Primate," thus writes Dr. Brennan, on 16th September, 1676, "is at present in this quarter of the world. He inspected the diocese of Cashel and my diocese to his great satisfaction, seeing that ecclesiastical matters were in as great order as the condition of the times will allow." The primate himself, writing on the 1st of October, 1676, gives a detailed account of this visit. This letter is as follows:—

"Before receiving yours of the 18th of last month, being already aware, through another channel, of the death of our glorious common Father and Pastor, I wrote to the suffragan dioceses, inviting both clergy and people, in a pressing manner, to implore the divine mercy for the eternal welfare of the deceased parent of Christendom; and for the immediate election of a holy successor of St. Peter; but now, at the request of your Excellency, and in obedience to their Eminences, I shall write again to the different dioceses, nor will I be wanting on my own part to offer my feeble prayers in a matter of such importance.

"During the past four weeks I was on a visit with some relatives and friends in Cashel and Waterford, where, through the goodness of God, and the kindness of the Bishop of Waterford, I saw all the clergy; they are very

orderly, and devoted to the service of God ; and the Catholics, although poor, are rich in spiritual consolations. Had I not myself witnessed the poverty of the Catholics, both ecclesiastics and laity, in the districts in Cashel, I could with difficulty, have believed it. In the city of Cashel there is not a single Catholic that could give lodging for one night ; there is but one parish priest in the whole city ; in the surrounding districts the soldiers and officers of Cromwell hold nearly all the lands, having expelled the Catholic tenants ; so that in these districts, and in the whole diocese, there are only twenty priests, who subsist with difficulty, so that the episcopal revenue is no more than 80 scudi per annum ; the late Archbishop had at his death only 20 scudi, whilst his debts exceeded 100 scudi. Hence, I see how justly the Bishop of Waterford refuses to be promoted to this archdiocese ; for, how could a bishop support himself, and also a servant, with 80 scudi a year ? To say the truth, there is no one better qualified, either by learning or prudence, or the esteem of the people, for the Pallium of Cashel than Dr. Brennan, and perhaps he would accept it without difficulty were he allowed to retain the administration of his present diocese, which, indeed, is not half a quarter of an hour's drive ; what do I say ? it is not even the distance of a Miserere from the archdiocese of Cashel. The diocese which he now governs has no more than thirty priests,

so that both dioceses together have about fifty priests, and thus his revenue will reach about 200 scudi per annum. Now the Bishop of Cork has about eighty priests in his diocese; the Bishop of Killaloe seventy; the Bishop of Meath seventy; and the Bishop of Elphin fifty, with more extensive districts than the Bishop of Waterford would thus have with his fifty priests. The Archbishop of Cashel had at other times the diocese of Waterford in administration, or in *commendam*, and considering the vicinity of the two dioceses, it would be more advantageous for Waterford to be subject to his administration than to be governed by a Vicar-Capitular. The Bishop of Waterford could administer confirmation, perform the visitations, &c., in both dioceses without difficulty; and I know that the Catholics of Cashel and Waterford most anxiously desire this."

Amongst the Irish Prelates who were most exposed to persecution during this eventful period, must be numbered Dr. John De Burgo, Vicar-Apostolic of Killala. In his youth he had served for some years as officer in the Austrian army of North Italy, but renouncing the world he dedicated himself to the service of the altar; and was appointed abbot of Clara, in the West of Ireland. From 1647 till the Bishop's death in 1650 he acted as Vicar-General of Killaloe, and we find him three years later arrested by Cromwell, and sent in company with eighteen other priests into banishment.

For some years he laboured in the sacred ministry in France and Italy, till 1671, when he received a brief from Rome appointing him Vicar-Apostolic of the ancient see of Killala.

Before the close of 1674, he was arrested by order of the Crown, accused of "bringing Protestants to the Catholic faith, contrary to the statutes of the kingdom, exercising foreign jurisdiction, preaching perverse doctrines, and remaining in the kingdom despite the act of Parliament of 28th March, 1674, &c." For two years he was detained in prison, with irons on his hands and feet. At the assizes he publicly declared that the Pope, as Vicar of Christ, was Head of the Catholic Church; he rejected with scorn a private offer that was made to him of being promoted to a Protestant bishoprick, should he conform to the Established Church. Conducted from Ballinrobe to Dublin, he there displayed the same firmness, and was at length sentenced to the confiscation of his goods and perpetual imprisonment. The Earl of Clanrickard, who was his relative, soon after obtained his release, which was accorded on condition that he should pay the sum of £80 sterling within one month, and retire to the Continent.

During his imprisonment, De Burgo made a vow to visit the holy places should he re-attain his liberty. In 1679, he fulfilled this vow; but on his return from Jerusalem was captured by pirates in the Mediterranean, stript of all he

possessed, and sold as a slave. He, however, found means to escape to Constantinople, where he took refuge with the Austrian ambassador. He thence proceeded to Venice and Rome, and receiving frequent aid from the Sacred Congregation, seems to have passed in peace the closing years of his eventful life.

1677. The Internunzio, Tanari, on the 4th December, 1677, writes that he had received intelligence from the Archbishop of Armagh of numerous bodies of banditti having organized themselves throughout the kingdom, whilst, on the other hand, troops of soldiery roamed through the country to exterminate them, "so that great prejudice resulted thence to those who profess our holy religion." All that was vile, and worthless, and immoral, joined these bandit corps, and from them the government of the nation chose its perjured witnesses to lead to the scaffold the Primate of our Church, and to cast opprobrium on our holy religion.

1678. A warm controversy had been long carried on between the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin regarding the primacy of their respective sees. Dr. Hugh M'Mahon, in his learned treatise on this subject, assures us that in 1678, Dr. Plunket prepared for the press a reply to the work which Dr. Talbot, Archbishop of Dublin, had published in Lisle in 1674, in defence of the primacy of his see; however, the storm which was soon let loose on our suffering country, and the arrest of both arch-

bishops, terminated, at least during their episcopate, the primatial controversy. In the prison of Dublin, in the following year, Dr. Plunket and Dr. Talbot were side by side (being confined in adjoining rooms), both captives for the faith. Before the glorious end of his earthly career, the Archbishop of Dublin wished to give a final proof to the world that he was moved only by a sense of duty in carrying on this controversy, and that notwithstanding their apparent conflict, the fire of charity ever glowed in his courageous soul; and hence, he addressed from his prison chamber, in which he was soon to die, an humble apology to Dr. Plunket, asking his pardon and forgiveness for any fault into which in the warmth of the dispute, he might have fallen. In this holy rivalry of Catholic charity and mutual love, Dr. Plunket was not to be overcome; and when it was reported to him that the Archbishop of Dublin was about to enter on his agony, Dr. Plunket could no longer be restrained, but bursting through his guards, rushed to give a last embrace and absolution to the dying confessor of our holy faith.

A letter of the Archbishop of Cashel, dated the 6th of April, acquaints us with some heads of accusations that were at this time made against the Archbishop of Armagh:—

“As to the accusation against the Archbishop of Armagh, that he is too familiar with the Protestant ministers, to the great scandal of the

faithful, I must say, that during the whole time of my stay in this country, I never found traces of any such scandal. Moreover, if they mean by Protestant ministers, ministers of the Protestant Church, it is indeed true that he is familiar with one of them who is attached to the court of the pseudo-primate ; and this friendship is of great advantage to his flock, for when any lawsuits regarding Catholics, especially in matrimonial cases, are brought to the Protestant Episcopal Court, this minister remits them all to Dr. Plunket. I have not received information of his being familiar with any other minister of the Protestant Church. If by Protestant ministers, they understand the magistrates and other ministers of the court, it is true that he is familiar with many of them, and he derives great benefit from them ; as when any evil persons, whether lay or ecclesiastical, bring accusations against him before these ministers, they from their own personal knowledge reject them, and it is probable, that were it not for his acquaintance with these persons, he would long since have been banished from the kingdom, like the Archbishops of Dublin and Tuam, so great is the malignity of these informers.

“ That the Primate is not well disposed towards the natives of that province is certainly a calumny. For, in the whole province but one individual received promotion from his own family, and even that one belonged to the province of Armagh. The Bishops of Down and

Clogher, who died about two years ago, were both natives of the province ; the present Bishop of Clogher, too, though indeed Dr. Plunket had nothing to do in his appointment, is a native of one of the suffragan dioceses. Moreover, I know for certain that the Archbishop bears the greatest love for those of his province, and that he seeks to promote their interests both within and without this realm. Indeed, in my opinion, the present Archbishop of Armagh has attended more to the spiritual administration of that province than any of his predecessors for many years ; and I say this without wishing to lower in any way the merit of the preceding primates."

1679.—This year witnessed the renewal of the persecution in all its fury. The See of Meath had to lament the demise of Dr. Patrick Plunket, who, in his last moments, was comforted by the presence of the Primate ; and the whole Irish Church was filled with mourning, her chief prelates being cast into prison, and the remaining clergy being obliged to seek a shelter on the mountain tops, or in the caverns and forests. The occurrences, however, of this and the two succeeding years will hereafter claim a more special attention.



## CHAPTER XV.

## PERSECUTION OF 1674.

TOWARDS the close of 1673, the English monarch, yielding to the bigotry of the Parliament, published an order suspending the few favours which had been granted to the Catholics of Ireland during the administration of Berkeley, and commanding all the bishops and regular clergy to depart from the kingdom. Thus were too soon sadly verified the anticipations of Dr. Plunket, which we have already met with in many of his letters. Indeed, the Catholics had as yet scarce begun to taste the sweets of toleration when this new storm of persecution was let loose against them. The use of arms was interdicted to them: "they were disfranchised in all corporations, and deprived of corporate honours and emoluments; the powers vested in the Lord Lieutenant and Council to regulate corporations were twisted into a legislative authority of new-modelling them, and of imposing oaths and qualifications contrary to law, and subversive of the rights of the subject."\*

What were the sufferings of Dr. Plunket and of the Bishop of Waterford, who was the companion of his flight, will be best learned from

\* History of the Irish Cath., by Mathew O'Connor, p. 105.

the letters of the Primate. Soon after the publication of the King's edict in Ireland, he thus writes to the Internuncio on 27th January, 1674 :—

“ I have received yours of the 12th of December, as also the letter sent to the companion of my sufferings, which, indeed, are very great in this first month of the new year ; so that this year begins with a cloud which is truly thickening, and presages a dreadful storm, as you will see from the following narrative.

“ In the edict published against the bishops and regulars, there was a clause, that whatsoever bishop or regular would have his name enrolled on the magistrates' list in the maritime forts, with the intention of taking his departure from the kingdom, should suffer no molestation ; nay, more, that he should be protected till a vessel would be found ready to sail for foreign countries. Some bishops, as Dr. Plunket, of Meath, and Dr. O'Molony, of Killaloe, entered their names in Dublin ; many of the regulars, with the Archbishop of Tuam, gave their names in Galway, and some others in various other parts of the kingdom, hoping that the storm would pass, and that peace and calm would be soon restored. Quite the contrary, however, happened. The Viceroy, on the 10th, or thereabouts, of this month, published a further proclamation that the registered clergy should be treated with the greatest rigour. Another, but secret, order, was also given to all the magis-

trates and sheriffs, that the detectives should seek out, both in the city and throughout the country, the other bishops and regulars. I and my companion no sooner received intelligence of this, than, on the 18th of this month (styl. vet.), which was Sunday, after Vespers, being the festival of the Chair of St. Peter, we deemed it necessary to take to our heels; the snow fell heavily, mixed with hailstones, which were very hard and large; a cutting north wind blew in our faces, and the snow and hail beat so dreadfully in our eyes, that to the present we have scarcely been able to see with them. Often we were in danger in the valleys of being lost and suffocated in the snow, till at length we arrived at the house of a reduced gentleman who had nothing to lose; but, for our misfortune, he had a stranger in his house, by whom we did not wish to be recognized: hence, we were placed in a large garret, without chimney and without fire, where we have been during the past eight days: may it redound to the glory of God, the salvation of our souls, and of the flocks entrusted to our charge. So dreadful was the hail and cold, that the running of the eyes both of my companion and myself has not ceased as yet, and I feel that I shall lose more than one tooth, so frightful is the pain. I have suffered in all my teeth; my companion, moreover, was attacked with rheumatism in one arm, so that he can scarcely move it. In a word, we may say with truth, that our flight was *in winter, and on*

*the Sabbath*, that is on Sunday, which was also the feast of the Chair of St. Peter. Blessed be God who granted us the favour of suffering, not only for the Chair of St. Peter, but on the very day dedicated to the feast of that Chair, which, resting on a rock, will, as I hope, in the end break the violence of these tempestuous waves.

“ Though I have not as yet heard of the arrest of any, except a certain Father Eugene Cogli (Quigley), of the order of St. Dominick, Prior of Tuam, and a Father Francis Brennan, in Mullingar, nevertheless, I fear that for the future room will be wanting in the prisons, so many will be arrested; for, as I am informed, the sheriffs and magistrates of the king received orders to hunt out the bishops and regulars, searching for them even in private houses. May God assist us.”

Dr. Brennan added the following lines to this letter:—

“ On the 14th of December I gave an account to your Excellency of my flight, and of the occasion of it. Up to the present God has protected me in the company of my old Roman companion; we have been together, sharing the same fate for the last two months, and he has described above its annoyances. The spies, however, occasion still greater anxiety, for we are at every moment exposed to them, especially now that the Lord Lieutenant has avowed his determination to carry the proclamation into effect, and for this purpose has already

published a new edict. We trust, in the mercy of God, that He will give us grace to endure all this, and conform ourselves to His holy will. I will not fatigue your Excellency by detailing the sad news with which our island is full at the present time. May God console us, and grant many years to your Excellency, &c.

“JOHN OF WATERFORD.

“27th Jan., 1674.”

Even after these lines of Dr. Brennan, the Primate added another postscript, in which he writes:—

“At the moment of closing this, I received two letters from London, one of the 10th of January, the other of the 12th, and they bring but little consolation or hope. The Parliament made an order that no Catholic could lodge within ten miles of London, and they sent away all the Catholics that have a permanent residence there. . . . . If such rigour is shown against the Catholics in the chief and model city, London, there can be but little prospect of relief for us in this country. No matter; the mercy of God is greater than all human efforts and machinations.”

About a fortnight later Dr. Plunket again wrote to the Internunzio:—

“We are here still in great fear and trembling, for *our neighbour's house is on fire*. In Scotland, the Parliament enacted that for the future it should be considered high treason to

hear Mass. It would seem that the days of Nero and Domitian and Diocletian have returned ; the penalty of this crime of high treason is to be embowelled and quartered. So thus we shall have the blood of martyrs in abundance to fertilize the Church. . . . . It was also commanded, under the strictest penalties, that all the sons of Catholics throughout the whole kingdom should be educated in the Protestant tenets. It was even proposed that all the priests of the whole kingdom should be imprisoned for life. The treaty of peace proposed by Holland, and favoured by the Spanish ambassador, diverted their attention, and at present engrosses their thoughts ; in my opinion, however, this peace will not be made, for the Dutch are resolved to fish in the British Ocean, and on the coasts of Greenland, whilst the English are equally determined not to yield these fisheries to them.

“ In fine, listen to another edict, or proclamation, which was published on the 24th of last month, and commanded that the 4th of February should be observed as a solemn fast : behold, a general fast now intimated. And for what purpose ? To invoke and implore the Divine assistance against the dreadful machinations and plottings of the Papists. You may easily imagine in what affliction and confusion we are. These times are like to the primitive church ; and I hope that the church will once more be rendered glorious, and be enriched

with the sufferings and martyrdoms of its northern children, who are humble and devoted servants, and imitators of Christ and the Apostles, and that the adverse storm will aid us more even than the favouring breeze.

“These edicts, and proclamations, and decrees, do not as yet regard Ireland, for it is not expressly mentioned in them ; but I think there is, as usual, no danger of their forgetting us. Should they come to us, God be praised, we shall welcome them : at least, we will not be mercenaries ; with the halter round our throat, they shall have to drag us to the vessel, for otherwise we shall not abandon the sheep or the lambs. I beseech you to procure for us the prayers of the servants of God, that thus God may protect us, and may grant to us the gift of holy perseverance.”

The only provision which had been made by the Primate for this flight and concealment, as he mentions in another of his letters, was a collection of books, and with these and his loved companion, this time of persecution, despite its dangers and sufferings, must have been to him one of peace and heavenly calm. He was often obliged to change his abode. If the place of refuge, just described in the preceding letters, was so ill provided with any convenience, that it seemed a prison rather than an abode, the hut to which, at other times, he was compelled to retreat, seems to have likened him still more to the martyrs of the primitive Church. “The hut in which Dr. Brénnan and myself have

taken refuge (he writes towards the close of 1673), is made of straw; when we lie down to rest, through the openings of the roof we can see the stars; and when it rains we are refreshed, even at the head of the bed, by each successive shower." At this period, too, a little oaten bread was their only support; "yet," the Primate adds, "*we choose rather to die of hunger and cold than to abandon our flocks, since it would be shameful for those spiritual soldiers to become mercenaries, who were trained in Rome.*" (15th Dec., 1673.)

The other accounts of the persecution of this year corroborate the narrative of Dr. Plunket. Thus the superior of the Capuchins, Father Patrick Barnewall, writes from London to Cardinal Spinola:—

"I have once more returned from Ireland to England, as the persecution is far more intolerable there than it is here. In Ireland no one, under penalty of losing all that he possesses, can receive a religious into his house; all the convents, as well as all preaching, are rigorously interdicted; the secular priests alone are tolerated, in order not to excite public tumults. In London twenty-five scudi are given to whosoever discovers a priest; so your Excellency may imagine in what manner we are able to live here. Nevertheless the bounty of God displays the wonders of His mercy to the confusion of the persecutors, for every day witnesseth new conversions to truth."



This persecution seems to have continued during the whole of the year 1674 : even in the first months of the following year the Parliament threatened its renewal, with still more rigorous edicts, and on the 5th of March, 1675, Dr. Plunket thus wrote to Monsignor Ravizza, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation ;—

“ You will have already heard how a few days ago, new rigorous edicts were published in England against the Catholics, so that we are here in fear and trembling. Should they affect us here we must fly once more to the woods and caverns, in which we have already, for fifteen months, passed a severe novitiate.”

However, this new storm seems not to have reached the Irish shores, and heaven granted a few years peace, of which the Primate untiringly availed himself to visit again the various districts of his province, to correct abuses, and sanction salutary laws of discipline for the safe guidance of the faithful people entrusted to his care.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

DR. PLUNKET PROMOTES DEVOTION TO THE HOLY  
SEE IN IRELAND.

DEVOTED attachment to the Holy See has been from the first a characteristic feature of

our Irish Church. St. Patrick, before assuming his glorious apostolate amongst us, resolved, as we read in his ancient life, "to visit the See of Peter, the citadel and teacher of Christian faith, and the fountain source of every apostolate; that by its apostolical authority his mission might be sanctioned and confirmed."\* Having led our people captive to the sweet yoke of Christ, he bequeathed to them his favourite maxim, "as you are Christians, so be you children of Rome;" and he laid down as the very foundation of the Irish Church, the principle from which its undying life and wondrous fecundity have sprung, that "if questions shall arise in this land, let them be referred to the Apostolic See." In succeeding ages, the Irish Church faithfully clung to these salutary maxims. In every difficulty, "like loving children, the Irish people had recourse to their fond mother."† Rome, as a new Jerusalem, became the centre of their pilgrimages, and at its sanctuaries and shrines they loved to rekindle their charity and faith. Hence, the great St. Columban, when writing to the Roman Pontiff, styles him "the most beautiful Head of all the Churches of the whole of Europe, the beloved Pope, the exalted prelate, the pastor of pastors, the mystic pilot of the ship spiritual,

\* See "Essays on the Early Irish Church," by Rev. P. F. Moran, p. 117, seq.

† Letter of St. Cummian, in the year 634.

that is the church;" and of his own countrymen he writes, "we are the disciples of SS. Peter and Paul, receiving nothing save what is the evangelical and apostolic doctrine; none of us has been a heretic, none a Jew, none a schismatic; but the faith, just as it was at first delivered by you, the successors of the holy apostles, is held unshaken. . . . . We are bound to the chair of St. Peter, for although Rome is a great and illustrious city, yet it is only through this chair that she is great and renowned amongst us."

And as it was in those ages of Ireland's faith and Ireland's glory, so was it in later times in the days of our trial and humiliation. No nation of Christendom clung with more instinctive affection, more ardent devotedness, to Rome; and on her part, Rome, as a loving mother, shared in all our sorrows and persecutions, cherished our exiled sons, preserved amongst us the spark of faith, and, as of old, she decreed to us the distinctive title of "Island of Saints and of learned men," so now she awarded to us the still more peerless crown of "the Martyr-Island of Holy Church."

These memories are at all times dear to us, but more particularly they rush to mind at the present day, when our bishops have returned in triumph to their devoted flocks, after repeating in clear and unfaltering accents, beneath the gilded dome of St. Peter's, the doctrine of our early saints, and foremost

among the bishops of the church of God, assembled in the Vatican Council, proclaiming the prerogatives of St. Peter's successor, and the unerring privilege of the Vicar of Christ.

But to revert to the episcopate of Dr. Plunket: the Church of Ireland was exposed to special dangers at the time when he returned to our shores. About the year 1665, a few students of Paris and Louvain had had their minds contaminated with the doctrines of Jansenius, and on their return to Ireland sought to disseminate those erroneous tenets in some remote districts. Gerard Ferrall, afterwards Vicar-Apostolic of Ardagh, when agent of the Archbishop of Armagh in Rome, had addressed to Clement IX. an earnest appeal to have chief pastors appointed to the vacant sees:—"The continued series of bishops," he says, "was the chief means by which faith was so well preserved, and by their authority, and piety, and counsel, and vigilance, not only was the Irish nation itself preserved Catholic, but also many foreign heretics, with their children and families, were converted to the faith;" and subsequently he added, as an urgent motive for thus appointing bishops, especially at that period, "*that there were some who now sought to introduce and disseminate Jansenism*" throughout Ireland.

Peter Walsh, to whose name a sad notoriety must ever be attached in the annals of our country, seems to have been amongst those who cherished the doctrines and principles of Jan-

senius. When a member of the Franciscan order in Louvain, he became acquainted with, and an admirer of that broacher of novel doctrines. To him Walsh dedicated his Public Thesis on Philosophy, and when the heretical work, *Augustinus*, was printed, after the death of Jansenius, he boasts of having been the first to read its proof sheets as they came from the press.\* All the later efforts of this unfortunate man to induce the Irish clergy to adopt his remonstrance were but an attempt to realize in practice the teaching of Jansenius, for which in early life he had professed so great an esteem.

Whilst Dr. Talbot, Archbishop of Dublin, won for himself the title of *the hammer of the Remonstrants*, by his unceasing opposition to Peter Walsh and his followers, Dr. Plunket was not less actively engaged, in union with Dr. Brennan, of Waterford, in checking the silent current of Jansenism, and in exposing the secret evil which threatened to infect our "sainted isle." Some of the decrees of the synods of Clones and Ardpatrik were directed against the consequences of these erroneous doctrines; and the necessity of thus enacting special decrees against them sufficiently attests the activity with which the agents of error sought to disseminate these doctrines. On the 27th of March, 1677, Dr. Plunket writes from

\* "History of Remonst.," p. 75.

Dublin to Cardinal Altieri, Cardinal Protector of Ireland, detailing the pernicious errors by which the purity of faith was assailed, and asking for some remedy from Rome to check the growing evil :—

“ Though the Parliament lately held in London fills us with alarm by its edicts, threatening to despoil the Catholics of their lands and possessions, yet the Catholics of these kingdoms are far more terrified at the spiritual calamities which seem impending, from the remains of Jansenism, and the novelties which continue yet to spread in France and Belgium: for it is from various parts of these countries that spiritual labourers come to cultivate this vineyard. You are already aware of how dangerous the doctrines are which, in their printed tracts, are circulated everywhere, concerning the fallibility of the Roman Pontiff,—the authority of St. Augustine, as if it were superior to the definitions of Rome,—the invalidity of absolution without the perfect love of God,—the necessity of reforming in many things the worship of God, of the Blessed Virgin, and the saints,—reproving frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, &c.

“ These, and many other things repugnant to the constant teaching and practice of the Church, are a source of much anxiety to us; but, besides the sad results as regards our faithful people, an occasion also may be given to the heretics of these kingdoms to reprove us, as if

we sought to introduce some new reformation of the Catholic Church.

“Hence, in order that the purity of faith may be preserved intact and inviolate in this kingdom, which is placed under the patronage of your Eminence, I pray and beseech you, with all reverence and submission, to lay the aforesaid things before his Holiness and the Sacred Congregation, that thus some remedy, embracing all, may be devised, lest this kingdom should become infected with the delirium of the Jansenists. In the meantime, both I and the clergy entrusted to me will not cease, on our part, to maintain the true purity of doctrine, and to impugn all perverse teaching. I know that this will be in accordance with the desires of his Holiness and of your Eminence, for whose welfare I shall ever pray, &c.”

Without delay the vigilance of the Holy See was awakened to counteract the efforts of the emissaries of error, who thus sought to corrupt the doctrines of faith in our Irish Church. We find in the acts of the Sacred Congregation frequent reference made to instructions given to the Internuncio in Brussels to this effect; but the most interesting monument connected with the subsequent history of Jansenism at this period is a letter of Dr. Brennan when transferred to the Archiepiscopal See of Cashel. This letter is dated the 15th of October, 1678, and is addressed to the Internuncio, in reply to a Communicaton from Rome, in which some pre-

cise information had been requested regarding the Jansenistical works which were being circulated in Ireland. Dr. Brennan not only gives a minute account of these books, but, moreover, affords sufficient data to attest the complete failure of Jansenism in seeking to obtain any footing in Ireland.

"I have received, with all reverence, the commands of the Sacred Congregation, under date of the 8th of March last, to give a precise account of the books containing the teaching of Jansenius, which have come into these quarters, as also of their authors and partizans. In compliance with these most esteemed commands, I beg to inform your Excellency, that we find here the New Testament, printed in France, in the French language, and having various errors contrary to the Vulgate, and to the Catholic religion. Another work is also met with, entitled 'On frequent Communion,' printed in French, and translated into English, having errors contrary to true devotion, and the practices of Holy Church. . . .

"As to the followers of the errors of Jansenius, thanks to God they are but few in this country. There was one regular who was deeply tinged with these errors, but I acted severely with him, and imposed silence on him, so that he retracted, and has become observant. It is for this reason, as also on account of his being a foreigner, that I refrain from mentioning his name, especially as he is neither notorious nor contumacious.



For the future, in consequence of the great vigilance and circumspection which are used, we hope that God may be served here in the fulness of pure and sound doctrine."

Thus was Jansenism soon repelled from our Irish shores. Our bishops sought at the central source of truth the remedy for the threatened evil, as in the early ages of the Irish Church they looked for aid to that See whence the light of faith had come to them, and, as children who have recourse to their mother, they derived thence counsel, and strength, and consolation.

Paris was at this period the great centre of Jansenism, and hence the chief danger of having our Church infected with its errors seemed to impend from that quarter. In fact, Dr. O'Molony, when urging upon the authorities in Rome the necessity of establishing an Irish College in Paris, put forward as a leading motive, the danger which otherwise the Irish students would there incur of having their minds poisoned with the tenets of Jansenism. Moreover, he stated from his own experience that some members of our Irish clergy then resident in that city were ardent promoters of these erroneous doctrines. This accusation of the Bishop of Killaloe gave occasion to a large number of Irish ecclesiastics then resident in Paris to enter a formal protest against the doctrines of Jansenism, and present it, with their signatures, to Dr. Creagh, Bishop of Cork and Cloyne, and Dr. Tyrrell, of Clogher, who were then hastening

to take possession of their sees, and request them to forward it to Rome. It is now preserved in the archives of the Sac. Cong. of Propaganda. It is addressed to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, and is as follows:—

“The undersigned, who are Irishmen by birth, and by profession Catholics, through the grace of God, as to orders, priests; in sacred theology, respectively, masters, licentiates, bachelors, masters of arts, and scholars; most humbly lay before your Eminences that they have learned, not without great affliction of soul, that they have been traduced, and, as well in Rome as elsewhere, have been accused of Jansenism; whilst, as they solemnly protest, they abhor nothing more than each and every doctrine repugnant to the true faith which the Holy Apostolic Roman See professes, and especially the Jansenistic doctrine combined in the five propositions condemned by the same Holy Roman Church. Wherefore, that your Eminences may be convinced of how unjustly they have been accused of the aforesaid Jansenism, they now, by this present letter, protest that they never held or taught such doctrine, and that in time to come, whilst reason remains intact, they never will hold or teach it.”

Such was the vigour of the opposition thus directed against Jansenism, that during the next thirty years, whilst the Churches of France and Belgium were rendered desolate by the

ravages of its erroneous novelties, its very name was almost unknown in Ireland. The subsequent history of that heresy in Ireland is easily told.

About the year 1709 some travellers visiting our Irish shores brought with them the contagion of its teaching, and by circulating Jansenistical tracts and books sought to imbue the minds of some with its false maxims. Others, too, in succeeding years, seem to have repeated these attempts, though, happily, without producing any effect on the sentiments of our faithful people. The vigilance, however, of the Holy See was awakened; and in 1719, through Mgr. Santini, the Internuncio at Brussels, an admonitory address was transmitted to the prelates of Ireland, exhorting them to earnestly repel these dangers, and, at the same time, expressing a desire that they should, by some public declaration, avow their acceptance of the constitution "*Unigenitus*." The bishops of Ireland joyfully responded to this call of the Universal Father, and by their letters testified their abhorrence of the pestiferous errors of Jansenius, their acceptance of the above-mentioned constitution, and their inviolable attachment to the See of St. Peter. The letter of the Archbishop of Cashel has been fortunately preserved to us by Dr. De Burgo, in the Appendix to his "*Hibernia Dominicana*," page 819. The commencement of it is as follows:—

"MOST HOLY FATHER,—The most reverend

and illustrious the Internuncio at Brussels has signified to me, humble as I am, that your Holiness, out of your great zeal for religion, expresses a wish to receive from the bishops of Ireland some testimonial of their obedience to and observance of the constitution usually termed 'Unigenitus.' To this most reasonable desire I am perfectly convinced that all and each of these prelates will accede, agreeably to the obedience which is due to the Holy See and to your Holiness, who so gloriously presides therein; and that amongst them not one shall be found who will not subscribe to the aforesaid most wise constitution without any tergiversation, cavil, or mental reservation whatever. For, although we are poor in the world, yet are we rich in faith; if we be deprived of our episcopal revenues, we have not, however, forfeited that obedience which we are bound to yield to those who are placed over us; if we suffer under the sword of persecution, we shall never create a schism in the body of Christ, or, to the utmost of our power, allow it to be done. We may be despised and oppressed, but we will be ever solicitous to preserve with *you*, our Head, *the unity of spirit in the bond of peace*; in short, although we traverse the plains of our native land in distress and affliction, nevertheless there abides within us, even to this day, that fervent love and veneration towards the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, and that desire

to preserve all these divine rights, which, more than thirteen hundred years ago, were established among our ancestors by that glorious Apostle, St. Patrick, whom your predecessor, St. Celestine I., commissioned to preach amongst them. With justice do we glory in the fact, that among our predecessors in the hierarchy not one can be found who, in a matter of faith, has dared to manifest resistance to any constitution, decree, or Apostolical diploma. Moreover, were it necessary, we have even additional motives in which to glory, inasmuch as neither by us, nor by our clergy, nor by our people, have any of these profane and novel terms, *religious silence*, or the *question of right and of fact* been adopted, in contempt of the lawfully constituted authority; nor have those infamous books, which caused so much disturbance and scandal in Catholic countries, been known, unless, perhaps, by name, to the greater part of our nation. That love and reverence for the Roman Pontiffs, which is the first sound that strikes our ears, which in infancy has been planted in our hearts, and, in a manner, forms a component part of our nature, has long since banished these and like novelties from our land."

Such were the sentiments of affection and reverence with which the prelates of Ireland ever clung to the See of Peter.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## CORRESPONDENCE OF DR. PLUNKET.

ON the 28th of April, 1670, Prince Cardinal Altieri ascended the Papal Throne, as Clement X. To the acclamations of the Catholic nations on the Continent were united those of Ireland, and many addresses were sent from our shores congratulating him on his elevation to this high dignity. Dr. Plunket, though then engaged in the deliberations of the Synod of Dublin, hastened to lay at the feet of his Holiness the expression of the heartfelt joy with which the hearts of his faithful children of Armagh were filled, and addressed the following letter to him :—

“ MOST HOLY FATHER,—The universal jubilee of the Christian world, on the elevation of your Holiness to the Chair of St. Peter, has reached also this kingdom of Ireland, ever attached and devoted to your Holiness and to the Holy See, despite the persecutions and afflictions which it has endured since the introduction of heresy into the kingdom of England : wherefore I, as the last of the servants and children of your Holiness, join in this universal

jubilee, and prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, in the name of this province of Armagh, entrusted to my pastoral charge by the favour of the Apostolic See, I pray heaven to grant to your Holiness every necessary aid, together with many years of life, that thus you may be able to correspond to the great hopes which the whole world has conceived from your reign, for the glory of God and the public advantage of the Church. . . . We all continually pray the Most High to grant to your Holiness His grace and many years of life; and I, prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, ask your sacred blessing for the whole Catholic people of this kingdom."

This letter was enclosed in another, and addressed to the Cardinal Protector of Ireland, which thus begins:—

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EMINENCE,—Although this kingdom of Ireland be truly poor in worldly riches, yet, nevertheless, is it rich in virtue, and especially in the true faith; and hence it is meet that the jubilee of the Catholic people of this nation should be made known in Rome on the most deserved exaltation of our Holy Father to the See of St. Peter, to which this kingdom has ever been closely bound and most devoted, despite the afflictions and persecutions which are known to the whole world."

The Holy Father, notwithstanding the many cares which pressed on him in his guardianship

of the universal Church, did not delay to acknowledge the congratulations of his Irish children, and he thus wrote to the Archbishop of Armagh:—

“TO OUR VENERABLE BROTHER OLIVER, PRIMATE  
OF IRELAND.

“VENERABLE BROTHER, HEALTH, &c.

“Your most devoted letters occasioned in us a special delight, and as we learned by them that the Catholics enjoyed peace in these regions, we were truly filled with sincere joy in the Lord, for we place all the glory of the Pontifical dignity entrusted to us by the Holy Ghost in the increase of the divine worship, and in the propagation of the orthodox faith. Whilst you labour in attaining this noble end, as you truly do in your exalted sentiments of religion, your congratulations on attaining this supreme dignity in the Church must be acceptable, whilst you will every day bind us more closely in affection towards you. Go on, therefore, venerable brother, and in those regions continue with alacrity to carry out, by word and example, the commission entrusted to you, and seek to aid with every assistance those orthodox children, to whom, in our paternal solicitude, by night and by day, we are ever present. Thus, indeed, will you well correspond with your exalted office, and have God the rewarder of your renowned labours. In the meantime we embrace, in the bosom of our Pontifical love,



the devout expressions of your filial affection; we promise to you all our patronage, and from the very depths of our heart we bestow on you, and on all the Catholics of that Kingdom, our Apostolic blessing.

“ Given at St. Mary Major’s, in Rome, the 11th October, 1670, the first year of our Pontificate.”

After a brief Pontificate of six years, Clement the Tenth was succeeded by Innocent the Eleventh, who, even before his elevation to the papacy, was famed for his sanctity and charity towards the poor. “ Whilst I was in Rome (writes our primate on the 11th of August, 1677), I knew by experience the holy life of the Supreme Pontiff, and the great opinion which was entertained by all of his wisdom, prudence, and sanctity.” The primate seems to have transmitted to Rome, through the Internuncio, a congratulatory letter on the accession of this Pope to the Throne of St. Peter, and to it he seems to allude in the beginning of the letter already cited, of the 11th of August, 1677, but we have been unable to discover any further traces of it.

During the first months of the Pontificate of Clement the Tenth, Cardinal Barberini filled the office of Protector for Ireland; but in 1671 he was hurried away by death to be its protector in the heavenly court. His successor in that important post was Cardinal Altieri, a man

distinguished for his virtues and learning.\* At the same time Dr. Brennan, the agent of the Irish clergy, was appointed bishop of the united sees of Waterford and Lismore, and Dr. Peter Creagh was chosen by the Irish bishops to succeed him as their agent in Rome. Dr. Plunket availed himself of the departure of this worthy ecclesiastic for the Eternal City to express his joy on the nomination of his Eminence to be protector of our country:—

“ We are obliged to pray unceasingly to God for the long life of his Holiness, in consequence of the favour which he has done us in giving us your Eminence for Protector, for in doing so he has rendered to this nation an exceeding great benefit, and a favour the more agreeable as it was most anxiously desired by us; for we have learned from our countrymen in Rome, and from Monsignor Baldeschi, and we ourselves now daily experience, the special affection which your Eminence bears to this most afflicted kingdom, so that we cannot but hope for most happy results from the protection of a Cardinal who, for his prudence in the management of affairs, and for his piety and zeal in

\* The same learning and exalted virtues shone forth in a pre-eminent degree in our own days in another Cardinal of the same name, who having held the highest offices in the Papal court, offered himself as a holocaust for his flock, and died a martyr of charity whilst attending those stricken with cholera in Albano, during the Summer of 1867.

propagating our holy Faith, receives boundless applause, and is esteemed and revered by the whole world. I, therefore, and the whole nation, should rather congratulate ourselves than your Eminence on this event, as the whole advantage and honour will be ours, leaving to your Eminence only the fatigue and annoyance, for which you can only look to the divine Majesty for remuneration, as this oppressed nation cannot make any return for the benefits received from your Eminence, or for those which, through your Eminence, they shall receive from others, except by continually praying to God for the long life, health and prosperity of your Eminence : and the more incapable we feel ourselves of meriting the slightest of your favours, the greater merit will the ardent zeal of your charity receive from God, and so much the more glorious will be the results of your innate generosity in relieving, by your patronage, the miseries of this most afflicted nation, which, on account of its Catholic faith and the affection and unfailing reverence for the Apostolic See, has ever been in continual sufferings and trials, from the time that Queen Elizabeth, with her statutes and penal laws, scourged the poor Catholics, as your Eminence knows far better than I do."

One of the subjects most frequently spoken of in the early letters of Dr. Plunket, is the sad consequences of the ambitious scheme of Peter Walsh and his adherents, in seeking to

force upon our clergy and people the well-known Remonstrance; owing to the zealous labours of the Archbishop of Dublin and Dr. Plunket, their efforts were everywhere baffled, and Walsh himself was soon compelled to abandon our shores. Repeatedly Dr. Plunket wrote to the Holy See, detailing the progress of the struggle between the defenders of truth and of error, and laying open to the authorities in Rome, the iniquitous designs of the Remonstrants; and, at length, on the 26th of September, 1671, he was able to inform the Internuncio that their errors had been wholly rooted out from our Irish Church, and that in the whole kingdom more than five or six could not now be found who would avow themselves their partizans. We have already had occasion to refer to this letter, and it contains many valuable details connected with this question:—

“Since the return of our most benign sovereign to the government of these kingdoms, no question or art of the demon has so impeded the progress of the service of God in these countries, as the perverse efforts and designs of Walsh and his adherents. Oh, how many dissensions, how many scandals had their origin thence; and all this commotion was for the sake of vain titles and emoluments. They used all their endeavours to prevent the appointment of bishops for this kingdom, that thus there might be no superior, no pastor but themselves; they strained every nerve to attain this great

end, that there might be none to control them, but God provided otherwise, and they are now confounded. . . .

"To say the truth, our just and good God, who permits evil in order to draw good from it, has drawn great good from the iniquitous deeds of Peter Walsh. This man, about eight years ago, anxious to make a display of zeal and thus more easily gain partizans, and attract the people, obtained from Ormond a toleration for chapels and convents in Dublin and many other cities; but he wished that all the convents and even all the provinces, should be governed by his own adherents. Ormond being removed from the government, through the mercy of God, no other Viceroy molested or molests either the chapels or the convents. In the most wealthy and noble city of my diocese and of the whole province, there are three chapels, very beautiful and ornamented: the first belongs to the Capuchins, the second to the Reformed Franciscans, the third to the Jesuits. There is also one belonging to the Augustinians, but it is rather poor, so that we may well repeat what is said of the sin of Adam, "*Oh, happy fault,*" or again, "*Necessary for our good was Adam's fall.*" The city to which I allude is called Drogheda, at five hours' distance from Dublin; it is, next to Dublin, the best city in Ireland."

The correspondence of Dr. Plunket with Rome seems to have been constant even in the times of persecution. Many of his letters are

in cipher, but the Internuncio always transmitted their key to the Sacred Congregation. His assumed name on these occasions was for some time *Thomas Cox*, and afterwards *Edward Hamon* or *Hamond*; in fact all our prelates, when corresponding with Rome, were compelled to assume other names; thus Dr. Tyrrell, of Clogher, signed himself *Scurlog*, which name he afterwards changed for *Stapleton*; Dr. Cusack assumed the name of *Fleming*, and Dr. Forstall, Bishop of Kildare, the more German title, *M. F. Von Creslaw*. Even the Internuncio was seldom addressed by his proper name, and we find him at first styled *Monsieur Pruissou*, which in 1679, for greater security, was often changed into *Picquet*. The year 1675 presents fewest letters of Dr. Plunket; he had often complained of the heavy expense which his correspondence with Rome entailed on him, and of his inability to continue it, unless aided by the Sacred Congregation. More than one hundred scudi, or £25, were annually expended by him in letters, which was nearly half the entire revenue of his diocese. Through the Internuncio, about one hundred and fifty scudi were at intervals transmitted to him to aid in these expenses, but the Sacred Congregation could not devote a larger sum for that purpose, as its care had to embrace not our island alone, but the missionary countries of the whole world. The Internuncio was well aware of the motives which impelled our Primate to observe this

silence, and on the 21st of December, 1675, he wrote to the Secretary of Propaganda:—"For many weeks I have received no letter from the Archbishop of Armagh, as he, in the present afflictions, finding himself in want of means, abstains from writing, in order not to incur the heavy expense of the post." However, in 1676, Dr. Plunket resumed his correspondence with his usual vigour, and continued it even when detained in his Dublin prison. His last letter from Ireland is dated the 3rd November, 1680, and was written on board the vessel which was about to conduct him prisoner to stand his trial before a London jury. It is directed to the Internuncio:—

"Six hours before embarking for England I received your letter of the 18th inst., and from shipboard I write these lines to give you intelligence, that I communicated, in a few words, to the bishops of the provinces of Cashel, Tuam, and Armagh, as also to the Bishop of Kildare, who is nearest to me, the privilege accorded by the Sacred Congregation. I pray you, however, to reflect that it would be even more necessary to grant the faculty of dispensing for the rich than for the poor, because the rich, by recurring to their Eminences for a dispensation incur great risk of confiscation of all their property, in accordance with the statute *præmunire*, 2nd of Elizabeth.

"If possible, you will receive letters from London. In the meantime I recommend myself to

your prayers, and I have been, and am, and ever will be,

“Your Excellency’s most devoted servant,

“EDWARD HAMON.”

(Oliver Plunket.)

For some months so close was the imprisonment in London that Dr. Plunket could find no means of transmitting letters to his friends. After some time, however, the guard was so struck by his saintly composure, that, moved to compassion, he undertook to be the bearer of an occasional letter; and as soon as sentence was passed against him, greater liberty was allowed him of communicating with whomsoever he pleased. We shall have occasion hereafter to speak at greater length of the correspondence of Dr. Plunket from his London prison: it will be sufficient here to remark, that his letters breathe a true spirit of Christian heroism, and express not only a dauntless courage, but also a heavenly joy on the happy privilege which awaited him of laying down his life for the faith.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

RENEWAL OF THE PERSECUTION TOWARDS THE  
CLOSE OF 1678.

IN the year 1678 the enemies of Catholicity in England, anxious to make a last assault on the Church of their fathers, entered into a conspiracy as dark and as hideous as any known in history. The chief agent in this plot was Titus Oates, whose name has been attached to it by posterity. He had been a clergyman of the Established Church, but preferred to his benefice an infamous and vagrant life. Under ever-varying disguises he insinuated himself into some religious houses on the Continent, and made himself sufficiently acquainted with Catholic usages and distinguished Catholic names to be able to give a semblance of circumstantial accuracy to any anti-Catholic tale which he might devise. Returning to England, he found the Protestant populace in a ferment lest a Papist should succeed to the royal throne, and he soon learned that the leaders of the opposition were eager to second and repay each effort to fan the flame. Such was then the disposition of men's minds, that the monstrous romance which he constructed was hailed with

applause, and found credence, not only with the vulgar, but even with the most sober members of the King's Council. The Pope, he said, had handed over the government of England to the Jesuits, and these had already, by commissions under the great seal of the society, appointed to all the chief offices in Church and State. Once before, the Papists had burned London: that scene was to be now renewed, whilst in the confusion they were to assassinate the King, and, at a given signal, each Catholic should massacre his Protestant neighbours.

This tale was not merely greeted with applause. Oates became the idol of the people, and through the influence of his patrons, was raised on a sudden from obscurity and poverty to a position of dignity and wealth. Hence, he soon found associates and rivals. To give perjured evidence, and lead Catholics to the scaffold, had proved a good speculation, and many wished to share in its profits and honours. We shall allow a Protestant historian to trace the character of the principal of these informers. "A wretch named Carstairs, who had earned a living in Scotland, by going disguised to conventicles, and then informing against the preachers, led the way: Bedloe, a noted swindler, followed; and soon, from all the brothels, gambling-houses, and spunging-houses of London, false witnesses poured forth, to swear away the lives of Roman Catholics. One came with the story of an army of thirty thousand men, who were

to muster in the disguise of pilgrims at Corunna, and to sail thence to Wales. Another had been promised canonization and five hundred pounds to murder the King. . . . Oates, that he might not be eclipsed by his imitators, soon added a large supplement to his original narrative. . . . The vulgar believed, and the highest magistrates pretended to believe such fictions as these. The chief judges of the kingdom were corrupt, cruel, and timid. . . . The juries partook of the feelings then common throughout the nation, and were encouraged by the bench to indulge those feelings without restraint. The multitude applauded Oates and his confederates, hooted and pelted the witnesses who appeared on behalf of the accused, and shouted with joy when the verdict of guilty was pronounced.\* And hence, as the same writer had already remarked, the courts of justice, "which ought to be sure places of refuge for the innocent of every party, were disgraced by wilder passions and fouler corruptions" than could be found in the annals of England.

Such an excitement against the Catholics naturally found a response in the Protestant ascendancy of Ireland. Ormond was, at this time, Viceroy ; his private letters, indeed, prove that he gave no credence to the accusations against the Catholics, but, nevertheless, with his usual duplicity, he enacted such measures

\* Macaulay "Hist. of England," vol. i. chap. 2nd.

and laws as supposed and confirmed the belief of the reality of their treasonable designs. The council of Ireland met in the presence of the Viceroy, on the 14th of October, 1678. Their first enactment was, that all officers and soldiers should repair without delay to their respective garrisons. A proclamation ensued, commanding "all titular Popish bishops and dignitaries, and all others exercising ecclesiastical jurisdiction by authority from the See of Rome, all Jesuits and other regular priests," to depart from the kingdom before the 20th of November following; whilst a reward was offered of £10 for the capture of a bishop, and £5 for that of a regular, after that period. Orders were, at the same time, given, that all "Popish societies, convents, seminaries, and schools," should be forthwith dissolved and utterly suppressed.

To prevent all excuses for not obeying the foregoing proclamation, another was issued on the 16th of November, requiring all owners and masters of ships bound for foreign parts to receive "the Popish clergy" on board, and to transport them accordingly.

It was deemed necessary, too, to disarm the Catholics; and a special proclamation enacted, that "no persons of the Popish religion should carry, buy, use, or keep in their houses any arms without licence; and that all justices of the peace should search for such arms as were not brought in within twenty days, and bind over the offenders to be prosecuted at the next assizes."

It was feared, however, that some officers were remiss in executing these laws, and hence positive orders were further issued on the 2nd of December, by the Lord Lieutenant and council, addressed to the sheriffs of the several counties, and to be by them communicated to the justices of the peace, "taking notice of their neglect in not apprehending such of the Popish regular clergy as did not transport themselves, and requiring them to return, not only their names, but the names also of such as received, relieved, and harboured them." They were, moreover, required to return "the names of all persons licensed to carry arms, and to prosecute those who had not delivered in their arms" according to preceding proclamations.

These orders were principally directed against the prelates and regulars, but in reality the officers commissioned with their execution prosecuted alike the secular clergy; it was enough for them to raise the cry that any one was a Jesuit in disguise to obtain their reward. A proclamation, however, published on the 26th of March, 1679, had the secular clergy for its special object. It commanded "that when there was any Popish pretended parish priest of any place where any robbery or murder was committed by the tories, he should be seized upon, committed to the common gaol, and thence transported beyond the seas, unless within fourteen days after such robbery or murder the persons guilty thereof were either killed or

taken, or such discovery made thereof in that time, as the offenders might therefore be apprehended and brought to justice."

A further proclamation ordered the suppression of "Masshouses and meetings for Popish services in the cities and suburbs of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Kinsale, Wexford, Athlone, Ross, Galway, Drogheda, Youghal, Clonmel, and Kilkenny," these being the most considerable towns in the Kingdom, "in which too many precautions could not be taken."

No soldier had for many years been admitted to the army till he had taken the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. It was now rumoured that some, after entering the service, had embraced the Catholic religion, and hence a special proclamation offered rewards "for the discovery of any officer or soldier who had heard Mass or been so perverted to the Popish religion." On the same day with this proclamation (20th November, 1678), another order was issued, prohibiting all Catholics, "from entering the Castle of Dublin, or any other fort or citadel," and commanding that "no persons of the Romish religion" should be suffered to reside in the towns of Drogheda, Wexford, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Youghal, and Galway, or in any other corporation, excepting such as "for the greater part of the twelve months past had inhabited them."

The result of such stringent measures, though,

perhaps, it did not satisfy the cravings of those who had anxiously looked forward to the rooting out of Catholicity from the "Island of Saints," yet was such as even to surpass the expectations of moderate Protestants; and Carte remarks, that though all the clergy were not expelled from the kingdom, "which never was, and never will be, the consequence of a proclamation; yet more had been shipped off than could have been imagined, and the rest lurked in corners, and durst not come near the great towns."

The illustrious Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Talbot, returned to England from his exile on the Continent in 1676, and a few months before the present outburst of feeling against the Catholics, through the intercession of the Duke of York, obtained permission to revisit and console his spiritual flock. Though subject to violent disease, and apparently at the close of his eventful career, yet was he chosen by the malignant policy of Ormond, to be the first Irish victim of the persecution. Dr. Plunket announces his arrest, writing on the 27th of October, 1678:—

"The matter being proposed and decreed in the Provincial Council that I should make a visitation of the province, I commenced with Meath, which is the first suffragan diocese, and then proceeded to the diocese of Clonmacnoise, where I had scarcely finished when the news arrived by post, that Dr. Talbot of Dublin was arrested and imprisoned in the Castle or Tower

of this city. I received this news on the 21st of the past month; immediately afterwards came a proclamation or edict, banishing all the archbishops, bishops, vicars-general, and all the regulars, commanding them to leave the kingdom before the 20th of November, and threatening penalties and fines against any secular who would give them to eat or drink, or otherwise assist them. I was quite astonished at the arrest of the Archbishop of Dublin, the more so, as since his return to Ireland he did not perform any ecclesiastical function."

The Archbishop of Dublin being confined in the Castle, the other prelates fled to their retreats in the woods and morasses, whilst the flocks were scattered and filled with dismay. The Internuncio thus writes to the Secretary of Propaganda on the 17th December, 1678 :—

"The Archbishop of Dublin continues still in prison; as far as I have been able to learn, none of the other prelates have been seized on, or compelled to leave the kingdom; but it is certain that they are all retired to places far away from the public, and the most difficult of access, so that they are no longer able to continue their correspondence with me."

In the following year the primate, writing on the 15th of May, makes known the fury of the storm to which the Catholics were exposed, and the extreme poverty to which the prelates, and especially he himself, had, consequently, been reduced :—



“Here matters go on from bad to worse. A proclamation offers £10 for the arrest of a bishop or Jesuit, and £5 for the arrest of a vicar-general or friar. The police, spies, and soldiers, are in pursuit of us day and night. Colonel Patrick, an excellent Catholic, and a great protector of the Catholics, although a relative of the Duke of Ormond, was exiled by order of parliament, which is desirous of prosecuting even the Duke of York, on account of his being a Catholic. The secular priests had some connivance till the present, though in many parts, and especially in the vicinity of Armagh, they had much to suffer. Such is the rigour of the Presbyterians, of whom there is a large number in these parts; they are now the prevailing faction in the three kingdoms, and are the enemies of all monarchy and hierarchy. One might walk twenty-five or thirtymiles in districts and not meet with six Catholic or Protestant families; for all are Presbyterians and strict Calvinists.

“From my diocese, during the past twelve months, I received only 22 crowns (£5 10s.), and for the future my revenue will be still less. I expended a great deal in building schools, and in maintaining masters to instruct the youth and clergy of my province: during the past nine years I gave hospitality to all; indeed, I was the only prelate in Ireland that had a house of his own. I never would have been able to encounter such expense had I not been aided by

the charity of Colonel Patrick, who has been a greater benefactor to me than all the diocese of Armagh, or all my friends and relatives in the whole kingdom; but he now is exiled. Moreover, the severest penalties have been published in proclamations against the lay Catholics who shall receive a bishop or regular in their houses, and thus the rich are afraid of losing their possessions, whilst the poor have nothing to give."

The arrest of the Primate was the crowning deed of the diabolical conspiracy of the enemies of our holy faith, but still it did not appease their fury. The storm continued unabated, and the rage of the Protestants against the Catholics seemed every day to become more and more inflamed. The Archbishop of Cashel thus writes on the 30th of June, 1680:—

"From the month of April till the present our affairs have become considerably more perplexed. The demon excited this tempest principally by means of an apostate, the chaplain and companion of bandits, who, deserving the scaffold, found a means of obtaining pardon by accusing the Archbishop of Armagh, and many others, of a general rebellion throughout the kingdom, and persons are not wanting in other parts of the country to follow his example. This diabolical invention added greatly to the afflictions of the Catholics, and to the fury of the Protestants against us. These, for the most part, persuaded themselves that the iniquitous

imposture was a reality, and that all the bishops of this kingdom have co-operated in setting on foot this rebellion; wherefore, the *mitres* are now more than ever hated by the Protestants, who are convinced that the number of bishops is intended to give offence to the government: and hence, too, the ministers of justice are now more active than ever in searching after them. It has even been resolved on by the government to pass a most stringent act in the next Parliament (which, it is thought, will be held in September), prohibiting, under penalty of the scaffold, that any bishop should ever again enter this kingdom. God forbid that their Eminences should make any new bishops for the present, as it would only excite more and more their bile against us, and be of great damage in this land, not of pleasure, but of tribulation and persecution, where we eat the bread of affliction. But heaven is above and earth below. We hope, without ceasing, in the mercy of the divine Majesty, that He will free us from these afflictions, and that in His own time he will manifest our innocence of this pretended conspiracy, a thing which we ever anathematized, never desiring anything save the glory of God and the service of our prince. Be good enough to excuse the necessary shortness of this letter, and the absence of titles: and, as usual, I make to you my reverence.

“30th of June, 1680.”

The enemies of the Catholics in England

were not content with the slow proceedings of the Irish government. On the 3rd of March, 1680, the Earl of Anglesey wrote to the Lord Lieutenant "that it is his Majesty's absolute and unaltered pleasure (advised by all the council) to have every individual of the Popish clergy seized and imprisoned till they petition to be sent over seas, and promise never to return or practice against the state; for there is no other way to cure their madness, and there are those in England who will apprehend them all." To which his Excellency characteristically replied, that "if any in England would undertake it, they shall have the promised reward, and his thanks besides; and to tell him of the insolent deportment and signal perfidy of the Popish clergy of Ireland is to preach to him that there is pain in the gout; and he protests that he would sooner be rid of them than of that disease."

Such was their hatred against the Catholic clergy, and such their premeditated plan, which was worthy of a Diocletian or a Nero, to banish the Catholic pastors from our shores, or lead them to the scaffold. We shall conclude this chapter with the words of the impartial Fox:—

"The proceedings of the Popish plot must always be considered as an indelible disgrace upon the English nation, in which king, parliament, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, have all their respective, though certainly not equal shares. Witnesses of such a character

as not to deserve credit in the most trifling cause upon the most immaterial facts, gave evidence so incredible, or, to speak more plainly, so impossible to be true, that it ought not to have been believed if it had come from the mouth of Cato ; and upon such evidence, from such witnesses, were innocent men condemned to death and executed. Prosecutors, whether attorneys or solicitors-general, or managers of impeachment, acted with the fury which in such circumstances might be expected. Juries partook naturally of the national ferment ; and judges, whose duty it was to guard them against such impressions, were scandalously active in confirming them in their prejudices and inflaming their passions."\*

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT OF DR. PLUNKET.

DR. PLUNKET, when rooting out the abuses which had crept into some districts of his diocese, had well foreseen that he had to treat with men who deemed his reforms too great a check on their vicious lives—who would refuse

\* Historical Works, page 33, seq.

to listen to his words of correction, and pursue him with their hatred even unto death. But he embraced these consequences of his sacred ministry with joy, and, as a good pastor, offered his life for the salvation of his flock, and the healing of the wounds of his suffering church. He never ceased for an instant to pursue the reforms which the necessities of his church required, and, as he had hoped, the earthly reward of all these labours was martyrdom ; but his death was the triumph of the holy cause for which he combated, and as the Archbishop of Cashel remarked, by his death he effected more towards the rooting out of these abuses than he could possibly have achieved by a century of anxious toil. A letter of the Inter-nuncio, written whilst Dr. Plunket was yet in prison, expressly attributes all his sufferings to the enmity of those who had experienced his zeal in the cause of church discipline and morality ; it is addressed to Cardinal Cybo, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda:—

“ From the Archbishop of Armagh I received no letter since his arrival in London, when he informed me that his trial had been deferred in consequence of God permitting that his accusers should dispute amongst themselves, imputing to one another most enormous crimes. All those who have come to England to accuse him are bad Catholics, and even ecclesiastics, regular and secular. *This is to be attributed to the*

*wicked hatred conceived against this Prelate; hence, during the past years the various accusations presented against him to the Sacred Congregation.* I fondly hope to be able, in a short time, to give more pleasing news.

“Brussels, 19th April, 1681.”

As early as 1678, an apostate religious named John MacMoyer, whom Dr. Plunket had suspended for various crimes, and who, as we shall see in the next chapter, was noted for his violence, drunkenness, and immoralities, accused him of conspiracy against the crown. But so notorious was the character of this unfortunate man, that the grand jury refused to receive his testimony, and ordered him to be arrested, and it was with difficulty that he escaped capital punishment. This check did not suffice to make the enemies of the Primate desist from their wicked design. MacMoyer could find no other names for him than Elymas, Simon Magus, and Oliver Cromwell, and often avowed his determination to bring him to the scaffold.

The accusations to which the Nuncio refers, as made in Rome against Dr. Plunket, proceeded from some worthy associates of this apostate, and were supposed by the Archbishop to have had for their chief author Anthony Daly, who was the friend and companion of MacMoyer.

A letter penned in Dublin prison by the Archbishop, in reply to the accusations pre-

sented to Propoganda against him, discloses to us not only many of these accusations, but also many facts which sufficiently make known the spirit which guided these unfortunate men in seeking the destruction of the Primate. It is the first letter written from prison by Dr. Plunket, and is dated the 17th of January, 1680 :—

“ May the Lord be praised, who in a twofold way has given me occasion of spiritual joy. And first of all, by these prisons of the tower or royal castle, where I was detained in close confinement from the 6th of December last till yesterday, when they gave me permission to converse with some friends and my servant, and this, because having examined my papers, they found nothing regarding political or temporal matters in which I ever took any part. Secondly, I am consoled by hearing of the calumnies of Anthony Daly, the bosom friend of Felix O'Neill. This Anthony sought to take away my life here, instigating the tories to kill me ; they came at midnight about six years ago, to the house of my vicar-general, where I then was ; they broke open the doors and took away all the money from myself, and my vicar-general, and my secretary, Michael Plunket, who is now in Rome, and they held a sword to my throat. The chief of this band was afterwards taken, and before death declared in prison to the parish priest of Armagh, and to his curate, that Anthony told him to kill me.



He afterwards went through the province spreading calumnies against me, and against my vicar-general, Bernard Magorch, Dean of Armagh, a man distinguished by his integrity of life and learning, who had endeavoured to restrain the insolence of this madman; then before going to Italy, he circulated in Paris all that your Excellency writes to me, and even more, viz., that I had become a Protestant, and had taken the oath of royal supremacy. Cardinal Howard is well informed of all the deeds of this apostate against me. Under the *seventh* and *eighth* heads, he states that I was the cause of the second last persecution, and that in that persecution, as well as in the present, I found favour, because I betrayed the Catholics. From this alone you may learn the malignant intentions of this man. In that persecution Dr. Brennan, of Cashel, and I were together on the mountains enduring the cold and the frost. In the present persecution I alone of the prelates as yet suffer here, and that solely for communion with Rome and my ministry, and dependence on my superiors, which I had always held and will hold. This calumniator says that I alone am in favour, whilst others are persecuted, and yet I am in prison and they are free. I declare to your Excellency that there is not a single one of the eight points which is not mere calumny and falsehood. But I bear these calumnies, as I hope with spiritual gain, imitating my Saviour, who suffered in

body and in reputation from His adversaries, calling him a magician, a bibber, a glutton, a demon, &c."

In the month of November, 1679, Dr. Plunket left his place of concealment in the secluded parts of his own diocese, and came to Dublin, to assist his relative, the aged Bishop of Meath, in his last moments. Ten days later Dr. Plunket was arrested in his place of concealment in the city of Dublin, by a body of militia, headed by Hetherington, an agent of Lord Shaftesbury, and, by order of the Viceroy, was committed a close prisoner to Dublin castle. This was on the 6th of December, 1679. For six weeks no communication with him was allowed, but after that term, nothing treasonable having been discovered in his papers, he was treated with more kindness, and permitted to receive visits from his friends.

The only crime of which the Primate was as yet supposed to be accused, was that of remaining in the kingdom, despite the royal interdict, and of exercising the functions of his sacred ministry. This is more than evident from many sources. All the letters of the Archbishop, written for many months after his arrest, never allude to any other accusation. In the letter just cited, he expressly states that this was the only ground for his arrest. A relative, too, of the Primate, named William Plunket, having completed his course of studies in the Propaganda college in Rome, and re-

turning to his native land, in the beginning of 1680, to his surprise learned on landing in Ireland, that the Archbishop had been already for some months in prison. He hastened without delay to convey this intelligence to Rome, declaring the affliction which overwhelmed him, and the consolation at the same time which all his friends received, since the Primate was accused of no other crime than that which was a true glory for a good pastor of holy Church; his letter is directed to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda, and is dated 20th of March, 1680:—

“After a long journey, I at length arrived at Nantes, a maritime city of France, in which, though there were many English and Irish vessels, yet none wished to receive me, fearing lest (should they bring ecclesiastics to Ireland during the persecution) their ships and merchandise would be confiscated. At length, after three months’ stay in Nantes, Providence inspired a Catholic master to give me a place in his ship. The weather was so stormy, and the winds so uncertain or contrary, that with difficulty we reached Ireland towards the beginning of February, although, if the winds were favourable, it should be only four days’ sail. Having arrived in Ireland, to my great dismay and grief, I received the news that the Primate was a prisoner in the Royal Castle of Dublin. I hastened thither, and *having heard*

*and learned for certain that he had been imprisoned only for being a Catholic bishop, and for not having abandoned the flock of our Lord in obedience to the edict published by Parliament, I was somewhat consoled, it being his and our glory that he should suffer in such a cause.* He was arrested on the 6th of December last, and no one was permitted to speak to him till the middle of January, when his friends were allowed to visit him, and he himself received permission to walk on an open balcony. No sooner was he arrested than the other bishops and prelates fled to their retreats, and are so concealed that few even of their most intimate friends know where they are. Notwithstanding all this, I have this moment received intelligence of the arrest of Dr. Creagh, Bishop of Cork, and the dread of all is so much the more increased, as it is thought a Parliament will soon be held, when the most rigorous enactments will be made against the Catholics, and, after the manner of the English Parliament, no Catholic will be allowed to sit in it. As to the state of ecclesiastics here, all the convents are destroyed and the friars scattered. . . . The parish priests have as yet some connivance in administering the sacraments, but in the cities and large towns they are not allowed to have oratories or chapels, and hence they are compelled to travel about and offer the holy Sacrifice, and exercise their sacred functions, now here, now there, in private houses. Would

to God, and to the Blessed Virgin, that this toleration at least may continue."

The Primate on his trial declared, "I was a prisoner six months, only for my religion, and there was not one word of treason spoken of against me for so many years;" and the Attorney-General himself avowed that he was arrested "for being an over zealous papist."

Nevertheless, another accusation had been from the commencement presented against him, and if it were kept secret and disguised for awhile, it was only that the plans of his accusers might be more matured, and the conspiracy so arranged in all its parts, as assuredly to lead him to the scaffold.

Side by side with the Archbishop of Armagh, in the prison of the Castle of Dublin was the glorious confessor of Christ, Peter Talbot, Archbishop of that see. They had both been pillars of our Irish Church; they had long struggled together, and sometimes, too, had held conflicting views in promoting its welfare and defending its rights; and God now decreed that they should be united in receiving their spiritual reward, being sharers in the same glorious captivity; and though Dr. Plunket alone was destined to receive the palm upon the scaffold, yet, perhaps, no less glorious was the crown of lengthened martyrdom which his fellow confessor received. Dr. Talbot, overcome by the sufferings of prison, died in the beginning of December, 1680.

It was not till the month of June, 1680, that the witnesses had fully arranged their plans. Armed with commendatory letters from the English court, they now returned to Ireland assured of success. Amongst the many precautions taken by the apostate MacMoyer, one was to have a government order sent from London to the Viceroy, that no Catholic should be a member of the jury:—"Orders had been transmitted to Ireland," says the Primate on his trial, "that I should be tried in Ireland, and that no Roman Catholic should be on the jury, and so it was in both the grand and other jury; yet, there, when I came to my trial, after I was arraigned, not one appeared." Dr. Plunket did not object to this arrangement, though in itself most unjust, so conscious was he of his own innocence, and of the known character of his accusers; and after the words which we have just cited, he again avowed upon his trial:—"If I had been in Ireland, I would have put myself on my trial to-morrow without any witnesses, before any Protestant jury that knew them and me."

The Viceroy, however, decreed that the trial should be held in Dundalk, the scene of the reputed treasonable crimes; and, as we shall just now see, this alone sufficed to derange all the plans of the witnesses, for they were conscious that their character was well known in that quarter, and that evidence could be, without difficulty, procured there of their malignity and

evil designs and perjuries. Dr. Plunket writing to the Internuncio on the 25th of July, 1680, the day after his return from Dundalk, gives the following detailed account of the proceedings of this trial :—

“Your letter of the 17th of July consoled me in my tribulations and miseries. MacMoyer, as well in the criminal sessions of Dundalk, as after these sessions, presented a memorial that the trial should not be held in Dundalk, where he was too well known, and that it should be deferred till September or March next, but the Viceroy refused.

“I was brought with a guard to Dundalk on the 21st of July; Dundalk is thirty-six miles from Dublin. I was there consigned to the King's Lieutenant in that district, who treated me with great courtesy, and on the 23rd and 24th July I was presented for trial. A long process was read, but on the 24th MacMoyer did not appear to confirm his depositions and hear my defence; I had thirty-two witnesses, priests, friars, and seculars, prepared to refute all that had been sworn against me, forsooth, that *I had seventy thousand Catholics prepared to murder all the Protestants, and to establish here the Romish religion and Popish superstition; that I had sent various agents to different kingdoms to obtain aid; that I had visited and explored all the fortresses and maritime ports of the kingdom; and that I had held a Provincial Council in 1678 to introduce the French.* He also accused, in his

depositions, Monsignor Tyrrell, Rev. Luke Plunket, the Ordinary of Derry, and Dr. Edward Dromgole, an eminent preacher. Murphy (the second witness) no sooner heard that the sessions and trial would be held in Dundalk than he fled out of the kingdom; and hence MacMoyer alleged that he himself could not appear, as he awaited the return of Murphy; and so these sessions terminated, and according to the laws of this country, I must present myself at three criminal sessions before I can be absolved, and as there will be no sessions in Dundalk till the end of March, my counsel and friends recommended me to present a memorial to have the cause adjudged in Dublin, at the next criminal sessions of All Saints, and that the jury of Dundalk should be brought to Dublin, which, perhaps, I may obtain. The sessions being over, I was reconducted, by order of the Viceroy, to the Royal Castle of Dublin, to my dear and costly apartment; considering, however, the shortness of the time spent in Dundalk, it was still more expensive, as I had to bring thirty-two witnesses from different parts, and maintain them for four days in Dundalk, and amongst the guards and servants of the Lieutenant I had to distribute about forty crowns. Although the two chief judges are appointed by the crown, the jury is chosen by the Lieutenant of the district of Dundalk. As there are more Catholics than Protestants in the county Louth, MacMoyer foreseeing that some Catholics would surely be on



the jury, and knowing that the Lieutenant, who, from his office, is called *sheriff*, was a friend of mine, presented a memorial that no Catholic should be on the jury, and he obtained his petition. I made no opposition, knowing well that all the Protestants of my district looked on MacMoyer as a confederate of the *tories*, and hence at the criminal sessions of Armagh, in 1678, he was prosecuted and fined; and I knew, moreover, that they all deemed fabulous the story sworn by MacMoyer against me, and, moreover, his dissolute life was notorious, and he was always half drunk when he appeared before the tribunals. Murphy fled, because he well knew that the jury of Dundalk would have hanged him. He had been imprisoned in Dundalk and escaped; he was found in the company of the *tories*, and he concealed the articles which they stole. It is said that he has gone to England to obtain pardon from the king, that he may afterwards appear against me; not to accuse me of treason, but of exercising Papal jurisdiction in this kingdom: another witness, Callaghan, accuses me in like manner, and it is an accusation which I deem most glorious. It is more than two years since MacMoyer commenced his accusations against me, as is clear from the depositions."

The scene was now to be soon shifted from the shores of Ireland to the banks of the Thames. Mac Moyer and his associates felt that it would be impossible for them to attain their wicked purpose in a country where their

crimes were so public, and the primate so revered : they, therefore petitioned the king that the trial should be transferred to London. The suggestion was pleasing to the Court, and about the middle of October Dr. Plunket received a summons to appear in London, to answer the charges imputed to him.

The Internuncio announced to the Sacred Congregation the extreme danger to which the life of the Archbishop was now exposed, and how all his own efforts, even though seconded by the mediation of the Spanish Ambassador, had proved fruitless in mitigating the rigour of the Court in his regard.

“The Archbishop of Armagh had been conducted from the prisons of Dublin to those of England. The rage of the enemies for our faith, and the sad conjuncture of the opening of Parliament, which is furious against the Catholics, occasion great fears for his life, although his innocence of the pretended conspiracy is most manifest ; nor are witnesses wanting to establish it should the matter be fairly investigated. I have implored in his aid the intercession of the Catholic ambassador, so much the more, as I have heard that in the persecution during the reign of Charles the First, the then Archbishop of Armagh being condemned to death for exercising pontifical jurisdiction in Ireland, was sent into exile on the promise given by the Spanish Ambassador that he would never again return to the British dominions.”

We have seen that after six months' close

confinement, in which the prison-guard was his only companion, Dr. Plunket received permission to communicate with his servant, and to write some letters to his friends. One of these is now preserved in the Vatican Archives. It is as follows :—

“I was brought from Ireland to this city (London) towards the close of October last, and subjected to the sufferings of a rigorous imprisonment, all intercourse with my friends being interdicted, so that no human being, save the guard of my prison, had access to me; but as now permission has been granted to write to my relatives and acquaintances, I could not but write to your reverence, to make known and lay open to you how matters now stand with me. About a fortnight ago I was accused and brought to trial for seeking to introduce the Holy Catholic and Apostolic faith, and to overturn and destroy the Protestant religion. But the accusation being read, the trial was deferred till next sessions,\* that I might bring my witnesses from Ireland, who, undoubtedly, will be an intolerable burden on me, and will exhaust my poor purse, unless I be aided by my friends, to whom I wholly confide myself. I caused eight witnesses to be called to refute all that MacMoyer and his colleagues had stated against me. I shall have a severe trial, for neither the jury nor the judges are acquainted with my circumstances and those of my accusers. I therefore earnestly pray your reverence

to collect and transmit to me, as soon as possible, whatever my friends can give me, that I may be able to support my witnesses. Each of them will require, at least, £20, considering their stay here and return to Ireland. Show my letters to my friends, and let Michael Plunket know the present state of my affairs."

The Internuncio Tanari wrote to Cardinal Cybo on the 31st of May, 1681, conveying the substance of this letter of the Primate, but he erroneously concluded from the passage relative to the accusations against him, that he had not been accused of treason; for, we shall see at the trial of Dr. Plunket, these two accusations were joined together, and the treason imputed to him was no other than that he sought to overthrow the Government, *in order to establish the Catholic religion, and root out Protestantism.*

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## CHAPTER XX.

### CHARACTER OF THE THREE CHIEF WITNESSES.

THE character of the witnesses, whose perjured evidence led Dr. Oliver Plunket to the scaffold, most clearly establishes the nature of the conspiracy which had been entered into against him, and proves that his death was owing to the hatred of those who looked upon him as the

pillar of the Irish church, and the dauntless champion of her discipline and teaching.

John MacMoyer, of whom we have often spoken in the preceding chapter, was an apostate friar, and the originator of that wicked conspiracy: and his chief associates were another apostate named Duffy, and Edmund Murphy, a suspended secular priest. MacMoyer and Duffy had studied together in St. Isidore's, and were expelled from that convent on account of their irregularities, by its venerable guardian, Father Tyrrell, who, at the period at which we are now arrived, was bishop of the ancient see of Clogher, and who, as he zealously co-operated with the Primate in reforming the abuses of some corrupt members of the clergy, so, too, was made the object of their enmity and hatred.

It was about 1673, that the reforms introduced by Dr. Plunket first awakened the fury and enmity of those who sought to maintain irregularity and corruption in the Irish clergy, and whose vicious lives but little corresponded with the sanctity of their profession. Amongst these opponents of the Archbishop none were more violent than the two just mentioned, who afterwards were destined to crown their impiety and guilt by leading him to the scaffold.

When, in 1678, MacMoyer presented to the grand jury in Dundalk heads of impeachment against Dr. Plunket for high treason, not only did they refuse to receive his testimony, but he himself was arrested and cast into prison, as

an associate of the bandits, and as guilty of other crimes: and he seems to have remained there till this design of effecting, by his perjuries, the death of the Primate, was made known to the Earl of Shaftesbury. Even before the order for his release arrived from London, he, being assured of the patronage of the Court, by a letter of Hetherington, made his escape from prison, and laid his accusations before the Viceroy, Ormond, and the grand jury of Dublin; but once more his evidence was rejected as worthless, and it was only when summoned to England to appear before the royal council, that he found, in the sworn enemies of the Catholic faith, willing and anxious ears to receive his perjured tale. The facts connected with his subsequent career, till the Primate's trial, have been detailed in the preceding chapter: returning to Ireland, armed with a royal mandate, and taking the precaution that all Catholics should be excluded from the jury, he yet feared to pursue his accusations before the grand jury of Dundalk; and at his solicitation London was destined, by the Crown, to be the scene of the trial of Dr. Plunket.

But if MacMoyer and Duffy had long been companions in their career of crime, and of enmity to the Primate, Duffy too was a fellow bandit of Edmund Murphy, and thus it was not difficult to make the latter a third accomplice in their sacrilegious design.

Edmund Murphy had been parish priest in

the diocese of Armagh, and chanter of the cathedral. As early as 1674 he was suspended from the exercise of all ecclesiastical functions, and hurried away by passion, he soon became one of the most virulent opponents of the Archbishop, and a leading concoctor of the conspiracy against him. Nevertheless, on more than one occasion the dictates of conscience seemed for a while to triumph: on being summoned to London he openly avowed that all he knew of the treasonable practices of the Primate he had learned from MacMoyer; and again, at the last trial of Dr. Plunket, he used every endeavour to cancel his former evidence and to have the trial deferred, in order that the Archbishop's witnesses might arrive, and destroy the testimony of his fellow-informers.

In 1680 he wrote a pamphlet (which was published in the following year), entitled "The Present State and Condition of Ireland;" and in it he details, at length, many of the exploits which won for him the favour of the Court and of the Protestants of England. His career, even as thus portrayed by himself, but too well justifies the severity of the primate in his regard; and at the same time reveals to us most fully the character of those who found in Dr. Plunket a check to their vicious life, and consequently plotted his destruction.

Despite the sentence fulminated against him, Murphy continued to plunder the country, as leader of a band of *tories*, whilst, on the other

hand, he corresponded with the government to betray his fellow-bandits, and obtain the price which had been set upon their heads.

Amongst the many bands of *tories* which then devastated the country, the most powerful was that headed by Redmond O'Hanlon, whose name is yet remembered in many districts of the North of Ireland. Mutual enmity and distrust soon sprung up between the rival leaders, and O'Hanlon caused proclamations to be made throughout his district, that whosoever would go to Murphy should forfeit, the first time, one cow; the second time, two; and the third time, his life. Soon afterwards two officers, named Baker and Smith, denounced Murphy as a robber, and the ringleader of a party which kept the country in continual agitation, and eventually he was arrested by the troops under their command, and committed a prisoner to Dundalk gaol. Carte (vol. ii. p. 514), supplies some further particulars connected with this period of his career:—

“Parties of *tories*, which the Duke of Ormond was careful to suppress, because they were a sort of nurseries for rebellion, served likewise for supplying witnesses for the Popish plot. One Murphy, living in their quarters, and corresponding with them, was prosecuted for that correspondence by Baker and Smith, of Dundalk. The proofs for convicting him were ready, and the assizes were near, when he made his escape out of prison, and put himself under



the protection of the Government as prosecutor for the king, of the charge against Oliver Plunket, titular Primate of Armagh. John Moyer being guilty of the like correspondence, took the same part as Murphy had done, and went to England, whence they returned with encouragement to proceed to the conviction of Plunket, and powers to take up such persons as they saw fit for further witnesses. They had been examined in England as evidences of the plot, but had neglected to take out their pardons, and being prosecuted on their first return, for their correspondence with *tories*, the Bishop of Meath pressed the Earl of Shaftesbury, by frequent letters, to procure their pardons, and get the titular Primate's trial, which was to be at the next assizes, which were then near, at Dundalk, to be removed from that town, where he would be certainly acquitted, to either Dublin or London. The latter place was deemed most convenient, and the old man was accordingly sent for thither, tried, and convicted by this, and the like evidence, of a charge that was in its own nature incredible, viz., the inviting 20,000 French to invade the kingdom, and land at Carlingford, and the listing of 70,000 men to join them."

The officers to whom Murphy was accustomed to betray his companions were Captains Coult and Butler, and he had for his assistants in this deed of infamy his own brothers, and a relative named Hugh Murphy. The occupation of this

last individual was to steal the horses of the *tories*, which afterwards were brought by the brothers to Sir Hans Hamilton, and he arrested all who inquired or sought after such horses. It soon, however, became rumoured through the country that Edmund Murphy was a traitor, and "all or most people were possessed that the informant received a large sum of money from the said Captain Coult, to bring in the heads of several of the chief *tories*, and rebels, all which was spread abroad by means of *lying fame*."

Hetherington had met, as companions in Dundalk gaol, MacMoyer and Murphy; he soon learned their sentiments in regard of the Primate, and having made his escape and arrested Dr. Plunket, he wrote to Murphy, informing him of the royal letters which had been obtained for his release.

Murphy soon informed Hetherington, that if he would accompany the informant to the north, he would produce evidence to prove the whole that before he had revealed, and more also; Murphy at once received a government authorization to gather in these witnesses, and setting out accompanied by Hetherington "under the denomination of a friar which had lately come from Rome," visited various districts of the north, but he could find none to swear against the Primate, and he complains that his witnesses against the officers "were chained and scourged to sign an instrument for their own transportation."

From facts which he subsequently records, we may conclude that the result of his excursion was still more unfavourable to his design. "Lying fame" having spread abroad his purport in visiting the north, a certain Hugh M'Kenna pursued him to Dublin to make known his iniquitous career. But Murphy anticipated his accuser, and caused M'Kenna to be arrested on a charge of making away with government papers necessary for the prosecution of the Popish plot. However, on the matter being investigated the truth became known. M'Kenna was released, and Murphy found himself once more cast into prison.

The witnesses whom he had succeeded in gathering together were prosecuted for perjury by the officers whom he had accused, and they soon were sentenced to transportation. At the same time, his relative, Hugh Murphy, met with a dreadful retribution at the hands of Lieutenant Baker, which we may commemorate in the words of the pamphlet:—

"The head of the fore-mentioned spy that the informant employed to look after the tories was brought to the Duke of Ormond as a piece of good service done by Lieutenant Baker, notwithstanding his being authorised by Sir Hans Hamilton and Captain Butler to betray the tories, under the pretence of corresponding with them, which he was allowed in. The manner of killing of the said spy was, when he was at his house sick in bed, Lieutenant Baker

came and knocked out his brains with the butt-end of a pistol or musket, and afterwards cut off his head; and then the said Baker taxed the country for money for his head."

Murphy's narrative comes down no further, but from other sources we know too well his subsequent history. Having received from the court a full pardon for all his crimes, he was commissioned by government to co-operate with MacMoyer and Duffy in ensuring the conviction of the Primate. When first examined in private, his evidence was more full and conclusive than that of the other witnesses. When produced, however, on the day of trial, all his efforts were directed contrary to the desire of his patrons; and he was accordingly arrested for contempt of court, and committed to Newgate.

Such were the three chief witnesses who plotted the death of Dr. Plunket; all three unworthy ecclesiastics, whose vicious career the zealous archbishop had long, but in vain, endeavoured to check, and who, when excommunicated for their crimes, became "renegades from our religion, and declared apostates."\* Even Murphy, the best of the three, when interrogated on the trial by the judge if he were a priest, made but a slight effort to conceal his apostacy, and answered, "I am indifferent whether I be a Protestant or a priest."

\* Words of Dr. Plunket on his trial.

The reader will probably have some anxiety to learn the fate of the two former unhappy men after consummating their deed of wickedness. On the 1st of May, 1682, the Archbishop of Cashel, writing to Rome, informs the Sacred Congregation, that MacMoyer, returning once more to Ireland, accused many others in the province of Armagh, but that his evidence was rejected, and he himself cast into prison, and accused of many crimes, was to receive sentence in the month of August following. The same archbishop, writing again on the 30th June, 1683, further declares that "Friar MacMoyer, and another Moyer, a relative of his, both accusers of the happy Primate, continue still in prison, where they suffer great privations, and are almost dead from hunger, finding none who will give them food, so abhorred are they by all."

Similar was the fate which awaited Duffy; he too, on his return to Ireland, was cast into prison, and, making his escape, joined with a band of *tories*, detested and abhorred by all. Forty years, full of eventful scenes, rolled on, and at length, old and emaciated, an outcast from the Church, and a prey to remorse, he cast himself at the feet of Dr. MacMahon, a successor of the martyred Primate, and exclaimed in an agony of soul, "Is there then no mercy for me!—am I never to be reconciled to God!" The prayer breathed by the holy Prelate, upon the scaffold, like that of St. Stephen for

his executioners, had obtained from God that mercy which he now implored. Dr. MacMahon heard him in silence, then pointing to an open shrine, he said in a solemn voice, "Look here, thou unfortunate man." The head of his innocent victim was before him; he saw, knew it, and swooned away. Soon after he was once more reconciled to the Church, and closed his career a sincere penitent.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### CHARACTER OF THE OTHER WITNESSES.

JOHN MACMOYER, Duffy, and Edmund Murphy, soon associated to themselves a host of other witnesses, to confirm their statements, and render plausible the monstrous tale they had devised. Indeed, nothing more clearly proves the sad degradation of our country, and the depths of misery and debasement to which long oppression and misrule had reduced its inhabitants, than the number of false witnesses, who, at the bidding of an English minister, or attracted by the hopes of reward, started at this period from our Irish shores, and rushed to England to swear away the lives of innocent men, choosing as the special victims of their perjury whosoever were distinguished by their love of country and the practice of religion.

The enemies of the Catholics had, as we have seen, strained every nerve to gain credit for the wicked nonsense of "The Titus Oates' plot." One thing, however, was sufficient to check the most credulous in assenting to it. Ireland was a Catholic nation, and yet no trace of such a plot had been found in Ireland. "It was a terrible slur," writes Carte,\* "upon the credit of the Popish plot in England, that after it had made such a horrible noise, and frightened people out of their senses, in a nation where there was scarce one Papist to one hundred Protestants, there should not, for above a year together, appear so much as one witness from Ireland to give information of any conspiracy of the like nature in that kingdom, where there were fifteen Papists to one Protestant, as that charged upon the Papists of England, whose weakness would naturally make them apply for assistance from their more powerful brethren in Ireland."

Welcome, therefore, was the announcement made by Hetherington to the Earl of Shaftesbury, that at length witnesses were at his disposal only too anxious to have a field to labour in his cause, and who, moreover, were desirous of laying the wished-for conspiracy and treasonable plot at the doors of the highest dignitaries of the Church of Ireland.

To aid in this design, an order from the

\* Vol. ii., p. 495.

English Council was published on the 28th November, 1679, "requiring the Lord Lieutenant and Council (of Ireland), to issue a proclamation forthwith for encouraging all persons that could make any further discovery of the horrid Popish plot, to come in and declare the same by a certain day to be fixed; otherwise not to expect his Majesty's pardon." With these hopes of pardon and reward held out to them, every one who was guilty of infamous crimes, and feared the just chastisement which awaited him, hastened to present himself as *an informer*, and thus the scum of society in Ireland found an opportunity of re-acquiring their position in the eyes of the British law, by adding perjury to their former crimes. The untiring persecutor of the Catholics, the Protestant Bishop of Meath, was the main supporter of these proceedings. "Nobody," says Carte,\* "was more active in procuring these witnesses than the Bishop of Meath, who had been scout-master-general to Oliver Cromwell's army, and now exerted himself to the utmost to serve that great and worthy patriot, his very great friend (as he styles him), the Earl of Shaftesbury. The private intercepted letters of his correspondence with the Earl, which was carried on by means of Colonel Mansell and William Hetherington, that nobleman's chief agent, manager, and instructor of the Irish witnesses,

\* Vol. ii., p. 498.



show something more zealous than honorable in his proceedings in that affair."

The Duke of Ormond from the first seems to have given no credence to the testimony of these witnesses. Thus, he refused to listen to Murphy's evidence, and reproved him as being instigated by hatred and revenge. In one of his letters also, whilst he gives the history of an individual witness, he traces the preparatory course of them all. "A notorious *tory* in Munster," he says, "being ready to be sent by my Lord Orrery to prison, and at last, actually, perhaps too hastily, sent thither by his lordship, offers at great discoveries, and names many persons as guilty of the plot. But orders will go this night for his setting at liberty, and for protecting him in his way hither. The fellow's name is Honaghan, as I think, in times past, an attorney in the Presidency Court, but since that was suppressed, turned robber. He has put his tale as well together as any of his country." In another letter he enters at length into the character of those who were now feted by the English Protestants, and whose stories he himself had made the pretext for new penal laws against the Catholics of Ireland. "Those that went out of Ireland with bad English and worse clothes, are returned well-bred gentlemen, well caronnetted, periwigged, and clothed. Brogues and leather straps are converted to fashionable shoes and glittering buckles; which next to the zeal, *tories*, thieves, and friars

have for the Protestant religion, is a main inducement to bring in a shoal of informers. The worst is, they are so miserably poor, that we are fain to give them some allowance; and they find it more honourable and safe to be the king's evidence than a cow-stealer, though that be their natural profession. But seriously, it is vexatious and uneasy to be in awe of such sort of rogues. Now that they are discarded by the zealous suborners of the city, they would fain invent and swear what might recommend them to another party; but, as they have not the honesty to swear truth, so they have not the wit to invent, probably. It is for want of something else to say that I fall upon this character of an Irish witness."

A leading witness in the beginning of 1680 was a certain David Fitzgerald, a native of the county of Limerick, and a Protestant. In the following year, however, he was seized with remorse, and, as the author of a pamphlet in Thorpe's collection (1640-1690), informs us:—"The said David did order me to write in my information, that one William Hetherington, and the rest of his Majesty's evidence, were all mere rogues and thieves, and gaol-breakers." He had already informed us who "the rest of his Majesty's evidence" were, and amongst them we find the names of "Edmund Murphy, John Moyer, Hugh Duffy, George Coddan, Paul Gormley, Murtagh Downing," and others, most of whom acted as witnesses against Dr. Plunket.

An active witness against the Primate, as well on the trial as in procuring other witnesses from Ireland, was John MacLane. He had been suspended and excommunicated by Dr. Tyrrell, and hence now sought revenge by confirming against him and against the Primate the monstrous accusations of MacMoyer regarding the pretended conspiracy. By his solicitations, too, Henry O'Neal, was induced to join the gang of witnesses. Perhaps no document connected with this plot throws more light on the character of these informers, and on the manner of *making up* the evidence, than the dying retraction of this last-named unfortunate man. We shall just now give a few extracts from it, but it will be useful to premit the following letter of the Archbishop of Cashel, addressed to the Secretary of Propaganda, and dated 1st of May, 1682 :—

“ I sent a narrative about the glorious Primate, and also information of the death, in prison, of the happy Confessor of Christ, the Archbishop of Dublin ; of the imprisonment of the Bishop of Kildare (who has been exiled from the kingdom), and of the Bishop of Cork, who continues as yet in prison. . . . God, in His mercy, has begun to console us ; for, during the past month of March, the royal judges, being on circuit to examine and bring to a close the criminal and civil cases, and finding, especially in the province of Cashel, many ecclesiastics and Catholic gentlemen accused or imprisoned for two or three years on account of the pretended

conspiracy, they caused them to be examined and tried, and all were declared to be innocent, and set at liberty, and some of their false accusers were punished. The same happened in other parts of the kingdom, especially in the province of Armagh, where some accused by Moyer and his relative were acquitted, and the two accusers once more cast into prison as guilty of other crimes, and they are to receive sentence in the month of August next. . . Henry O'Neal has been hanged, and on the scaffold declared that all he had said against the Archbishop of Armagh and others was false, and that he was instigated to accuse them by MacLane, MacMoyer, and others, who promised him great rewards for his deed. He passed great eulogiums on the Primate, declaring him innocent, and a great prelate; and he avowed that he deemed his own death permitted by Providence in consequence of the sacrilege he committed in accusing the Primate and other innocent victims. The declaration of this good robber has been printed, and is to be found everywhere throughout the kingdom. I wish to mention these accusers in particular, as they were the witnesses who appeared in London against the Primate, and were the cause of his death; and God wished, in a short time, to chastise them all, that thus He might make known his innocence, and their iniquity. These facts remarkably console the Catholics, and cause confusion to many of our adversaries;

and we now begin to breathe and hope more than during these four years past. And the Catholics remark, that, since the death of the Primate, matters have changed for the better, and that happy soul receives every day greater veneration from the faithful."

The dying retractation of O'Neal, to which the archbishop refers, thus begins:—

*The last speech of Henry O'Neal, one of the late Irish informers (who was executed for a certain robbery at Mullingar, the 18th of March, 1681).*

"I, Henry O'Neal, do hereby declare upon the word of a dying man, as I hope for salvation from the God of truth, my Maker and Redeemer, that I never knew of any plot or treasonable contrivances by Irish or English against his Majesty's person or government. And that whatever I did swear in this kingdom, or in England, to discover a Popish plot, was first suggested to me in Dublin, above three years since, by one *Hobbert Tyrrell*, before I was examined by *Sir John Davis*, and afterwards I was brought by *Owen Murphy* into England, who made me great promises that we should get great lands and livings by swearing what people would have us swear, saying, that whoever gave evidence to prove the Popish plot, he should be largely considered by the Parliament for ever; whereupon I, by the instigation of the enemies of my soul, being in a very needy condition, to relieve myself, and to free my son out of the

gaol at Mullingar, promised to discover a plot ; but now, in the sight of God, I never did know anything of it, nor would ever say, nor could say anything to it but what I was taught by *Mr. William Hetherington, Hobbert Tyrrell, Owen Murphy, John MacClane, MacMoyer, fryar Duffey, Florence Weyer, Hugh Hanlon*, and others, both here and in *England*, all which was falsehood in me, as I now confess before God and the world ; the said *John MacClane* often desired me to swear the plot against Primate *Plunket*, and to induce me to do so, he said he would take the sin of it on himself ; this was in *Boossin's-Inn*, in *London*, and *Moyer* and the rest of the informers did use to encourage me, saying, it was the best act that ever we did, and that we were the happiest men in the nation, by our interest in the Parliament ; but I never gave any evidence against the Primate, and I hope in God I am innocent of the blood of that good man, although it was my misfortune to be in the company of those that accused him ; and truly, upon the words of a dying man, I think in my heart he was altogether innocent of those crimes whereof he was accused, and for which he died. Nay, I say with my last breath, that I am as morally sure of his being really innocent, as I am of my death now. I also protest before God, that what information I gave in against Bishop *Tyrrell*, and what I said of the Vicar *Brady*, and others of the *Irish* clergy, was all false ; and that I never knew any such thing, but what the

aforesaid *John MacClane* instructed me what evidence I should give in that point, saying, he would take the sin of it on himself, and so he sent me to Dublin to discover such things as he suggested to me, and bid me tell upon my examination that himself knew those things, and advised me to swear and discover them, which if I should, I should be very considerably rewarded; to which I now, by my last breath, declare and protest, without equivocation, that I never knew even the least tittle or particular of any thing or things relating to an *Irish* plot, but what (as I before mentioned) I have been prompted and instigated to by the aforesaid *John MacClane*; neither do I, or ever did know, of any meeting or meetings of the Popish clergy, but such chapters and meetings as they publicly have, and alwaies had in their own proper affairs. In a word, as I hope to save my soul, I do not believe there was one word but perjury and falsehood in all that was said by as many of the *Irish* informers and discoverers as I conversed with, and employed me in the aforesaid plot; and now I acknowledge before God, that I have deserved this untimely and shameful end, or a worse, by being engaged or any ways concerned in so horrid a design as that false discovery imported; I have, I say, by my sins in general, and particularly by being so active an instrument as I have been in that hellish contrivance, justly incurred God's vengeance. . . . . All which I do before the Almighty and the

world declare and protest to be true, which if not truth, I desire I may be excluded from eternal bliss. As witness my hand, this 18th day of March, 1681, styl. vet. (*i.e.* 1682).

“HENRY O’NEALE.

“Dublin, printed 1682.”

Dr. Brennan refers to some similar retraction of another witness in the following extract from a letter, dated 10th April, 1682 :—

“In the province of Cashel some priests, who were accused of high treason during the past month of March, have been liberated and declared innocent by the royal judges. In the province of Armagh three of the informers against the Archbishop were condemned for various robberies, and one of them on the scaffold, like Judas, cried out that he had betrayed innocent blood, and often repeated that the Archbishop of Armagh died innocent; and this is a source of great confusion to the wicked, and of consolation to the faithful, seeing that God has thus so soon punished some of the assassins of our first prelate. But of this, and of other things touching the same matter, I will give a more detailed account in another letter.”

Another witness against the Primate was Florence M’Moyer. He was a relative of friar MacMoyer, and the head of the family which enjoyed the hereditary right to keep and guard “*The Book of Armagh*.” Providence, however, so arranged, that in punishment of his guilt he should lose his long-treasured inheritance, and



be compelled, through poverty, to part with, for a mere trifle, that precious relic of the early Irish Church.

The character of M'Geoghegan, who was another apostate and informer against the Primate, is clearly traced for us in the letters of the Viceroy, the Duke of Ormond. In November, 1680, he landed in the county Waterford, and being armed with an order from council, and accompanied by a guard of six horsemen, set to work at once in earnest to fulfil the desires of his employers. But his old occupations (which we have so often described, as forming the preparatory course of these informers), had still so many attractions for him, that he sought to combine them with his new mission, and, as Ormond writes, "during his circuit he committed many outrages, and at length his violences, excesses, debaucheries, and, in effect, his plain robberies, became so notorious, and occasioned such disturbances throughout the whole country, that he had to be arrested and committed to gaol." In a letter of the 29th December, 1680, Ormond thus reviews the history of this witness:—

"We have already sent you a part of Mac-Geoghegan's life and achievements, till he left Ireland and was re-converted by the Bishop of Durham, under the name of Dalton. His exploits, since he came over with the authority of the council to take plotters, are many and remarkable, and shall be sent to my Lord Sunderland as soon as the story is completed to his

committal to Newgate, where he now is. I send you authentic copies of examinations, which will satisfy anybody that it was not fit to let him to plunder, beat, and imprison whom he pleased, English and Irish, Papists and Protestants, as his fancy, supported by strong ale and wine, should direct him. There is also Owen Murphy, authorized to search for and carry over witnesses, I suppose, to give evidence against Oliver Plunket."

The lawless career of this unfortunate man did not terminate with the martyrdom of Dr. Plunket. Returning to Ireland, he visited again the theatre of his former exploits, and resumed his predatory excursions. But the bubble of the Popish plot had now burst, and the government no longer needed his perjuries. He was arrested, convicted of being an associate of the *tories*, and condemned to be hanged. Happy was he, however, that his imprisonment gave him time to repent of his wicked career: we shall allow the Archbishop of Cashel to conclude the narrative. On the 30th of June, 1683, he thus writes to the Sacred Congregation:—

"I send enclosed a copy of a retractation made on the scaffold by three robbers who were leading informers against the Catholics. James Geoghegan, an apostate Franciscan, a cruel persecutor and informer against the Catholics on the occasion of the pretended conspiracy, being confined to prison two years ago, where he still continues, having been convicted as a

robber and a thief, at length wrote and subscribed, with his own hand, a retraction of all that he had deposed and sworn against the Catholics in regard of the conspiracy; and the paper thus signed by him was committed to the parish priest of the place, who now holds it, and exhorted the penitent to renew this retraction in presence of some minister or royal agent."

In another letter, of the 1st September, 1684, he again writes:—

"I have been informed that a certain James Geoghegan, a Franciscan apostate, was lately hanged. He was the most violent informer against the Catholics in these parts; he afterwards turned robber, and during the past four years was detained in prison. I cannot be certain of his execution, as he was kept in the Dublin prison. This event has given great consolation to the Catholics, and confusion to their adversaries; and therefore I have deemed it proper to communicate the intelligence to your Excellency, as I doubt not it will be gratifying to you."

In the retraction of O'Neal, a certain Mac-Namara is named as instigator and prompter of those who were to act as witnesses. In a few years he too met with a fate well deserved by his wickedness, whilst at the same time the prayers of those he persecuted obtained for him the grace of repentance. We shall describe the close of his career in the words of the Archbishop of Cashel:—

"On the 24th of August, just passed, John

MacNamara, a layman, was hanged at Waterford; he was a famous informer against the Catholics at the time of the pretended conspiracy. Before that conspiracy, he was always a Catholic, but he became a Protestant to acquire greater credit and authority in London on his going to that city, where he presented to the king and parliament a narrative of the conspiracy, printed and subscribed by him, and in it, amongst other ecclesiastics and laymen, he also accused me. But finding that matters assumed a different aspect in England, and that the art of an informer had become discredited, he returned to Ireland, where he became a public robber (he was, indeed, always supposed to be a thief), and at length, together with other bandits, he was arrested and sentenced to death; whilst he was in prison he became a penitent, and died a Catholic. He declared at the public sessions, and in presence of the royal judges, that all his informations against the Catholics, whether in England or in Ireland, were false, and that he was instigated to give such informations by certain perverse heretics, enemies of the king and of the Catholics, who had bribed him with money, and he named the individuals. He confirmed all this whilst he was upon the scaffold, where he read a paper containing such a retractation, and he afterwards gave that paper to the royal officer who assisted at his execution."

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE TRIAL OF DR. PLUNKET.

ON the 8th of June, 1681, Dr. Plunket was placed upon his trial before an English jury in Westminster, charged with overt deeds of high treason committed in Ireland. Such a course was contrary to the standing laws of the realm, and without a parallel in the history of England. Moreover, there was something peculiarly outrageous in sending his case for trial to a London jury; it was to hand over the good prelate to sworn enemies, who were thirsting for his blood; it was to procure credence for his perjured accusers, removing them from the country where their perjuries and crimes were known, and where Protestant juries had already refused to receive their sworn testimony; it was also, in the then existing circumstances, to deprive the accused of the possibility of defence, and to oblige him to answer the highest charge against the crown, before a court where there could be no witnesses in his favour, no evidence of his innocence.

In the "narrative" of the Archbishop of Cashel, to which already we have had occasion to refer, we find briefly recapitulated the

various accusations made against the Primate, and at the same time many incidents of his trial:—

“The judges being come to court, the accused was placed at the bar, and the indictment read. In the first place he was accused of writing letters to Monsig. Baldeschi, Secretary of the Pope, to the Bishop of Aix, to Prince Colonna, and Cardinal de Bouillon, soliciting them to procure and send aid into Ireland, in order to establish there the Catholic religion and to destroy the Protestants; and in the depositions made against him in Ireland, MacMoyer affirmed that the accused wrote letters to the Pope to the same effect, and that he saw in the hands of Dr. Creagh a letter of the Primate to Monsig. Baldeschi, in which he assured him that there were 60,000 men to advance the cause, and that naught was wanting to them but arms.

“Secondly: that he had sent an Irish captain to the King of France, inviting him to send an army into Ireland, and to take possession of this kingdom.

“Thirdly: that he had enrolled 70,000 soldiers to unite with the French on their arrival here.

“Fourthly: that he had exacted money from the clergy to introduce the French and pay the army.

“Fifthly: that he visited all Ireland, and examined and explored all the seaport towns and

fortresses of the kingdom, in order to introduce the French by a secure port.

“ Sixthly : that he had held many synods and meetings, in which a collection was ordered to supply funds for the French.

“ These and other heads of accusation were affirmed with sacrilegious oath by John Moyer and Duffy, who, in addition to these articles of high treason, declared that the Primate had appointed some soldiers to enter England clandestinely and assassinate the king.

“ The indictment and the aforesaid heads of accusation being read, and the accusers having been examined, the counsel for the crown employed all their deceitful eloquence against the accused. The judges then intimated to the accused to reply to the charges made against him. He stated, that he had already been accused, and had pleaded his cause before the royal court in Ireland, which was the place of his birth and residence, and the scene of the pretended crimes ; and that it seemed hard, and without a parallel in past ages, that such a case should be tried in England ; and that at least he should be enabled to make his defence by deferring the trial for ten days, in which time his witnesses would arrive ; but his petition would not be listened to, and he was compelled to defend himself as best he could.

“ He therefore declared, first, that the whole indictment was a mere romance, fabricated by his enemies, who had been chastised by him

for their wicked life : that he had never written a letter to Monsig. Baldeschi on matters of state, nor any letter whatsoever to the Bishop of Aix, Prince Colonna, or Cardinal Bouillon ; that he had never explored the kingdom, or examined the fortresses or seaports ; that he had never held synods or assemblies excepting for affairs of the clergy, and that he had never even dreamt of enrolling soldiers or setting on foot an army of 70,000 soldiers, or even of two soldiers ; and that it was clear that all the power of the King could not call into existence such an army in Ireland, and that all the revenue of the kingdom would not suffice to maintain it ; that all the priests of the kingdom could not maintain 500 soldiers (he might have said 100), and that his statements would be surely accredited by the judges and other lawyers in Ireland acquainted with the condition of the country and persons.

“ But all this did not suffice to make the judges understand the truth of his discourse and his innocence. They gave credence rather to the sacrilegious swearing of two apostates, the enemies of the accused, who procured four of their friends, vile and infamous men, never seen or known by the accused, to ratify all that they had affirmed.

“ It was not without interested views that these men apostatized from the faith and renounced all honesty, for having declared themselves informers of the pretended conspiracy,



they obtained a royal pardon for their past crimes (for they were wicked men), and sums of money to maintain themselves as gentlemen. In fine, on the evidence of these wicked men he was declared guilty of treason on the 8th of June, 1681, and on the 14th of the same month was sentenced to be hanged and quartered—which is the punishment of treason.

“The Primate on hearing the sentence, and seeing his innocence condemned to so infamous a death, displayed a dignified composure, and did not lose even one quarter of an hour of his usual repose, as he himself writes, being comforted by his innocence and the justice of the Supreme Judge.

“From the court he was reconducted to prison, where, during fifteen days, he proved himself wholly master of himself, and superior to all the adversities of the world, employing his time in prayer and mortification, and in exhortations to the faithful to persevere in the true faith, and to bear with patience the present tribulation: and he himself gave to all the example of a worthy prelate, so that even the guards of the prison remained confused and edified.

“He writes with sentiments of the greatest piety regarding the solicitude and charity displayed by the Catholics of London in his regard, especially from the time that his case was brought to trial, when they were allowed to visit him. They collected amongst them-

selves a sum of money to pay the counsel and others employed to procure a prorogation of the trial, and to have the execution of the sentence deferred. But this being in vain, they, with a more than ordinary charity and zeal, collected 200 crowns for his funeral expenses, and another sum for the expenses of the witnesses in their return to Ireland, and other expenses that might occur."

According to the truly barbarous policy of the law in the seventeenth century (and, indeed, the same law was enforced till a very late period), no person accused of treason was allowed the assistance of counsel, unless in the case that some purely legal question should arise during the trial. Hence, Dr. Plunket now stood alone at the bar to plead his cause, before judges who seemed to vie with each other in their partiality for the perjured witnesses, and in their animosity against the accused; whilst, at the same time, the jury had naught to guide them in their decision but the long concocted, and nevertheless, occasionally conflicting evidence of these perjurers.

The judges on the trial were the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Francis Pemberton, and Judges Dolbein and Jones, more than one of whom had already imbued their hands in the blood of glorious champions of our faith.

On the 3rd of May, 1681, in Easter Term, Dr. Plunket was arraigned at the King's Bench bar for high treason, but thirty-five days were

then allowed him to procure witnesses for his defence. This interval, indeed, might now-a-days suffice, when steam has lent its aid to our modes of conveyance; but it was far from being sufficient at the time of which we treat, when the servants whom the Archbishop dispatched to Ireland took fourteen days from Holyhead to Dublin. Another difficulty which the accused had to encounter was the want of the necessary means to defray the expenses of such witnesses, but this was rendered comparatively easy through the charitable contributions of his Catholic friends; there were, however, some other difficulties, which were, indeed, insurmountable. For instance, the officers of the Irish courts refused to give the records of the conviction of MacMoyer and his associates, alleging that the transmission of such documents to an English court would be a violation of the privileges of the Irish nation; and yet, on the trial, when Dr. Plunket declared the guilty character of his accusers, the judges told him that his assertions were all in vain, unless he produced the records of their conviction. Again, the witnesses who might attest his innocence, and disprove the assertions of his enemies, could not easily be induced to set out for England, where it is more than probable that they themselves would be imprisoned and brought to the scaffold by the same hired perjurers of the court. Nevertheless, such were the exertions of his friends, that, on the appointed

day of trial, a sufficient number of witnesses had arrived in Coventry. On being placed at the bar, Dr. Plunket petitioned that a few days more should be granted to enable these witnesses to arrive, and in feeling terms showed the injustice he was subjected to, and the impossibility in which he was placed of making a proper defence, as those who knew his case had not arrived, and copies of the records necessary to establish the infamy of his accusers had been refused by the Irish courts.

But he appealed for justice in vain. The court was inexorable; and the trial was ordered to proceed without delay. From the speeches made at its opening by Sergeant Maynard and the Attorney-General, Sir Robert Sawyer, it is sufficiently clear that the object of the Government in this trial was to fan the flame of Protestant fanaticism, and evoke against the Catholics the bigotry and passions of the mob.

The former said:—

“ You have heard his charge; it is as high as can be against the king, and against the nation, and against all that is good. The design and endeavours of this gentleman was the death of the king, and the destruction of the Protestant religion in Ireland, and the raising of war. . . . Dr. Plunket was made, as we shall prove to you, as they there called him, Primate of Ireland; and he got that dignity from the Pope upon this very design.”

And the Attorney-General, amongst other things, likewise said:—

“The character this gentlemen bears as Primate, under a foreign and usurped jurisdiction, will be a great inducement to you to give credit to that evidence we shall produce before you. We shall prove that this very preferment was conferred upon him upon a contract that he would raise 60,000 men in Ireland for the Pope’s service, to settle Popery there, and to subvert the Government.”

Even the Lord Chief Justice, when passing sentence, betrayed the same sentiments and hatred of the Catholic religion.

“Truly yours,” he thus addressed Dr. Plunket, “is treason of the highest nature; it is treason in truth, against God and your king, and the country where you lived. You have done as much as you could to dishonour God in this case; for the bottom of your treason was your setting up your false religion, than which there is not anything more displeasing to God or more pernicious to mankind in the world. A religion that is ten times worse than all the heathenish superstitions; the most dishonorable and derogatory to God and his glory of all religions or pretended religions whatsoever, for it undertakes to dispense with God’s laws and to pardon the breach of them. So that, certainly, a greater crime there cannot be committed against God than for a man to endeavour the propagation of that religion.”

Thus did his lordship, from his seat of injustice, rail against the religion of his fathers, the heavenly religion which civilized the universe; and thus did he stigmatize as treason against the king, precisely as the agents of Nero and Domitian were wont to do of old, the preaching and propagation of our holy faith.

The swearing of the witnesses was in full accordance with these sentiments of the court, and must surely have satisfied the most sanguine expectations of their patrons, the Protestant Bishop of Meath and the Earl of Shaftesbury. The words of one witness, Florence MacMoyer, will suffice, as an instance, of the perjured evidence produced against the Primate. He swore as follows:—

“I know there was a plot both before Plunket’s time and in his time, for it was working in the years 1665 and 1666; but it was brought to full maturity in 1667. For then Colonel Miles O’Reilly and Colonel Bourne (Burns) were sent to Ireland from the king of France, with a commission to muster as many men as they could, promising to send an army of 40,000 men, with a commission, upon St. Lewis’s day, in August following, to land in Carlingford, to destroy all the true subjects, to destroy the religion as it was established there, and to set up the French king’s authority and the Roman Catholic religion. And one Edmund Aryle that was a justice of the peace and a clerk of the crown, sent for all the rebels abroad in the

north to come up into the county of Longford ; and they marched into the head town of the county and fired the town. The inhabitants fled into the castle. Then they came up to the gaol, thinking to break it open, and by setting the prisoners free to join them with them; but there Aryle was shot, received a deadly wound, and dropt off his horse, and they fled. So, then, when they were without the town, one Charles MacCanal alighted and took away all the papers out of his pocket, which, if they had been found, would have discovered all. This occasioned Colonel Brown to be suspected, and being so suspected, he was taken prisoner, and turned to Newgate in Dublin. Then Colonel Reilly fled away again to France, and the plot lay under a cloud during the life of Primate Reilly, the prisoner's predecessor. This Primate Reilly died beyond the sea. Then many of the popish religion would have had the primacy conferred upon one Duffy, but the prisoner at the bar put in for it; which might have been opposed if the prisoner had not engaged and promised that he would so manage affairs, that before the present government were aware, he would surprise the kingdom, provided the Pope and the king of France would send a competent army to join with theirs for the effecting of it. So the first year of his coming over I was in the friary of Armagh; I was an acquaintance of the friars, and they invited me; and one Quinn told the prisoner that they thought

Duffy would have been primate. Said he, it is better as it is; for Duffy hath not the wit to do those things that I have undertaken to do; meaning that he did undertake to supplant the Protestant religion, to bring in Popery, and put the kingdom under subjection to the king of France. In his assembly kept by him, he charged his inferiors to collect such several sums of money as he thought fit, according to the several parishes and dignitaries, to assist and supply the French forces when they came over. I have seen the money collected, and I have seen his warrant to bring it in to redeem their religion from the power of the English Government. And he procured the MacDonnells a piece of money out of the exchequer, pretending to do good service to his majesty; but he sent them to France, meaning they should improve themselves and bring themselves into favor with the king of France, and come over with the French king to surprise Ireland. This one of the rebels told me. So I have seen the prisoner's letter, directed to the grand tory Fleming, desiring that they should go to France, and he would see them, in spite of all their enemies in Ireland, safe ashore, and Fleming should return again a colonel, to his own glory and the good of his country. I have seen the prisoner going about from port to port—to Derry, to Carrickfergus, Corily, Down, and Carlingford, and all about. I heard it among the Church, that he went on purpose



to view the seaports, to know the strength of all the garrisons, to see which was the most convenient way to bring in the French army."

Hugh Duffy declared that he was present:—

"At Clones, in the county of Monaghan, on the occasion of the confirmation from the bishop, about 1671. It was there agreed that the gentlemen of Armagh, Monaghan, and Cavan should join together; and then they went into a private council to get a list of all the officers that were in the last rebellion, and those that lost their estates. They were withdrawn aside into a garden,—some stood up, and some sat down; and Oliver Plunket stood in the middle of them all as a prelate, and every one kneeled down before him and kissed his hand. Then they did consult, and gave special order to some of them to get a list of all the officers in the late rebellion, and that lost their estates, and that they should be more forward than others to proceed in that wicked design to destroy all the Protestants together."

He afterwards swore that he had received a precept from Dr. Plunket to know what men in his district were able to bear arms: that he had accompanied Dr. Plunket to Carlingford, and that there "he went round about the place where some of the custom ships come in; there was a great castle there near the sea, and he went to view the place, but could not get a boat. And there was great talk of Carlingford to be one of the

best havens in Ireland; that there was no great garrison at the place, and any ship might come to the gates of the town and surprise it, it being a little town; and he concluded thence that he could get the French army to land safely there."

John Maclane in his evidence said:—

"In France I landed at Brest, and going through Brittany, I met with Bishop Tyrrell and Dr. Creagh, who was my lord Oliver Plunket's agent, and Duke John, of Great Brittany, came to them, and he showed Dr. Oliver Plunket's conditions with the king of France, which was this: to get Dublin and Londonderry, and all the sea ports into their own hands, to levy war, and destroy the Protestant religion; and that they should have him to protect them during his lifetime."

The Chief Justice interrogated him:—

"What do you know of his being Primate?"

He replied:—

"He was made Primate by the election of the king of France, and upon his election he made those conditions with the king of France, to raise men to join with the French, to destroy the Protestant religion."

On the Chief Justice asking Dr. Plunket what he had to say in his defence, he replied:—

"My lord, I tell you I have no way to defend myself; as I have been denied time to bring over my records and my witnesses, ten or twelve in number. Were they here, or were I in Ireland,

where both they and I should be known, I would defy all the malice of the world; but when I was to be tried in Ireland, they would not appear, knowing that their statements were false and malicious. These men used to call me Oliver Cromwell out of spite."

The Chief Justice then having recapitulated the heads of the accusations, Dr. Plunket replied to the various charges made against him, pointing out their absurdity and improbability, and proving in a way calculated to convince every impartial hearer, that his accusers were perjurers, and merely animated by a fell spirit of avarice and revenge. He concluded by protesting again that in his present circumstances, without witnesses and records, it was impossible for him to make a proper defence.

The recapitulation of the evidence by the Solicitor-General and Sergeant Jeffries followed, replete with envenomed remarks against the archbishop and the Catholic religion. On the Lord Chief Justice delivering his charge to the jury, Dr. Plunket once more declared:—

"I can say nothing to it, but give my own protestation that there is not one word of what is said against me true, but all plain romance; I never had any communication with any French minister, cardinal, nor other."

The jury without delay came to their decision, and the foreman announcing "guilty," Dr. Plunket exclaimed "*Deo gratias*," thanks be to God.

The verdict being recorded, the court arose.

On the 14th of June, 1681, Dr. Plunket was again brought to the bar to receive judgment in accordance with that verdict. On leave being given to speak, Dr. Plunket again pointed out the difficult position in which he had been placed, refuted the charges made against him, and proved the wickedness and malice of his accusers :—

“ My lord, may it please your lordship, I have for the offences with which I am now charged, been already arraigned in Ireland. At the day fixed for my trial there, my accusers voluntarily absented themselves, seeing I had records and witnesses to convict them, and to show what men they were, and the prepense malice that they did bear to me; and, so, finding that I could clear myself evidently, they absconded; from that day no one appeared against me in Ireland; but hither they came and procured that I should be brought where I could not have a jury that knew the qualities of my adversaries, or who knew me, or the circumstances of the places, times, or persons. The jury here, as I say, consisting of strangers to these affairs, my lord, they could not know many things that conduce to a fair trial; it was morally impossible they should know them.

“ I have been accused principally and chiefly for surveying the ports, for fixing upon Carlingford for the landing of the French, for the having of 70,000 men ready to join the French, for collecting money for the agents in this matter,

for assisting the French, and enlisting this great Utopian army. A jury in Ireland, consisting of men that lived in that country, would immediately understand the folly of such charges, and any man in the world that hath but seen Ireland in a map, would easily see there was no probability that Carlingford should be a place fit for the French to land in. Though never in Ireland, yet by the map he would see the invaders must come by the narrow seas all along to Ulster, exposed to rocks and every other danger, for the purpose of landing at Carlingford, which is a poor town and of no strength, with a very bad harbour and with a very small garrison, which had not been so if it had been a place of any consideration.

“And then I had influence only upon one province, as is well known, though I had the title of Primate of all Ireland, as the Archbishop of Canterbury hath of all England, though the Archbishop of York did not permit him to meddle with his province; and it is well known by the gentry there, and those that are accustomed to the place, that in all the province of Ulster, take men, women, and children of the Roman Catholics, they would not supply 70,000. This a jury on the spot, my lord, would have known very well: therefore, the laws of England, which are very favourable to the prisoner, have provided that there should be a jury of the place where the offence was committed, as Sir Thomas Gascoigne, as I have

heard, had a Yorkshire jury, though he was tried at London. . . .

“I will not deny, that as long as there was any toleration and connivance, I did execute the functions of a bishop; but that, by the 2nd of Elizabeth, is only *præmunire*, and no treason. But, my lord, whilst I have been left without means of defence, my enemies have had full time to prepare their wicked charges against me. I did beg for twelve days’ time, whereby you might have seen, as plain as the sun, what those witnesses are that began the story and say those things against me. And, my lord, for the raising of the 70,000 men, and the monies that are collected of the clergy in Ireland, they cannot be true, for they are a poor clergy, that have no revenue nor land—there is not a priest in all Ireland that hath, from certain or uncertain sources, above three score pounds a-year, and that I should collect from them sums sufficient for the raising of an army, or for the landing of the French at Carlingford, if it had been brought before a jury in Ireland would have been thought a mere romance.

“If they had accused me of a *præmunire* for the exercise of my episcopal function, perhaps they had said something that might be believed; but, my lord, as I am a dying man, and hope for salvation by my Lord and Saviour, I am not guilty of one point of treason they have sworn against me, no more than the child that was born but yesterday. I have an attestation under

my lord of Essex's hand, concerning my life in Ireland, and not only from him, but from my lord Berkeley, who was also governor there, which the king's attorney saw; but here I was brought—here I was tried, without having time to bring witnesses, so that I could not prove my innocence, as otherwise I might. Hence, if any case in the world deserve compassion, surely my case does; and it is such a rare case, that I do not believe you will find an instance that one arraigned in Ireland should be tried here afterwards for the same fact."

The Chief Justice then proceeded to pass sentence; having said in the course of his address: "I appeal to all that heard your trial, if they could so much as doubt but that you were guilty of what you were charged with. For, consider, here were persons of your own religion, the most of them priests—I think almost all of them in orders." Dr. Plunket corrected him, saying:—"There were three, whom I have endeavoured to correct seven years, and they were renegades from our religion, and dastard apostates."

And shortly afterwards, the Chief Justice extolling the evidence of Duffy, Dr. Plunket said:—"I had sufficient evidence to prove he was an apostate, and was chastised by me, and therefore had prepense malice against me."

On the conclusion of the Lord Chief Justice's discourse, Dr. Plunket again addressed him:—

"May it please your lordship to give me

leave to speak one word. If I were a man that had no care of my conscience in this matter, and did not think of God Almighty, or conscience, or heaven, or hell, I might have saved my life, for I was offered it by divers people here, so I would but confess my own guilt and accuse others. But, my lord, I had rather die ten thousand deaths than wrongfully accuse anybody. And the time will come when your lordship will see what those witnesses are that have come in against me. *I do assure your lordship, if I were a man that had not good principles, I might have easily saved my life; but I had rather die ten thousand deaths, than wrongfully to take away one farthing of any man's goods, one day of his liberty, or one minute of his life.*"

Lord Chief Justice.—"I am sorry to see you persist in the principles of that religion."

Dr. Plunket.—"*They are those principles that even God Almighty cannot dispense withal.*"

With the usual solemnity the sentence of a traitor was then pronounced against him; but against a man breathing those noble sentiments, such a sentence is of little avail. His conduct during the whole course of trial, his fearless denunciation of the injustice which was committed in thus compelling him to stand his trial deprived of all means of defence—his solemn protestations of innocence and of the prepossession malice of his perjured accusers—but above all, the exalted sentiments of Christian morality, worthy of a spiritual pastor, who in



his own life traced out the path which his children might pursue, must have extorted the admiration even of his enemies, and the *sentence* which followed, far from being a triumph over him, only served to crown his cause and render his victory more complete.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE EXECUTION OF DR. PLUNKET.

FRIDAY, the 11th of July,\* 1681, was the day fixed for the execution; and at an early hour Dr. Plunket was conducted from prison to the scaffold at Tyburn. The dauntless spirit which he displayed whilst awaiting in prison the carrying out of the fatal sentence, and the heroic sanctity with which he disposed himself to receive the martyr's crown, belong rather to the next chapter; for the present it will suffice to give some extracts from a manuscript narrative, presented the same year to the Sacred Congregation, and which was not improbably composed by Father Teeling, a distinguished member of the Society of Jesus. It is entitled, "a brief nar-

\* This date corresponds to the 1st of July, old style.

rative of the imprisonment, accusations, and death of Monsignor Plunket, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, executed at Tyburn, in London, the 11th of July, 1681." Many of the facts, however, which it contains have already been commemorated from other sources, wherefore we shall be content with presenting those passages which add new circumstances connected with the imprisonment and death of our holy prelate :—

"The glorious death of this prelate, deserving of eternal memory, as well for his innocence as for the heroic constancy with which he supported his atrocious penalty, has awakened in many a devout curiosity to learn its circumstances, and especially in those who well remember to have known and conversed with him in this city of Rome, where he lived for so many years, at first as a student of the Irish College, and afterwards as professor of theology for many years in the College of the Propaganda. Wherefore, not to defraud so holy a desire, whilst we await a more complete narrative of those facts, we shall here relate what is known for certain, partly from various letters, and partly from his own discourse, which may now be had in print in many languages."

The narrative then proceeds with the various facts till the removal of his trial to London, regarding which iniquitous proceeding it remarks :—

"Every one will see, that nothing less than a

heroic virtue and magnanimity was required to receive this blow with that peace of soul, and with that perfect charity for his enemies with which the primate bore it. . . . The good prelate, on the 11th of November, was removed from the castle of Dublin, and conducted, under a close guard, to London, where he arrived in the depth of the past most rigid winter; and although he was of a most delicate complexion, yet the only relief he received after so severe a journey, was to be thrown into a most opprobrious and disastrous prison, called Newgate, where for awhile he had to undergo such trials, as even the accused of most vile condition are not subjected to. Thus the entire winter and spring passed on, and in the meantime his accusers, living at large in London, arranged and matured all their plans to encompass his destruction."

The account of his trial and sentence is then given, and the narrative thus continues :—

"At the same time and place sentence of death was also passed against a certain Fitzharris, a man, for many and heinous crimes, deserving of that punishment; this served to form a contrast with Dr. Plunket, and add a new lustre to his innocence. On the sentence of death being passed, Fitzharris, by the terror of his looks, his trembling, and the complete failure of strength, showed that his heart was not less guilty than feeble. On the contrary, the Primate, as well when awaiting sentence,

as whilst it was being passed, and after it, displayed such a frankness of soul and heart, such a serene and joyous countenance, and was so composed in all his actions and deportment, that all were able to perceive not only his perfect innocence, but, moreover, his singular virtue, which was master and superior to every emotion of passion. And concerning all this, the Catholics who were present, wrote endless praises, attesting that none could wish for a deportment more noble, more amiable, more worthy of him whom he there represented. Having heard the sentence (turning his thoughts to his soul, and no-wise solicitous as to the sufferings destined for his body), he asked as a favour from the judge to be allowed to treat of spiritual matters with a Catholic priest. ‘You will have,’ replied the judge, ‘a minister of the Church of England.’ But he answered, ‘I am obliged for your good intentions, but such a favour would be wholly useless to me.’

“The Primate being re-conducted to prison, after this public and so glorious trial, there arose between the Catholics and the Protestants an eager strife who would visit him and converse with him—the former attracted by a singular devotion, the latter by an extraordinary curiosity; and he, during the few days that he survived, received both with such courtesy, with such a sweetness, and calmness, and amiableness of manner, that the Catholics departed truly edified, and the Protestants were not only ex-

ceedingly contented with his deportment, but also rendered more affectionate towards the Catholics. Before his execution he was able to confer with a spiritual father (a man\* of great merit, who was then, as he is yet, a glorious confessor of the faith in that prison), to whom he manifested, as that which most disturbed him, his having no horror of death, on account of which he feared that he was not well prepared for it, which shows his humility, and with what worthy sentiments he approached his death, as the only scruple which disturbed him was one derived from a special and excessive grace which God granted to him. On his part he was nowise negligent in disposing himself for this great grace ; for, in addition to the sufferings of prison, to the afflicting journeys so patiently borne by him, to the generous and repeated pardon which he so often breathed for his enemies in exchange for their many outrages, he added moreover, many voluntary penances, and especially a rigorous fast on bread and water, three times each week, during the whole time that he was in London, as the keeper of the prison, a Protestant, attested after Dr. Plunket's death, not without eulogy and admiration.

“ At length, on the 11th of July, the day destined for the carrying out of the fatal sentence, the keeper of the prison, imagining that

\* This was Father Corker, as we learn from the letters of the Archbishop of Cashel.

the apprehension of approaching death, and horror of the atrocious punishment, would have made some impression on that soul hitherto so resolute, went early in the morning to visit him, and if necessary, too, to give him courage and comfort him; but he was yet more surprised and filled with astonishment on finding that the Prelate, on being awakened, was as little moved by the approach of sufferings as though his body were insensible to pain, whilst, nevertheless, he was of an ardent and delicate temperament. In a little while the announcement was made that everything was in order, wherefore he was taken from prison, and stretched (with his face uppermost) and tied with cords upon a wooden hurdle (as is there customary), and thus drawn to Tyburn.

“It had been a hundred years, perhaps, since a Catholic bishop was thus executed there, and hence the curiosity to see a victim of such exalted dignity, and already so famed for his noble deportment, gathered together an immense multitude of spectators, who partly awaited him on the roadside, partly at the place of execution. Such as he had shown himself when receiving sentence of death did he now prove himself in this last scene when undergoing death itself, being ever serene and tranquil, even to his last breath.

“On the scaffold he delivered a short discourse, in which, after protesting his innocence as to the charges of conspiracy made against

him, he prayed for life and health to the king and all the royal family, gave a most complete pardon to all his enemies and adversaries, and, in fine, supplicated the Divine Majesty to be propitious to him, through the merits of Christ, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the holy Angels and Saints of Paradise. Which form of prayer, so simple and yet so pious, was remarked by the spectators, who never remembered to have heard from any other such an express mention of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.

“ Having concluded his discourse, the sentence was carried into execution, and his happy soul sped its flight (as we may hope) to enjoy an eternal repose.

“ The Primate, before death, asked and obtained permission to be buried with the fathers of the Society of Jesus, who, during the present persecution, sacrificed their lives at Tyburn. He was therefore interred with them in the church of St. Giles; and we cannot but remark the devotion and great esteem which the English Catholics displayed for this sacred deposit; and together with it they interred a copper plate, on which was inscribed the following inscription:—

“ ‘ In this tomb resteth the body of the Most Rev. Oliver Plunket, late Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland, who, when accused of high treason, through hatred of the faith by false brethren, and condemned to death, being

hanged at Tyburn, and his bowels being taken out and cast into the fire, suffered martyrdom with constancy, in the reign of Charles the Second, King of Great Britain, on the 1st day of July, 1681.'

"Some few circumstances yet remain connected with the death of Dr. Plunket, which cannot be passed over in silence, and which we now add:—

"It is deserving of attention that all the accusers, judges, and other opponents of Dr. Plunket were not able to attach the mask of conspiracy to his cause, or conceal its being a manifest and direct cause of religion. The plots in England were pretended to be directed against the life of the king, but neither the death of the king nor the advancement of any other cause could be put forward as the scope of the pretended Irish conspiracy, but only the establishment of the faith. . . .

"It is certain that, on the part of one of the first noblemen in England, his life was offered him, should he consent to accuse others; which offer, although resolutely rejected by him, is said to have been renewed to him on the scaffold, God permitting this temptation for the greater merit of one who thus, in such innocence, sacrificed his life.

"The Superior of a certain religious order, a man of great prudence, who was present at the Primate's death, writes, that on the scaffold, by the singular composure of soul and actions,



he seemed like an angel descended from paradise, who was joyously arrived at the moment of once more returning thither.

“All write, with one accord, that this innocent victim has done and yet performs great good in England, not only by the edification which he gave to the Catholics, but, moreover, by the change of ideas and sentiments which he occasioned in many Protestants, who now commence to regard all these conspiracies as malicious fictions; and there are great grounds for believing that the fruit which England will derive from his blood will not end here. The Archbishop himself wrote from prison in London (and the letter written with his own hands is still in Rome), that he has experienced in the English Catholics the most exalted piety, faith, and Christian charity, which any one could desire: and he gives the names of many families and individuals who, it seems, gave to him, though a stranger and unknown to them, large sums of money to enable his witnesses to come from Ireland, and offered themselves, moreover, as most ready to undergo any other expense, or render him any service. He, therefore, in the letter referred to, professes an unspeakable love for those so bounteous benefactors; and we may hope, that as he has, whilst living, done so much by his example, so now he will be efficacious in obtaining from heaven most abundant blessings for those by whom he deemed himself so benefited on earth.”


Such were the glorious sentiments with which the Archbishop encountered the barbarous sentence which had been unjustly decreed against him. None, even amongst his enemies, dared to insinuate his guilt, or pretend that any deeds of conspiracy could be imputed to him; all felt the attractions of his innocence and sanctity, and could scarce find words to express their admiration and esteem. Even amongst subsequent writers, no matter how ardent defenders they may have been of the Protestant cause, none have reproached his memory with the reputed guilt, but all have uniformly recorded his innocence of the charges thus made against him.

With peace and calm Dr. Plunket prepared himself in prison to receive in a worthy manner the glorious privilege of dying for the faith, with which God wished to crown his earthly labours. On the day after the final sentence had been passed against him, he thus wrote to his friend and fellow-prisoner, Father Corker:—

“I am obliged to you for the favour and charity of the 20th, and for all your former benevolence; and whereas I cannot in this country remunerate you, with God’s grace I hope to be grateful in that kingdom which is properly our country. And truly God gave me, though unworthy of it, that grace to have a fortitude fearless of death. I have many sins to answer for before the Supreme Judge of the high bench, where no false witnesses can have an audience.

But as for the bench yesterday, I am not guilty of any crime there objected to me. I would I could be so clear at the bench of the All-powerful. However, there is one comfort, that He cannot be deceived, because He is omniscient, and knows all secrets, even of hearts; and cannot deceive, because all goodness; so that I may be sure of a fair trial, and will get time sufficient to call witnesses, nay, the judge will bring them in a moment, if there will be need of any. You and your comrade's prayers will be powerful advocates at that bench; here none are admitted for

“Your affectionate friend,

“ OLIVER PLUNKET.”

This composure of soul, and tranquil resignation to the will of God, is attested not only by the friends of the illustrious Primate, but also by Protestants, who, perchance, had occasion to contemplate and admire his fortitude and heavenly deportment in prison. Sir Richard Bulstrode, for instance, attests that—

“Captain Richardson, keeper of Newgate, being asked by the Lieutenant of the Tower, how this prisoner had behaved himself, he replied, ‘Very well, for when I came to him this morning he was newly awake, having slept all night without any disturbance; and when I told him he was to prepare for his execution, he received the message with all quietness of mind, and

went to the sledge as unconcerned as if he had been going to a wedding.'”\*

In addition to the particulars of the closing scene of Tyburn, which we have already presented, we learn some further circumstances connected with Dr. Plunket's execution, from a letter of the Archbishop of Cashel:—

“The 11th of July, 1681, being at length arrived, this great bishop (Dr. Plunket) was brought to the place of execution, destined for public malefactors, being placed upon a sledge trailed on the ground, and drawn by horses, and accompanied by a numerous guard of military, as well as by a multitude of spectators and royal officers; and to all he gave occasion of surprise and edification, because he displayed such a serenity of countenance, such a tranquillity of mind and elevation of soul, that he seemed rather a spouse hastening to the nuptial feast, than a culprit led forth to the scaffold. . . . .

“And in truth, his holy life merited for him this glorious death; for during the twelve years of his residence here, he showed himself vigilant, zealous, and indefatigable above his predecessors, nor do we find within the memory of those of the present century, that any primate or metropolitan visited his diocese and province with such solicitude and pastoral zeal as he did, reforming depraved morals amongst the people,

\* “Memoirs and Reflections upon the Reign and Government of King Charles I. and King Charles II., &c., by Sir Richard Bulstrode. London, 1721.

and the scandalous life of some of the clergy, chastising the guilty, rewarding the meritorious, consoling all; benefiting, as far as was in his power, and succouring the needy, wherefore he was applauded and honoured by the clergy and people, with the exception of some wicked enemies of virtue and religious observance.

“Many Catholics do not hesitate to call him *martyr*, being convinced that he suffered for the Catholic faith; and although he was accused on three principal charges, as he himself writes—first, of having sought to establish and propagate the Catholic faith; second, of plotting the death of the king; third, of seeking to bring in the French—the second and third were only as if means to attain the first, as even the adversaries themselves laid down. In truth, they might be styled two chimeras; so that the only real cause of his suffering was the propagation of the faith; and he confessed publicly, in regard of the first accusation, that he had discharged the office of a prelate as became him, without doing or seeking to do any injury to any being in the world.

“And as Boetius finds a place in the martyr-ology for having defended the Catholic faith against the Arians, although the pretext of his death was an imaginary conspiracy against King Theodoric; and, in like manner, St. Hermenegild, for having professed and sought to advance the true faith, although the pretext of his death was a similar conspiracy against

King Leovigildus and his kingdom, with the aid of the Greek emperor ; so, too, they argue in the present instance. But it is not our province to decide this ; the lawful tribunal will decide it.

“ However this may be, it is certain that the memory of this glorious prelate will ever be revered in these kingdoms, as, on the contrary, the name of his impious accusers will ever be held in abomination, for having, with sacrilegious impiety, shed this sacred and innocent blood, and procured, with like impiety, to insult the Holy See and the court, as well of Rome as of other Catholic sovereigns, by their wicked and sacrilegious depositions, declaring them promoters of the feigned conspiracy, which, in truth, was forged in hell. They included, too, in their accusations against the Primate, the Catholics of Ireland, as aiders in advancing that engine, from which will result the ruin of our people, unless God, in a special manner, protects them.”

These words need no comment ; the death of the good prelate corresponded with his life ; and his dispositions of soul and heavenly sentiments fully accorded with the glorious consummation of his career as bishop of God's Church. The discourse which he delivered from the scaffold, with a great calmness and energetic zeal, as though he were addressing from the pulpit his own immediate flock, moved all the assembled multitude, and even his executioner, to compassion ; and surely no one even now-a-days

can read without emotion even the dead letters of the printed discourse, especially the concluding passages, in which he prays forgiveness to all his enemies, and supplicates from the Almighty pardon for his own faults and eternal rest in heaven. Dr. Plunket composed his discourse in prison, and left it to his friends, written with his own hand; for he feared lest his dying words would be misrepresented, or any false sentiments be imputed to him. It was immediately printed and translated into various languages. It thus begins:—

“I have some few days past abided my trial at the King’s Bench, and now very soon I must hold up my hand at the King of King’s Bench, and appear before a Judge who cannot be deceived by false witnesses or corrupted allegations; for He knoweth the secrets of hearts; neither can He deceive any or give an unjust sentence, or be misled by respect of persons: *He being all goodnees, and a most just Judge, will infallibly decree an eternal reward for all good works, and condign punishment for the smallest transgression against His commandments*, which being a most certain and undoubted truth, it would be wicked, and contrary to my eternal welfare, that I should now, by declaring anything contrary to the truth, commit a detestable sin, for which, within a very short time, I must receive sentence of everlasting damnation; after which there is no reprieve or hope of pardon. I will, therefore, confess the truth, without any equi-

vocation, and make use of the words according to their accustomed signification; assuring you, moreover, that I am of that certain persuasion, that no power, not only upon earth, but also in heaven, can dispense with me, or give me leave to make a false protestation; and I protest upon the word of a dying man, that as I hope for salvation at the hands of the supreme Judge, that I will declare the naked truth with all candour and sincerity; and that my affairs may be better known to all the world. It is to be observed, that I have been accused in Ireland of treason and præmunire, and that there I was arraigned and brought to my trial; but the prosecutors (men of flagitious and infamous lives) perceiving that I had records and witnesses who would evidently convict them, and clearly show my innocency and their wickedness, they voluntarily absented themselves, and came to this city to procure that I should be brought hither to my trial, where the crimes were not committed, where the jury did not know me or the qualities of my accusers, and were not informed of several other circumstances conducing to a fair trial. Here, after six months' close imprisonment (or thereabouts), I was brought to the bar, the 3rd of May, and arraigned for a crime for which I was before arraigned in Ireland; a strange resolution, a rare fact, of which you shall hardly find a precedent these five hundred years past; but (whereas) my witnesses and records were in Ireland, the Lord Chief



Justice gave me five weeks time to get them brought hither ; but by reason of the uncertainty of the seas, of wind, and weather, and the difficulty of getting copies of records, and bringing many witnesses from many counties in Ireland, and many other impediments (of which *affidavit* was made) I could not at the end of five weeks get the records and witnesses brought hither ; I, therefore, begged for twelve days more, that I might be in a readiness for my trial, which the Lord Chief Justice denied, and so I was brought to my trial, and exposed, as it were, with my hands tied, to those merciless perjurers, who did aim at my life by accusing me of these following points."

He then recapitulates the accusations made against him, which he refutes in detail, and thus concludes :—

" And though I be not guilty of the crimes of which I am accused, yet I believe none came over to this place in such a condition as I am, for if even I should acknowledge (which in conscience I cannot do, because I should believe myself) the chief crimes laid to my charge, no wise man that knows Ireland would believe me. If I should confess that I was able to raise 70,000 men in the districts of which I had care, to wit, in Ulster, nay, even in all Ireland, and to have levied and exacted monies from the Catholic clergy, for their maintenance, and to have proposed Carlingford for the French's landing, all would but laugh at me, it being well

known that all the revenues of Ireland, both spiritual and temporal, possessed by his Majesty's subjects, are scarce able to raise and maintain an army of 70,000 men. If I will deny all these crimes (as I did and do), yet it may be that some who are not acquainted with the affairs of Ireland will not believe that my denial is grounded on truth, though I assert it with my last breath. I dare mention farther, and affirm, that if these points of 70,000 men, &c., had been sworn before any Protestant jury in Ireland, and had been even acknowledged by me at the bar, they would not believe me, no more than if it had been deposed and confessed by me, that I had flown in the air from Dublin to Holyhead.

“ You see, therefore, what a condition I am in, and you have heard what protestations I have made of innocency, and I hope you will believe the words of a dying man. And that you may be the more induced to give me credit, I assure you that a great peer sent me notice, *‘ that he would save my life if I would accuse others ;’* but I answered, *‘ that I never knew of any conspirators in Ireland, but such (as I said before) as were publicly known outlaws ; and that to save my life I would not falsely accuse any, nor prejudice my own soul. Quid prodest homini, &c. To take away any man’s life or goods wrongfully ill becometh any Christian, especially a man of my calling, being a clergyman of the Catholic Church, and also an unworthy prelate, which I do*

*openly confess.*' Neither will I deny to have exercised in Ireland the functions of a Catholic prelate, as long as there was connivance or toleration; and by preaching, and teaching, and statutes, to have endeavoured to bring the clergy (of which I had a care) to a due comportment, according to their calling; and though thereby I did but my duty, yet some who would not amend, had a prejudice for me, and especially my accusers, to whom I did endeavour to do good; but you see how I am requited, and how, by false oaths, they brought me to this untimely death, which wicked act, being a defect of persons, ought not to reflect on the order of St. Francis or on the Roman Catholic clergy, it being well known that there was a Judas among the twelve apostles, and a wicked man called Nicholas, amongst the seven deacons; and even as one of the said deacons, to wit, holy Stephen, did pray for those who stoned him, so do I for those who, with perjuries, spill my innocent blood, saying, as St. Stephen did, 'Lord, lay not this sin to them.' I do heartily forgive them, and also the judges who (by denying me sufficient time to bring my records and witnesses from Ireland) did expose my life to evident danger. I do, also, forgive all those who had a hand in bringing me from Ireland to be tried here, where it was morally impossible for me to have a fair trial. I do, finally, forgive all who did concur, directly or indirectly, to take away my life; and I ask for-

givenness of all those whom I ever offended by thought, word, or deed. I beseech the All-powerful that His divine Majesty grant the King, the Queen, and the Duke of York, and all the royal family, health, long life, and all prosperity in this world, and, in the next, everlasting felicity.

“Now that I have shown sufficiently (as I think) how innocent I am of any plot or conspiracy, I would I were able, with the like truth, to clear myself of high crimes committed against the divine Majesty’s commandments (often transgressed by me), for which I am sorry with all my heart; and if I should or could live a thousand years, I have a firm resolution, and a strong purpose, by your Grace, oh, my God! never to offend you; and I beseech your divine Majesty, by the merits of Christ, and by the intercession of His Blessed Mother and all the holy angels and saints, to forgive me my sins, and to grant my soul eternal rest. *Miserere mei Deus, &c. Parce animæ, &c. In manus tuas, &c.*”

Having concluded his discourse on the scaffold, the archbishop knelt in prayer, and with eyes raised towards heaven, recited the psalm, “Miserere,” and many other devout prayers; and having breathed the aspiration, “*into thy hands, oh Lord, I commend my spirit,*” the cart was drawn away, and whilst, from the executioner, he received the disgraceful punishment of a traitor, he yielded his happy soul into the hands of his Creator.

To conclude this chapter, we shall add the letter of a Catholic gentleman, who, as we learn from the Archbishop of Cashel, was present at the execution. It was addressed to that dear friend of the martyred prelate, who transmitted it to Rome, and at the same time, deeming it a letter of edification, distributed many copies of it throughout the country, to the great consolation of the Catholics. It is dated, London, 15th of July, 1681, and is as follows:—

“ On Friday last, despite all our endeavours, our good man was conducted to the fatal place of execution ; whither he went to receive and encounter death with a soul so noble, and a fortitude so generous, that his adversaries—even malice itself—admired his intrepidity and compassioned his lot. Never did he preach from the pulpit with greater vigour of soul than he displayed when delivering this discourse at the place of execution. In a word, he won more credit and repute, as well for himself as for his country, by one hour of suffering, than he could have acquired perhaps by hundreds of years of life ; and I am persuaded that there was never a victim of the Irish nation which will reflect more credit on that kingdom, than this revered and truly Christian prelate ; who, as a Jonas cast into the sea, will, we may hope, be a means of appeasing the tempest, and terminating our present persecutions. And of this, indeed, we have already had some evidence ; for on the very day after the death of

this martyr, the Earl of Shaftesbury, head of the anti-Catholic faction, was committed to the Tower of London, accused of high treason, where are also imprisoned on the same grounds, Lord Howard, and two others of the same party; so that even already the scales have commenced to change their balance, and we have begun to hope for better times."

Dr. Plunket was the last victim to the anti-Catholic fury with which the English nation was then inflamed; the next day, witnessed the fall of Shaftesbury, and saw that arch-enemy of the Catholics conducted to the Tower, whilst the very witnesses whom he had fostered employed their perjured tales to hurry on his ruin. Many, indeed, even in after years, were called to share in Dr. Plunket's crown, but never with the formalities of a trial, or with the public and direct sanction of the government. With him was closed the bright array of heroes of the faith who at Tyburn received their martyr-crowns. The enemies of the Catholic Church had vainly hoped by shedding their blood to destroy the faith, but they forgot that the blood of martyrs is a fruitful seed—that the sword of persecution can only prune the vine and cause it to put forth new branches—and that the Church of God is, indeed, the mystic field, in which each grain cast into the earth buds forth remultiplied.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

HEROIC SENTIMENTS OF DR. PLUNKET DURING  
HIS IMPRISONMENT, AND AT THE PLACE OF  
EXECUTION.

LITTLE remains for us in this chapter, save to allow the reader to draw his own conclusions from some letters of Dr. Plunket, and from other documents connected with his imprisonment and subsequent martyrdom; these documents speak for themselves, and bear with them such an evidence as places in the clearest light the heroic sanctity of this glorious confessor of Christ, and the high degree of perfection to which he had attained. Above all, they attest his calmness and resignation to the Divine will in all his sufferings. In the first letter addressed from prison he burst forth into the exclamation, "the Lord be praised, who, by these prisons, has given me occasion of spiritual joy." When forced to embark and abide his trial before a London jury, his only sentiments are: "may all be for the greater glory of God and the salvation of my soul." The Archbishop of Cashel declares that in prison he "proved himself wholly master of himself and superior to all the adversities of this world;" that he spent his time "in prayer

and mortification, and in exhorting the faithful to perseverance in the true faith, and to bear with patience their present tribulations;" that in his own deportment and resignation he presented to all "the example of a worthy prelate," and filled his very guards with confusion and admiration. The narrative given in the last chapter continually refers to his *heroic virtue*, his *perfect charity for his enemies*, the eager desire of Catholics to visit him, and their rapture, as well as edification, in conversing with him. On the scaffold, such was the heavenly unction of his discourse, and the angelic sweetness of his manner, that all were moved to compassion, and the fruits of this closing scene of his glorious career were such that many of his friends could declare him to have merited greater reward, and to have achieved more good by this one hour of his suffering, than he could possibly have attained by a century of missionary toil. But, in addition to these writers, who thus incidentally declare to us these striking features of the holy Primate, many others may be cited, who, in like word or, perhaps, still more explicitly, commemorate the glorious triumph which he thus achieved in his happy death. The learned theologian, Arsdekin, declares that:—

"The multitude which was gathered together from all sides, proclaimed with one accord his innocence, his Christian constancy, and his incredible contempt for death; and many, too,



affirmed that, did he live for one hundred years, yet never could he have gained such glory for himself, for God, for his country, and for the Catholic faith."

The Internunzio, too, from Brussels, writing on the 19th of December, 1681, after stating that the intercession of the Spanish ambassador with the King of England, in favour of Dr. Plunket, had been in vain, adds:—

"In effect, it is notorious that the most obstinate and most barbarous heretics themselves were forced to feel compassion for him, and many Protestants of the highest name and dignity in their sect declared, that if the government continued to put to death Catholics of such fervour and zeal, they would soon succeed in rendering Catholic all England."

This well confirms the noble testimony of the Archbishop of Cashel, that the Protestants themselves were filled with admiration at the heroism which he displayed, and that the Catholics, too, were consoled, "considering the glorious death of this sacred victim, and the applause which he merited, even from Protestants, and the honour which he thus rendered to the Church, to his country, and to his sacred dignity."

The letters addressed from prison a little while before his death, perhaps still better than any testimony of others, reveal to us the heavenly calm which reigned in all his faculties, his complete resignation to the Divine will—his

spiritual joy at being thus chosen by God for the crown of martyrdom. We have already seen one of his letters addressed to Father Corker, in which he thanked God for having strengthened him "*with a fortitude fearless of death.*" In another, addressed to the same worthy ecclesiastic, he expressed his joy at the prospect of being put to death for the faith, "since Ireland, so fertile in saints, has but few martyrs." Nothing, too, can be more calm and dignified than the following letter, which he wrote to his relative, Michael Plunket, a student of the Irish College in Rome, on the day after sentence of death was passed on him :—

"DEAR MICHAEL PLUNKET,

"On the eighth of this month I was brought to trial, accused of introducing the Catholic religion, of preparing 70,000 men for rebellion, collecting money for them, exploring the fortresses and forts of Ireland, and of destining Carlingford as the landing place for the French. I applied for time to bring my witnesses from Ireland, but in vain. I argued that the pretended crime having been committed in Ireland, it should be there discussed, or that at least a jury should be brought thence, who would be better acquainted with the circumstances and condition of those concerned; but everything was denied to me. . . .

"Sentence of death has been passed against

me, and there is no hope of respite or pardon, and thus those who beheaded me in effigy, have now attained their intent of beheading the prototype. I pardon them all, and, with St. Stephen, I cry out, 'Oh, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' I think I will be executed about the end of this month. Show this letter or its contents to all my friends, and pressingy solicit their prayers for me. I never sought to introduce the Catholic religion unless by teaching and preaching. My conscience never reproached me with being guilty of any conspiracy or rebellion, direct or indirect. Oh," would to God that I were as free from every other stain and sin against the divine precepts as I am from this. Therefore, it is necessary for all my friends to pray for me, as I confide they will."

A few days later Dr. Plunket addressed another letter to this same relative, Michael Plunket. It is one of the few letters in the Roman archives whose original is in English, and it must be especially dear to the reader as recording the sentiments of our Primate a few days before his execution. It is dated 22nd June, styl. vet. (*i.e.* 2nd July), 1681, and is as follows :—

"Sentence of death passed against me on the 15th, without causing me any fear, or depriving me of sleep for a quarter of an hour. I am innocent of all treason as the child born yesterday. As for my character, profession, and function, I did own it publicly, and that being

also a motive of my death, I die most willingly, and being the first among the Irish, I will teach others, with the grace of God, by example, not to fear death. But how am I, a poor creature, so stout? seeing that my Redeemer began to fear, to be weary and sad, and that drops of His blood ran down to the ground. I have considered that Christ, by His fears and passions, merited for me to be without fear.

“I am informed by persons of credit that Felix and Daly did contrive all this tragedy before their departure from Ireland. MacMoyer was Daly’s vicar, and Duffy is a fosterer, or of that family who fostered Felix: if so, God forgive them; and I do forgive all who had a hand, directly or indirectly, in my death and in my innocent blood.

“I have recommended you to my friends there; and also my nephews and two nieces. Jemmy and Joseph began their Philosophy, and Mickey ended his Prosody. Catty and Tomasina and all will be in a sad condition. You know that Ned is simple, and that, by Cromwell’s people, what little land and mortgages he had left him by his father were lost; and I believe my friends there will help my nephews, if you speak to Monsignore. I stuck to my care and districts until death.

“The English Catholics were here most charitable to me; they spared neither money nor gold to relieve me, and on my trial did for me all that even my brother would do; they

are rare Catholics and most constant sufferers. My accusers swore that I had seventy thousand men in Ireland to promote the Catholic cause, that I had the harbour of Carlingford ready to bring in the French, and that I levied monies upon the clergy in Ireland for their maintenance—such romances as would not be believed by any jury in Ireland. As for what was opposed of my profession, character, function, &c., I owned publicly, and die for it willingly: my mind remains unmoved by the terrors of death.

“I expect daily to be brought to the place of execution, where my bowels are to be cut out and burned before my face, and then my head to be cut off, &c.; which death I embrace willingly: I desire to be dissolved that I may be with Christ. What speech I will have at my death will be sent to you.

“Salute all my friends there as if I had named them, and I recommend myself to their prayers: none of them ought to be grieved for my death, being as innocent of what is lodged to my charge as a child unborn, as to matter of treason; as for my religion and character, 'tis glorious for all my friends that I should die for it. I did expect yesterday to be brought to execution, but finding I am not to be brought to it until Friday or Saturday, I thought fit to write to you these few lines. I can hardly believe, though 'tis reported, that Tyrrell is taken. Dromgole, I know, was, and Forstall, and

Creagh. If they be, I will lead them the way to a worthy death.

“What pictures are there I leave them to the place where you are, and where I got my first education. I would there were cornices about them. You may write to Joyce, and direct your letters thus:—*For Mr. Thomas Golding, in the Inns, Dublin*, and he will send them to Acarne. If I will not be executed on Friday, this shall not be the last. These eight days past I have some more liberty than before. I could not get leave to have a priest, though there be eight or nine here condemned: amongst whom there is one Mr. Corker, to whom I am much obliged. Yet I am in hopes to get leave for one of them to come to me.”

This letter, as was usual, was not sent directly to Rome, but enclosed in another to Canon Joyce, which has been preserved to us by Father Arsdekin, and which we translate from his Latin version:—

“Sentence of death has been passed against me, but I fear it not; nor does it deprive me of one moment of my rest, for I am as free from all the conspiracy imputed to me as the infant of yesterday. As to what regarded my character, profession, and function, I publicly professed it, and this being the cause of my death, I willingly lay down my life, and as I am the first of the Irish bishops to come hither, so, aided by the divine grace, I will give example to the others not to dread such a death. I ex-

pect every day to be led out for execution, where my bowels are to be taken out and burned before my face, and then my head cut off. I ardently desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. I pardon from my heart, and I pray that God may pardon all who in any way were the cause of my death."

Surely nothing can be more generous, or more noble, than the sentiments of these letters of the holy prelate; the unaffected piety which they breathe, and at the same time the ardour which they disclose to us of his desire to suffer for the faith, and that true Christian courage which, whilst it joyously reposes on the divine aid, is ever diffident in itself, and loves to dwell on its own lowliness and infirmity, recall to mind the letters of the glorious confessors of the early ages, and cannot fail to fill the soul with spiritual consolation and delight.

Eight days after the Primate's execution, the Internunzio Tanari writes from Brussels, conveying the sad intelligence to the authorities in Rome:—

"It has been impossible to prevent or defer the sentence of death which was passed against the Archbishop of Armagh. Perhaps, however, this impious policy has promoted the interests of religion more efficaciously than the zeal of Dr. Plunket could have effected, though he had lived for many years, since all who conversed with him in prison, or saw him when standing before the judge, or when led

out to execution, have admired the sanctity of his manners, the constancy of his soul, and his calm resignation. In a lengthened and able discourse, of which I annex a translation (for he sent the original, signed by his own hand, to the palace of the Spanish ambassador), he defended his innocence, so that all present were moved, and compassionated his lot.

“After his death the Catholics were allowed to collect and put together the remains of the prelate, and inter them, as he had desired, near the Jesuit fathers who suffered in 1679.”

The Bishop of Clogher, Dr. Tyrrell, wrote about the same time to the Secretary of Propaganda, conveying the same sad intelligence:—

“What I feared has at length come to pass, that is, the Archbishop of Armagh, falsely accused of treason against the king and state, was on the 11th of this month of July, executed and beheaded, having left in writing a last declaration of his innocence, and *a glorious example to us of an indomitable patience and constancy.*”

Another important document testifying the heroic sentiments with which the glorious prelate prepared for his happy lot, was presented by the learned Jesuit, Father Teeling, to the Sacred Congregation, and is a recapitulation of various letters which he had received from members of his order, and others in London. It is as follows:—

“Dr. Plunket, Primate of Ireland, died with the greatest fortitude and piety that could be



wished for; and with such a serenity and joy of countenance, that the innumerable multitude which was assembled, by repeated exclamations, attested his innocence, and even his enemies wept at his death.

“Father Edward Peters, a prisoner in the Tower, was present at the execution, and writes, that the Primate Plunket had the look of an angel who had descended from heaven, and was about to return thither: and that he has rendered immense glory to the Catholic religion by his angelical deportment in death as well as when conducted through London to the place of execution.

“In other letters it is said that on the days which preceded his death, the concourse was continuous from morning till evening, of persons of every class, and all attested their extreme delight and edification at his manners, discourses, and modesty; and even the children visited him. Such, moreover, was his resignation, that he declared to a friend that he knew not which to choose, were it proposed to him to live or to die. And moreover, he felt so comforted at the prospect of dying, that he wrote to a Benedictine father, confined in the same prison, that he felt a little scruple for the little, or rather no fear of death. He prepared himself for death on the day preceding his execution, all alone, and with the assistance of a priest, admitted to him by the keeper, who, though most cruel with others, yet with the Primate was merciful and compassionate.”

It now only remains to present\* to the reader the beautiful narrative written by the often commemorated Benedictine, Father Corker. This worthy priest was fellow prisoner with the Primate, and had more than once enjoyed the privilege of holding communication with him by letter. Dr. Plunket speaks of him as one from whom he had received special favours, and for whom he had entertained a particular esteem. In this narrative, which was written immediately after the execution, the good Benedictine father describes his own personal emotions when communicating with the holy man, as well as the sentiments of all who approached him, and the heroic practice of every virtue with which he disposed himself to receive the martyr's crown:—

“I cannot as yet,” he thus writes, “pretend to give you, as you desire, a description of the virtues of the glorious archbishop and martyr, Dr. Oliver Plunket. I am promised the particulars of his life and actions, both at Rome, where he studied and taught almost twenty years, and in Ireland, where he exercised his episcopal, or rather apostolic function, till he became a champion of faith; but these particulars are not as yet arrived at my hands. After

\* It is deserving of remark that Protestant historians, such as Burnet, Echard, Stuart, Leland, Carte, Harris, Hume, and others, write almost in the same strain as our own Catholic historians concerning the virtues and heroic constancy of Dr. Plunket.

his transportation hither, he spent his time in almost continual prayer; he fasted usually three or four days a-week, with nothing but bread; he appeared always modestly cheerful, without any anguish or concern at his danger or strait confinement; by his sweet and pious demeanour he attracted an esteem and reverence from those few that came near him. When he was arraigned, it is true, I could write to him, and he to me, but our letters were read, transcribed, and examined by the officers before they were delivered to either of us. For which cause we had little other communication than what was necessary in order to his trial. But the trial being ended, and he condemned, his man had leave to wait on him alone in his chamber, by whose means we had free intercourse by letters to each other. And now it was I clearly perceived the spirit of God in him, and those lovely fruits of the Holy Ghost, charity, joy, peace, &c., transparent in his soul. And not only I, but many other Catholics who came to receive his benediction, and were eye-witnesses (a favour not denied to us), can testify, there appeared in his words, in his actions, in his countenance, something so divinely elevated—such a composed mixture of cheerfulness, constancy, love, sweetness, and candour, as manifestly denoted the divine Goodness had made him fit for a victim, and destined him for heaven. None saw or came near him, but received new comfort, new fervour, new desires.

to please, serve, and suffer for Christ Jesus, by his very presence. Concerning the manner and state of his prayer, he seemed most devoted to Catholic sentences taken out of scripture, the divine office, and missal, which he made me procure for him three months before he died. Upon these sentences he let his soul dilate itself in love, following herein the sweet impulse and dictates of the Holy Ghost, and reading his prayers, writ rather in his heart than in his books. For this reason I suppose it was, that when, with great humility, he sent me his last speech to correct, he also writ me word he would not, at the place of execution, make use of any other set form or method of prayer than the *Pater noster*, *Ave Maria*, *Credo*, *Miserere*, *In manus tuas Domine*, &c., and for the rest he would breathe forth his soul in such prayer and ejaculations as God Almighty should then inspire him withal. He continually endeavoured to improve and advance himself in the purity of divine love, and by consequence also in contrition for his past sins and for his deficiency in both, which this humble soul complained to me as the only thing that troubled him. This love had extinguished in him all fear of death. Hence the joy of our holy martyr seemed still to increase with his danger, and was fully accomplished by the assurance of death. The very night before he died, being now, as it were, at heart's ease, he went to bed at eleven o'clock, and slept quietly and soundly

till four in the morning, at which time his man, who lay in the room with him, awakened him ; so little care had he upon his spirit, or rather, so much had the loveliness of the end beautified the horror of the passage to it. After he certainly knew that God Almighty had chosen him to the crown and dignity of martyrdom, he continually studied how to divest himself of himself, and become more and more an entire and perfect holocaust, to which end, as he gave up his soul, with all his faculties, to the conduct of God, so, for God's sake, he resigned the care and disposal of his body to unworthy me. But I neither can nor dare undertake to describe unto you the signal virtues of this blessed martyr. There appeared in him something beyond expression—something more than human ; the most savage and hard-hearted people were softened and attendered at his sight. Many Protestants, in my hearing, wished their souls in the same state with his. All believed him innocent, and he made Catholics, even the most timorous, be in love with death. When he was carried out of the press-yard to execution, he turned him about to our chamber windows, and with a pleasant aspect and elevated hands, gave us his benediction. How he composed himself after he was taken from hence, you yourself can give a more exact account than I."

## CHAPTER XXV.

VENERATION SHOWN TO DR. PLUNKET AFTER  
HIS DEATH.

As the Benedictine, Father Corker, had been the admiring friend of Dr. Plunket during life, so did he cherish his memory after death. Dodd, in his Church History, mentions that, on the morning of the execution, the Primate bequeathed his earthly remains to this good father; but, perhaps, this was done on the preceding day, when, as we have seen, he alone enjoyed the company of Dr. Plunket, and aided him in disposing his happy soul for its passage to a glorious eternity. Permission was, without difficulty, obtained to collect the scattered members of the mangled body of the martyr, and they were, with due solemnity, interred close by the remains of Father Whitebread and his four companions, all Jesuit Fathers, who, two years before, had, in like manner, laid down their lives at Tyburn, and whom Dr. Plunket had ever venerated as glorious martyrs of the Catholic faith. The head and arms, from the elbow, were placed in a separate case, and preserved with due reverence till Father Corker, on being liberated from prison, was enabled to translate them, together with the

body, to the monastery of his order, at Lamb-spring, in Germany. Dodd mentions, that the site where his body was interred, was, "under the North wall," in St. Giles's, and he quotes from Mr. Wood, in his "Athen. Oxonien." page 221, the additional circumstance that, "in the said place, Plunket's quarters continued till the crop-eared plot broke out in 1683, and then they were taken up and conveyed beyond the sea to the monastery of the Benedictines, at Lambspring, in Germany."

We learn from Dr. Chaloner, that when, in 1684, the body of Dr. Plunket was disinterred, it was found to be entire.\* It was translated, as we have seen, to Germany, through the care of Father Corker, and a few years later (in 1693), this same father erected a handsome monument in the church of his order, at Lamb-spring, which bore the inscription in Latin:—

"The remains of Oliver Plunket (of holy memory), Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland, who, being hanged, through hatred of the Catholic faith, and his bowels being taken out and cast into the fire, as a glorious martyr, laid down his life in London, the 11th of July, 1681."

The devotion of the good Benedictine did not rest here. He caused the right hand to be

\* Hugh M'Mahon, Archbishop of Armagh (in the second part of his "Jus Primatiale," section 22, page 8-9), attest that many miracles were performed by these sacred remains.

placed in a rich case, and it is still so preserved in the church at Lambspring. The head also he cased in a silver shrine. In 1684 he petitioned the authorities in Rome to be allowed to keep a perpetual lamp ever burning before his shrine; and to strengthen his petition, procured recommendatory letters from the Irish bishops, who, despite the persecution, still remained guardians of their flocks.

Some further particulars regarding the remains of the martyred Primate, are registered in the following note of the Bishop of Limerick, Dr. John O'Molony, presented to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, on the 12th of November, 1696 :—"The Bishop of Limerick, in Ireland, begs to state to the Sacred Congregation, that there is at present preserved in the Convent of English Nuns, in Paris, a whole arm of Oliver Plunket, with its flesh and skin, the hand, fingers, and nails, all as perfect and fresh as though still living. He was Archbishop of Armagh, and laid down his life for the faith, being executed in London, and then drawn into four parts, by four horses, in the year 1681, under Charles II. The said Bishop of Limerick asks what is to be done in this case. Archbishop Plunket was for many years professor of theology in the College of Propaganda, in Rome, and was always esteemed for his most holy life: he is at the present day deeply venerated throughout the three kingdoms. The remainder of his body was conveyed from Lon-



don to Lanspruck, in Germany, by the Benedictine Monks, with the exception of one rib bone, which is also kept in Paris. The Benedictines hold his remains in the greatest veneration, and they, too, are anxious to know what course they should pursue. In Rome there are many witnesses who are well informed about the whole case, as for instance Bishop Ellis, the Vicar of His Holiness, in England; the Rev. Father Grims, Prior of the Dominicans, at the Monastery of SS. John and Paul; and many others. It would confer a great blessing on these three kingdoms, should the Sacred Congregation make some inquiry into this matter." In reply to this note, the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, ordered the question to be referred to the Congregation of Rites, whose special province it is to inquire into all things connected with the canonization of saints.

But the Holy See did not, as yet, deem it opportune, such were the then existing circumstances of the English nation, to declare our holy prelate "*a martyr*;" we may, however, fondly hope that the day is not now far distant, when our long afflicted church will be consoled with the solemn declaration of the Vicar of Christ, that he who, in the hour of trial, was the pillar of the House of God in our country, and who so nobly sealed with his blood the doctrines of our faith, may be ranked among the martyrs of our holy church.

In Ireland each memorial of the martyred

Primate was treasured up with the greatest veneration. As he went to the scaffold he handed his Beads to the servant who had waited on him during his imprisonment: the heirs of that faithful servant still preserve the precious gift. The Dunsany branch of the Plunket family, though they no longer enjoy the blessings of that Holy Faith for which the Primate joyfully laid down his life, yet cherish as priceless heirlooms the watch and some other memorials of Dr. Plunket. In the parish of Termonfeckin, where the Primate generally resided, the site of the hut wherein he dwelt is still traditionally pointed out, and the inhabitants still vividly cherish the memory of the orchard wherein he was accustomed to assemble the little children for instruction in the rudiments of faith; and of the rude loft, formed of branches of trees, on which he used to seek concealment by day and repose by night.

So fierce, however, was the rage of the enemies of the Catholic Church at the time of the execution of the Primate, that our persecuted people had then but little opportunity of manifesting their reverence and devotion for his memory. The letter sent by the Archbishop of Cashel, when transmitting the narrative to which we have already referred, discloses to us the sad affliction to which our prelates were subjected. It is dated the vigil of the Assumption (14th August), 1681:

“MONSIGNOR,—I send enclosed a dolorous

narrative, the subject of which has filled with affliction all the good in these parts. Our friend, though most unjustly put to death, died gloriously, if we consider true felicity. He being the first Prelate gave good example encountering death, confiding in the mercy of God and in his own innocence, and it is probable that other bishops will follow in the same path, for wicked men are not wanting to accuse them though innocent, and rewards and pardons are held out to stimulate such perjurers. Two bishops are already in prison, viz., those of Cork and Kildare; but, as yet, it is not known what will be done with them."

It was the desire of many distinguished members of our Irish church to have the diocese of Armagh subjected to some signal chastisement by the Holy See, that thus it might manifest the common detestation of all Catholics for the deed perpetrated by unworthy members of that diocese. The Bishop of Clogher, in a letter written not long after this occurrence, does not hesitate to say:—

"Should their Eminences refuse to stigmatize that people by some punishment, many here are apprehensive, lest the bad example should occasion the worst impressions, and this impunity assume the character of licentiousness."

None, however, were so vehement in denouncing the wicked sacrilege, and soliciting the Sacred Congregation to inflict condign punishment on its perpetrators, as Dr. James Cusack,

Bishop of Meath. In a letter of January, 1682, he thus writes to Propaganda:—

“Again I cry out, again and a third time I knock, if not with clamorous shouts, yet certainly with mournful sighs. I am forced to repeat my cries by the repeated injuries of the wicked men who prolong their iniquity. I mean the murderers of our illustrious Oliver of Armagh, to whom they rendered evil for good, and hatred for love, all whose fault was, that he reprehended the faults of the wicked. They now add iniquity to iniquity, and seek by new warrants to procure the death of the Bishop of Clogher, Dromgole, Hughes, Maguirke, and others. What does the loved one of the Spouse do? the guardian of the Spouse of Christ? the Shepherd of Christ’s fold? Does he devise some spiritual remedy to check this so horrid and unheard-of pest? New diseases must be met by new remedies, and such a remedy must, indeed, be found, which, at the same time, will heal for the present the recent wound of the Church, and serve as a warrant to posterity.”

Notwithstanding these repeated and urgent solicitations, Rome remained unmoved; and the Holy Father continued, as heretofore, to nominate worthy successors to St. Patrick in the primatial see. When we now look back on this period of our history, whilst we render the just tribute of our admiration to the zeal and solicitude of these worthy Prelates to have as a

perennial memorial such a public tribute rendered to the memory of their loved martyred primate, surely we must be filled with gratitude for the wisdom and paternal solicitude of the Holy See, which refused to involve alike the innocent with the guilty in the merited chastisement, or impute to the whole body the guilt of some unworthy members, who were already cut off by suspension and excommunication from its bosom, and thus deprive our national Church of its glorious privilege of pointing out the series of its primates, who, in unbroken succession, have handed down unchanged the sacred deposit of faith which our Apostle, St. Patrick, bore with him from the Centre of Religion and Catholicity.

We have seen the reverence shown by the good Benedictine father to the remains of Dr. Plunket; we have only to add a few words regarding the manner in which part of these relics passed to our own country.

In 1714 Dr. Hugh MacMahon was transferred from the see of Clogher to the primatial see. From his infancy he had learned to walk in the footsteps and admire the virtues and the zeal of his martyred predecessor. When studying in Rome, in the Irish College, he often heard of the glory which Dr. Plunket had won for religion by his glorious death; and often, too, did he there contemplate the shrine containing the head of that happy prelate, which, as tradition tells us, had been presented many years before by Father

Corker to Cardinal Norfolk—perhaps at the time of the contemplated visit of the good father to Rome, in 1684, of which we have already spoken ; and on the demise of that Cardinal, in 1690, was preserved in the convent of the Dominican order in that city.

In 1721, at the request of Stephen MacEgan, provincial of the Irish Dominicans, and afterwards bishop of Meath, Dr. MacMahon applied to the general of the order to have a convent for the nuns of his order opened in Ireland. The circumstances were indeed most favourable. We have seen with what affection, in a letter written in prison a few days before his death, Dr. Plunket speaks of his niece, *little Catherine*. Before many years the Dominican nuns numbered her in their community ; and at the time of which we speak she was matured in sanctity and distinguished for her virtues in the convent of that order at Brussels. She was at once chosen first Superioress for the Irish convent, and Drogheda was destined as the scene of her labours. This convent was dedicated under the invocation of St. Catherine of Sienna, and it remains to the present day ; never has the primitive fervour of its holy inmates abated ; and it now, as under its first foundress, diffuses throughout our island the sweet odour of its sanctity. No spot could be better chosen for the shrine of Dr. Plunket ; and Dr. MacMahon hesitated not to place there, without delay, the precious deposit which had already been granted to him from Rome—the

head of his martyred predecessor. The foundress of this convent was still living when it was first visited by the celebrated author of the "*Hibernia Dominicana*," who found Dr. Plunket's head entire and yet retaining its grey hair. One of the latest writers on the "*Life and Death of Oliver Plunket*," gives the following description of the reliquary in which it is now preserved:—

"At present it is enshrined in a little ebony temple, at each of the four angles of which is a Corinthian pillar of silver. The sides are also inlaid with silver plates. There are two doors, one in the front and one in the rere, and inside of each there is a glass plate, through which the head can be seen. On the silver plate in the front door are the Primate's arms, surmounted by a silver mitre. On each angle of the roof is a silver flame, emblematical of martyrdom. The head itself is of a brown color, and quite perfect, with the exception of the nose, which is slightly injured. It still retains some of the white hair of which DeBurgo speaks."

Another portion of the holy Prelate's remains was preserved with watchful affection by his devoted friend the Archbishop of Cashel, who so anxiously desired that due permission for venerating them might be accorded by the Holy See. His successors retained this treasure till the year 1791, when on the death of Dr. Butler, it passed into the hands of a worthy relative in

Ballyragget. Miss Margaret Lalor, the last who possessed it, guarded this precious relic with religious watchfulness for forty years, till, for greater security, she consigned it to the zealous curate of that town, the Rev. Nicholas Murphy, to whose great kindness the writer of these pages is indebted for receiving it in charge in the month of August last. It has been deposited by me in the safe keeping of the holy community of Dominican Nuns, at St. Mary's, Cabra, in the suburbs of this city, where I trust it may one day, with the solemn sanction of the Holy See receive that honor and veneration which are due to the martyrs of the Church of Christ.

There is one peculiar feature of the reverence shown to our great Prelate, which here merits special commemoration:—During the past years many temperance societies have been formed under the invocation and patronage of Oliver Plunket; the friends of temperance fondly persuading themselves that he who throughout his apostolic career, had laboured so earnestly and so unceasingly to root out from his flock the degrading vice of drunkenness—that accursed plant which has produced and still produces so many evil fruits of bitterness to the Irish people—would not now fail to plead before the Throne of God, even more efficaciously than during life, the holy cause in which they were engaged. I may add that I have known instances in which familie that prayed to God to banish drunkenness from



amongst them, and placed their prayers under the protection of the martyred Primate, have had the wished-for blessing granted to them in a most wonderful manner : and some instances are not wanting in which men who had reached the last stage of the dreadful vice of drunkenness, and were already on the very brink of the abyss, have had both their temporal and eternal happiness secured to them through the same most efficacious patronage.

We have now brought to a close this "Life" of Dr. Plunket ; and whosoever examines the documents which it presents must assuredly confess, that the period of his episcopate forms a bright epoch in the history of our Church. In the centuries which immediately succeeded the conversion of our island, heaven seemed to pour out upon our people all the treasures of grace, and, at the same time, all the blessings of peace : for later ages was reserved the ordeal of our faith. But her triumphs in the arena were not less glorious than her crowns in time of peace ; and, as the virtues of her children merited for her the glorious name of "Island of Saints," so the noble heroism displayed by her champions of faith in the days of persecution have won the no less peerless title of "Martyr-Island of the Church." From the records we have published, it is evident that Dr. Plunket must be ranked amongst the foremost of these her heroic children. Neither is his fame confined to our own island ; but many

are the panegyrists which his virtues and his martyrdom have found throughout the Continent. In our own country it is not only in the records of our history and the annals of our Church that his name is inscribed; it is yet, after a lapse of near two centuries, a household word in every family, and lives in the tradition of our faithful people.

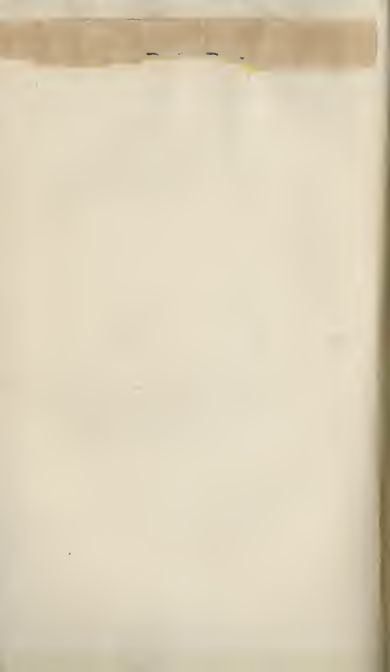
We will conclude our narrative with the words of one of the most learned and judicious of our national writers, Matthew O'Connor, Esq., who in his "History of the Irish Catholics," part i. page 106 *seq.* (Dublin, 1813), after detailing some particulars of the foul conspiracy against the Catholics, thus apostrophises the martyred Primate—"Illustrious shade! thy memory is embalmed in the tears and honoured by the admiration of six successive generations! The power of thy persecutors was short-lived, and nothing remains of them but the memory of their crimes; your virtues still exhibit a glorious example of patience, meekness, humility, charity, and fortitude. Thou hast received thy reward: Anima sanctissima aveto salveto! May the contemplation of thy happiness encourage to the imitation of thy virtues! May the example of thy resignation sustain those who may be exposed to similar persecution!"

THE END.









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