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THE HISTORIANS OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE SPIRIT OF IRISH HISTORY.

IN that exquisite dirge for Eugene O'Curry, in which Thomas D'Arcy MacGee voices with his own sorrow for his dead friend, the grief of Ireland for her dead scholar son, the poet has recalled with peculiar felicity a beautiful story, which had been among the precious treasures salvaged by O'Curry himself from the wreck of the ancient literature of Ireland. Who does not know and love the famous stanza :—

Let those who love and lose him most,
 In their great sorrow comfort find,
 Rememb'ring how heaven's mighty host
 Were ever present to his mind ;
 Descending on his grave at even
 May they a radiant phalanx see—
 Such wondrous sight as once was given
 In vision to the rapt Culdee.

The story referred to is the story of Aengus the Culdee, and how he came to write his celebrated " Feilire," or " Festology." It will be found in O'Curry's " Manuscript Materials."

" One time that Aengus went to the church of Cuil Benchair he saw a grave there, and angels from Heaven constantly descending and ascending to and from it. Aengus asked the priest of

Aengus the
Culdee.

the church who the person was that was buried in this grave. The priest answered that it was a poor o'd man who formerly lived in this place. ' What good d'd he do ? ' said Aengus. ' I saw no particular good by him,' said the priest, ' but that his customary practice was to recount and invoke the saints of the world as far as he could remember them, at his going to bed and getting up, in accordance with the custom of the o'd devotees.' ' Ah ! my God ! ' said Aengus ; ' he who would make a poetical composition in praise of the saints would doubtless have a high reward, when so much has been vouchsafed to the efforts of the old devotee.' " And Aengus there and then commenced his famous work.

This beautiful and touching story might well serve as an epigraph to any account of the writing of Ireland's History. No less heroic and saintly than the making of the history of our land—" Insula Sanctorum et Heroum "—has been the telling of it. Those who set themselves to the task were lured on by the hope of no earthly reward—no fame, no

glittering money prize. Rather had they to face dangers and hardships beyond all telling. Their grinding toil, their weary pilgrimages in search of materials, their heart-breaking disappointments over the disappearance of the precious old books—what solace had Michael O'Clery and his comrades compiling their immortal "Annals" amid the ruins of Donegal Abbey, or Geoffrey Keating, writing his history, while "on the run," in the Glen of Aherlow, to make up for these things? This was their constant heritage: hunger and cold, peril and poverty.

Ah! yes! But *now*? *Now* are they not in the enjoyment of the "high reward" of the old devotees of Coolbanagher, or of "the rapt Culdee," or Eugene O'Curry himself? Over their graves, on whatever part of the earth's surface they lie—whether amid the storms of the Northern Seas, where Abbot Adamnan awaits the Resurrection, or in that forgotten Spanish church where Philip O'Sullivan sleeps his last sleep, or in Louvain, where repose the bones of Michael O'Clery, or in or own Glasnevin, where O'Donovan and O'Curry rest in peace—might we not see—*we*, too, if our eyes were purified by the poet's fire—

Such radiant sight as once was given
In vision to the rapt Culdee—

the eventide filled with "a radiant phalanx"—"a service of angels" constantly ascending and descending to and from heaven and that "sanctified spot" which holds their mortal remains?

The spirit which has inspired the historians of Ireland, and which has given to the story itself its peculiar perfume, has been summed up

by Michael O'Clery in the famous phrase: "To the
Inspiration of Glory of God and the Honour of Ireland." "I have
our History. calculated," he writes in the dedication of the "Annals,"

"that it seemed a cause of pity and regret, grief and sorrow (for the glory of God and the honour of Ireland), how much the race of Gaedhil the son of Nial have passed under a cloud of darkness, without a knowledge or record of the death or obit of saint or virgin, archbishop, bishop, abbot or other noble dignitary of the Church, of king or of prince, of lord or of chieftain."

CHAPTER II.

ADAMNAN : THE HISTORIAN OF ST. COLUMCILLE (Seventh Century).

UNDER the pleasant shade of the oak-trees the old monk, Ernene, white-haired, white-garmented, sat dreaming of the past. Presently through the flickering green and gold—the dance of leaf shadow and sunshine—he saw coming towards him, Adamnan

at their head, the boys of the monastery school, each with his tablets slung from his shoulders by their leathern thongs.

Adamnan and Ernene. One by one, with reverent greeting, the lads knelt before him, and Ernene laid his hand in blessing on each bright young head. The hand lingered longest on the head of Adamnan. The old voice recovered some of its lost strength, as it spoke the words of blessing over that kneeling boyish form.

"Hast thou and thy comrades studied well to-day, Adamnan?"

"Passing well, Father Erne," said the boy; "the Abbot is well content"—he turned to his companions with a sweep of his arm—"and now we have come to you for our reward—a story."

The old monk took the boy's hand in both of his, and kept it there. "Shall the story be of the master?" he asked, smiling.

"Of the master, surely," cried the lads, and the voice of the whole band was but as the voice of one. "Tell us of the vision thou thyself didst witness on the night when the blessed one passed from earth to Heaven," pleaded Adamnan.

And there beneath the oak-trees which had so often sheltered Columcille and his angel visitants, seated on the soft sward which angel feet had so often trod, as they kept step with his, the boys of the monastery school of Drumhome "of the sweet acorns" heard, not for the first time, the tale of the vision old Ernene's eyes had witnessed on the blessed night of St. Columba's death.

"On that night on which St. Columba, by a holy and blessed end, passed away from earth to heaven, I and other men with me, while at work catching fish in the valley of the fish-abounding

Ernene's Vision. Finn, saw the whole expanse of sky suddenly illumined, and struck by the suddenness of this miracle we turned

our upraised eyes to the east, and lo! there appeared, as it were, an immense pillar of fire, which, rising upwards at that midnight hour, seemed to us to lighten the whole world, just as does the summer and meridian sun; and just as after the setting of the sun, so after that pillar had penetrated the heavens, darkness followed. And many other fishermen also who were scattered fishing in various pools of the same river, as they afterwards told us, were greatly awed at the sight of this same apparition."

Even the least imaginative of Brother Ernene's listeners felt his heart stirred—as a sleeping lake is stirred by the dawn-breezes—by the poetry, and beauty, and mystery, conjured up by the old monk's words. They were back with him—across the years to where his fond dreams led them—to the banks of a darkling river where the fisher-monks plied their trade by the dim light of the stars—they saw

the sudden radiance in the east making the midnight sky as luminous as that of the summer noon, and showing in one quick flash the river and its shining pools and groups of awe-struck fishermen raising their eyes to the marvel! And the marvel itself! The soul of Columcille passing from earth to heaven in the shape of a pillar of light! But in the heart of Adannan there was a deeper stirring. There and then awoke the tiny seedling of a life-purpose which came to maturity long years after in the production of his celebrated book: *The Life of Saint Columba*.

A kinsman of St. Columba, born in the modern barony of Raphoe, about seven and twenty years after his saintly cousin's death, Adannan was educated at the monastery of Drumhone, a Columban foundation. Here, according to his own account, "Vita S. Columbae." he often talked with the old monk, Ernene, and heard the latter relate the vision he had witnessed on the night of Columba's death—9th June, 597. He subsequently visited, as the fashion of the period was, other celebrated monastic schools in Meath, and acquired all the learning that was available in them. At last he crossed to Iona, and became a monk there. On the death of Abbot Failbe in 679 he was elected Abbot.

Great scholar, skilled writer, kinsman of their founder, is it any wonder that his monks were never tired of urging him to write the master's life? And is it any wonder that when he had yielded to their pleadings, the work was what it is: the living, breathing portraiture of his saintly hero, set amidst the very scenes in which the latter had passed his earthly pilgrimage?

CHAPTER III.

AENGUS THE CULDEE (Eighth Century).

IT was, as we have seen, in the light cast by the "radiant phalanx" of angels gathered around the tomb of the old devotee of Coolbanagher, that Aengus the Culdee discovered his historian's vocation.

His heart thrilled by the heavenly melody they made, his eyes dazzled by their splendour, he knelt by that lowly grave, and he promised the "King Who governs the Angels" to dedicate himself to the work of recording the lives and merits of the saints of the world, but especially of the saints of Eire.

Vocation of Aengus.

Instead of returning to his hermitage of Clonenagh, he disguised

himself as an old labourer, and he made his way to the great monastery of Tallaght, where Abbot Maelruain dispensed the treasures of heavenly wisdom to a numerous company of disciples.

No one knew the old serving man, with his rough garments, his unkempt hair and beard, his bowed form—no one knew him for the saintly hermit of Clonenagh, the fame of whose sanctity and learning had drawn men to the door of his cell from far and wide. So he was assigned work on the monastery farm, and a sleeping place in one of the monastery barns, and whether he worked or whether he rested, he held converse with none, and his mind was ever occupied with the composition of his great historical poem on the Saints, for which his retreat and disguise afforded an opportunity which the crowds ever flocking to him at Clonenagh would have denied.

Seven years passed thus, and though search was made far and wide for Aengus, no one discovered his hiding place, and no one, in all the monastery of Tallaght, ever thought of identifying the old labourer, who toiled from morning to night like a beast of burden, on the farm, or in the barn, or at the kiln, with the great scholar and saint whose name was in all men's mouths.

It was a little boy, the dunce of the monastery school, who discovered the tremendous secret. Young Ceallach, as not infrequently happened, had neglected to prepare his lesson. And, as not infrequently happened, he was in danger of experiencing the full weight of the rod which Abbot Maelruain had cut from a special sally bush for the treatment of cases such as Ceallach's.

The little "Mitcher."

So Ceallach thought it might be prudent to keep out of the Abbot's presence that day, and very early in the morning he stole out from the monastery, and made his way to the barn on a remote part of the farm, where the old labourer was already busy with his day's task of winnowing.

Now, Aengus, like all those who follow the Master most closely, was very fond of little boys; and he made the little "mitcher" welcome, and he spoke to him gently, and learned his trouble. Then seeing that he was tired, he gathered him into his arms, laid the fair head against his breast, and lulled the boy to sleep.

What mystical current passed from soul to soul, what treasures of light and grace were communicated, while the innocent brow of the Irish boy rested against the pure breast of the Irish saint?

After a time young Ceallach awoke, strangely refreshed, from his slumbers. Aengus smiled at him, and asked him to repeat his lesson. And behold!—to the lad's own indescribable astonishment—he repeated it without a hitch.

"Go to thy class now, little one," said Aengus; "there is yet time."

So Ceallach presented himself to the Abbot, and no boy in the class that day knew his lesson better. And thus it was every day that followed.

Now, such a great marvel as the sudden transformation of Ceallach, the dullard of the school, into its best pupil, could not but be much discussed; and finally the old serving man's part in the little drama was discovered. Moved by an irresistible impulse, Abbot Maelruain went to visit him in the remote part of the monastery farm where his days were spent. And there, to his great surprise, he discovered in him the celebrated hermit of Clonenagh, whose disappearance had filled the churches of Eire with lamentations.

There was an end then to Aengus's retirement. He had to return with the Abbot to the monastery, and continue his labours amid the other scholar monks in the "Tech Screpra" ("House of Manuscripts"). Here he produced many of the works which have made his name famous, including the most celebrated of all—*The Feilire*

Works of
Aengus.

of Aengus.

CHAPTER IV.

BLESSED MARIANUS SCOTTUS: CHRONICLER.

(Eleventh Century).

FULL five hundred years had passed away since Bishop Finnian had founded his great monastery of Moville, and still the school which had attracted Columba himself and many other of the saints of Eire, flourished, and the rule, which Finnian had brought from Candida Casa, was observed in all its pristine purity.

How this continuity was brought about, we may infer, if we transport ourselves in spirit across the centuries to a day in the middle years of the eleventh century, and assist at an interview which took place in Abbot Tighnerach's hut, between the Abbot and a young monk, Maelbrighde.

Of what slight transgression against the rule the young monk had rendered himself guilty, we know not. But the Abbot held that no infraction of the rule could be overlooked; so he had sent for Maelbrighde, and sweetly and gravely, as befitted a father speaking to his son, he had pointed out to him how he had done wrong. Then he told him how, once upon a time, in the monastery of Inniscaltra, Abbot

Story of
Annichad.

Corcran, for as slight a fault, had laid upon one of his monks, Annichad, the penance of immediate and eternal exile from Eire.

"Whither did Brother Annichad go?" asked Maelbrighde, strangely interested.

"Among the brethren of Fulda in Almaine: there did he live the life of an 'Inclusus' for many years, and there, amid miracles and marvels, his bones repose. For out of the transgression which caused his exile, he drew the motive which made him a saint. Many pilgrims from our own land have visited his tomb, and not a few have seen heavenly lights above it, and heard angelic psalmody resounding around it."

It was as if a great light had been kindled before the feet of Maelbrighde—showing him the road he was to walk to reach the Heavenly City. A hard road it was—the road of exile, its last station marked by the walled-up hut of the "Inclusus."

Not long after (1056) Maelbrighde left Ireland, and became a monk in the Irish monastery of Cologne, one of the numerous Irish foundations which were then scattered far and wide over the Continent of Europe. From this time we must drop the Irish name by which he was known in the homeland, and refer to him by that other name, Marianus Scottus, by which he has passed into European history.

He had been about two years in Cologne when, in the Easter Week of the year 1058, news reached the monks of his monastery of the death of their countryman, Paternus, at Paderborn. The holy man, an "Inclusus," like Annichad, had perished in the conflagration which had destroyed the city of Paderborn, a martyr of fidelity to his vow of perpetual enclosure.

Inspired by the pious desire of visiting the scene of his countryman's martyrdom (for such he considered his death), Marianus Scottus set out for Paderborn, and at the tomb of Paternus he met the Abbot of Fulda, who had come to the city on the same holy errand. Together they knelt on the mat where Paternus's body had rested when his pure soul fled to heaven.

The old desire for an "Inclusus's" life flamed up in the heart of Marianus, and he looked upon it as something more than a simple coincidence that the Abbot of Fulda was at his side, at that moment, to tell him that the hut of Annichad at Fulda was still vacant—as if it had been kept free for Marianus's tenancy.

For ten years Marianus lived as an "Inclusus" in Fulda, having previously been ordained priest at Wurzburg, beside the shrine of his saintly countryman, Kilian the Martyr.

We must picture to ourselves the sort of little hut in which an

"Inclusus" passed his life. It was completely walled up, except for three windows. Through the first, the inmate An "Inclusus." received Holy Communion. Through a second, directly opposite, his scanty food and drink were passed; the third, closed with horn, was intended to give light. After the "Inclusus" passed into it, with the touching ceremonies the Church prescribed, the door, left free for the purpose, was walled up, and the inmate could no more emerge until death, or some grave emergency determined his ecclesiastical superiors to break down the door once more.

During these ten years Marianus was occupied, in addition to long exercises of prayers and penance and meditation, with the composition of his famous "Chronicle," and other works. In the year 1069 the Bishop of Mainz ordered his transfer to his own episcopal city, where he was immured until the date of his death in 1086. In the Church of St. Martin of Mainz his relics repose.

Works of
Marianus.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMING OF THE O'CLERYS.

(Thirteenth Century).

AMID the flicker of torches and the wailing of funeral psalms the body of the young *ollamh*, Gilla Brighde O'Sgingin, "cut off amid his vernal years," had been borne one summer night, on its bier, from his father's castle of Kilbarron to "Assaroe, near Erna's shore," and there, after Requiem Mass at dawn, in the ancestral tomb of the O'Sgingins, in the cloisters of the Cistercian Abbey, were his remains laid to rest.

Bowed with grief, the old *ollamh*, his father, hung over the tomb in which were buried, not his dead son only, but the whole future of his race, the whole hopes of a fond father's heart.

Death of
O'Sgingin's son. From sire to son in unbroken succession for many centuries, the O'Sgingins had been *ollamhs* in history to the Lords of Tirconnail, and in Gilla Brighde their hereditary learning had come to its brightest blossoming. And now he lay dead, and the last male representative of the family was the broken-hearted old father, who mourned in hopeless grief above that untimely grave.

In vain Nuala, the fair daughter of O'Sgingin, strove to comfort her father, lavishing on him all the treasures of tenderness and affection with which her maiden heart was full. Over the sounding voice of the

waterfall rose the voice of the bereaved father "caoining" his dead son, and the summer day was darkened by his woe.

When the day was nearly spent, and it was time to return to their castle, the old *ollamh* refused to stir from his child's grave. "Here will I remain," he said, "until death claims me. Why should I depart from this spot where my heart itself is buried?"

"What must we do?" cried Nuala, turning with clasped hands and streaming eyes to the Abbot.

The Abbot, his own heart moved to its depths by the grief of the father and the anguish of the daughter, considered for a moment. Then he said: "It is well that thy father should remain here for a time. In the peace of the cloisters his heart will regain its peace, and at the feet of the Crucified," (he pointed to the Calvary in the midst of the little lawn round which the cloisters ran), "the Sorrowing Mother will teach him to bear the grief so like to that with whose sword point her own heart was pierced." So, ere nightfall, Nuala, weeping but brave, returned alone to the desolate hearth of Kilbarron.

That night old O'Sgingin, giving himself up to his grief, remained at his son's tomb. But at length, overcome with the weariness of sorrow, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, he thought for a moment that his son had been given back to him; for some hand, as kind as that of his boy's, had pillowed his poor throbbing head on a soft cushion, Cormac O'Clery was wrapping a warm mantle around his shaking old limbs. When he opened his eyes fully he saw a young man, in face and form strangely like his own Gilla Brighde, bending over him with anxious tenderness.

"Who art thou?" questioned the old *ollamh*.

"One who has known grief himself," answered the youth gently, "and has come to spend the night mourning with thee, at the tomb of thy dead son."

There were other griefs beside his own, the old *ollamh* suddenly remembered. "Tell me of thy sorrow," he said, taking the young man's hand, "but first tell me thy name and kindred."

"I am Cormac, the son of Diarmuid O'Clery, of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne," answered the youth. "It may be that you have heard how we were driven from our lands that we had held since the days of our great ancestor, Guaire the Hospitable, and how the Norman freebooter, De Burgo, lords it over our possessions."

"I have heard, indeed," said O'Sgingin, compassionately.

In the course of further conversation the old *ollamh* learned that his young friend was a professor "of both laws," and that having found a refuge with the monks of Assaroe, he was repaying their

hospitality by giving lectures to the younger brethren. O'Sgingin consented to be present at some of the lectures, and gradually his old interest in scholarly pursuits revived (bringing with it healing for his grief), and he sent word to his daughter, Nuala, that he would soon return to Kilbarron, accompanied by a guest for whom he bespoke a special welcome!

Not long afterwards Nuala and young O'Clery were married. The only bride-gift O'Sgingin asked for was the promise that the eldest son of the young couple should be called Gilla

A Romance. Brighde, and be trained up as his dead young uncle's substitute, as *ollamh* of history to the Lords of Tírconnail.

That was done; and thus did the O'Clery's enter on their new great heritage.

CHAPTER VI.

FATHER HUGH WARD, O.F.M.

(1575--1635).

PERHAPS at home, in the old land, inherited antipathies, ancestral feuds between the native aristocracy and the invaders, between Gael and Gall, would have divided them. But here, as they sat side by side, that bright spring morning of the year 1623, in a window recess of the library of the ancient convent of their Order in Paris, the two young Irish Friars, Father Hugh Ward and Father Patrick Fleming, felt their souls knit together by bonds more compelling than those of blood.

They had known each other but a few days. Yet already they had discovered that they were brothers—not alone as sons of a common father, the "Poor Little Man" of Assisi—but as loving children of the one "nurse and mother," Eire. Ward and Fleming. The same passionate devotion to her which burned in the heart of Aodh Mac a Bhaird, the son of the old race of Ollamhs, flamed high in that of the young Palesman, Christopher Fleming.

Father Hugh Ward was at this time resident in the Convent of his Order in Paris, to which he had come from Salamanca, as *Socius* of Father Francis de Arrába, Confessor of Queen Anne of Austria. Father Patrick Fleming (to give him the name in religion for which he had exchanged his baptismal name of Christopher) was only spending a few days in it, as companion of Father Hugh MacCaghwell, the Visitor of the Franciscan Order.

"You will lose no opportunity of forwarding the great work." The

pale face of Aodh Mac a Bhaird glowed: the poor crippled body took on a strange dignity as he pleaded with his companion to throw himself heart and soul into the stupendous task which they had planned.

For answer the younger Friar stretched out his hand and grasped the thin hand of Father Aodh. In that handclasp, long and mute, they pledged themselves to devote their lives, as far as their religious duties permitted, "to explore the records of their country's past, and to search out new monuments of the history of the Saints of Eire."

It is one of the most pregnant moments in our country's story—this meeting at which we are assisting between Father Hugh Ward, and Father Patrick Fleming, in the Convent of the Fruits of their agreement. Friars Minor at Paris. For out of the plans then discussed, and the engagements then taken, have grown some of the most epoch-making productions

in the domain of Irish History: the great series of "Lives of the Saints" associated with the name of Colgan, the "Collectanea Sacra" of Fleming, the "Annals of the Four Masters," and other fruits of the gigantic toil of Michael O'Clery and his fellow-workers.

The next day Ward and Fleming parted—the latter to continue his journey on foot to Rome, on which he was then engaged with the Visitor. From every stopping place, from Clairvaux, from Obrier, from Lyons, from Bobbio, we find him writing to his friend in Paris, telling him of the "finds," he has made in the old monastic libraries.

In the autumn of that same year Ward was sent by his Superiors to St. Antony's, Louvain, as Professor of Theology. He brought with him there much precious material, which he had collected from the libraries of Northern France. To these he presently added further materials for the great work he had planned on the Irish Saints, the result of his researches in the libraries of Belgium. Father Fleming, who had reached Rome in the meantime, wrote to him frequently to tell him all he had picked up in the MSS. collections of the Eternal City. Before the end of the year Ward was made Guardian of St. Antony's, and then he found opportunity to take a most important step which he had already discussed with Fleming: to send Brother Michael O'Clery to Ireland, with the commission to search out and transcribe all the Irish Lives of the Saints he could find in any part of the country, and all the documents which could throw light on its history.

During all this time he himself was not idle. Whatever leisure the heavy duties of his Guardianship left him was devoted to scholarly work in his chosen domain. In addition Works of Ward. to his celebrated *Life of St. Rumold*, we owe to his untiring efforts most of the materials embodied by Father Hugh Colgan in his celebrated *Acta Sanctorum*.

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER PATRICK FLEMING, O.F.M.

(1599--1631).

FOOTSORE and weary, the two Brown Friars, Father Hugh MacCaghwell, and Father Patrick Fleming, must often have been, as they toiled bare-footed day after day over the long leagues that lay between Paris and Rome. But for Father Patrick at least, his heart aflame with zeal for the great mission to which he and

Father Hugh Ward had pledged themselves during their historic meeting in Paris, the journey was like some knightly "Quest" commemorated in the romances of chivalry, and every step of it was full of glamour.

"A Path to Rome."

As he walked side by side with the Visitor, he remembered that the path they followed had been trodden by hundreds of their saintly countrymen in the old days when the Irish Schools sent forth swarm after swarm of apostolic teachers for the civilisation and evangelisation of Europe. Columbanus himself had looked with rapture on that snow-clad mountain peak which they saw there flaming in the sunset. In that little river Gall had cast his nets. Deicola, in that forest glade, had lived his holy hermit life—alone with God. So were the old Saints of Ireland their constant travelling companions.

And when the two Brown Friars stopped at nightfall, asking a night's shelter from some convent or monastery, opportunely found along their route, the Porter Brother at the gate opened it all the wider when he learned they were countrymen of St. Fursey or St. Fiacre, or St. Malachy. After supper, when they met the community at recreation, it was odds that they would find an Irish brother amongst them, his eyes glowing with delight at this happy meeting; and the Brother Librarian would be only too charmed to show them all his treasures, and the Irish Brother would be only too eager to promise Father Patrick to copy for him the MSS. of which he was in need.

In Rome, where Father Luke Wadding was waiting to welcome him, there were other great moments. We can picture Father Luke

and his young companion making their way through the streets of the ancient city, almost ere dawn had finished breaking, to use the cool morning hours for

research in the great libraries. One morning it was to the Library of the Oratorians, where the eager young searcher was rewarded

with many precious "finds": the *Life of St. Peregrinus*; *Lives of St. Donat and St. Andrew of Fiesole*; poems of St. Emilian, etc. On another morning their destination was the Vatican Library, where the courteous librarian put into Father Patrick's hands the catalogue of the precious books and MSS. which the Duke of Bavaria had recently presented to the Holy Father—the celebrated "Palatinate." On yet another they turned their footsteps to the Salviati Palace, where the Primate, Peter Lombard, kindly received the young Friar, and promised to search among his papers for a *Life of St. Frigidian of Lucca*, which he was almost certain was to be found amongst them.

In the Autumn of 1624, Fleming, having received his Doctor's degree, was recalled to Louvain to profess Philosophy and Theology in St. Antony's and the six following years were among the most fruitful in the annals of Irish Hagiology. We can picture him at work on his own great achievement, the *Collectanea Sacra*, containing the Life and Writings of St. Columbanus and other valuable tracts concerning the early Irish Church. He was also busily engaged helping Ward to complete the collection of Irish Saints' Lives. Brother Michael O'Clery had, shortly before Fleming's own recall to Louvain, been despatched to Ireland on his memorable mission. Can we not conjure up the scene which St. Antony's old walls must often have witnessed during those years, as the two friends, Ward and Fleming, paced its cloisters, side by side, discussing the latest report they had received from Brother Michael?

In 1630 Father Fleming, accompanied by Father Geraldine, left Louvain to take up the Guardianship of the newly founded convent of his Order at Prague. Six months later the college was formally opened by the Cardinal Primate of Bohemia; and a little afterwards Fleming was obliged to spend many weeks in Vienna, looking after its interests at the Imperial Court.

Death of Fleming.

He returned to Prague—only to meet his martyr's death. The Elector of Saxony had invaded Bohemia, and armed the Lutheran peasants, who formed themselves into bands to plunder the Catholics and wreck the religious houses, chasing or murdering their inmates. Father Fleming and one of his novices were met by such a band on the outskirts of Prague one November night of the year 1631, and both were barbarously murdered.

CHAPTER VIII.

BROTHER MICHAEL O'CLERY.

THE Porter, who had entered the library of St. Antony's with his message, had to cough discreetly more than once, before Father Guardian, so absorbed was he in his work, noticed his presence.

"There is a stranger at the gate who is desirous of seeing your Paternity."

"Bring him to me here," said Father Hugh Ward, absent-mindedly; and he went on with his work of deciphering some old MSS. containing Lives of the Saints of his country.

But a few moments later, when Brother Ferghal had conducted the stranger to the library door, and Aodh Mac a Bhaird, raising his

The Coming ofBrother Michael.

head, saw who was there, he threw aside his pen, and ran forward with outstretched hands, his pale face all lit up with joy, his eyes shining. "Tadg O'Clery!

What fortunate wind wafted you here?"

"I have come, old friend," said the newcomer, "to beg admittance as a lay brother among the sons of St. Francis of this Irish Convent of St. Antony's, Louvain."

That night at recreation someone said, looking round the happy Irish faces of the brown-habited brotherhood: "It is like a Convention of the Bards." And in truth it was. All the old families of Ollamhs were represented in St. Antony's. The Guardian, himself, Father Hugh Ward, was of the family which for centuries had furnished the hereditary Ollamhs in Poetry to O'Donnell. The family

Bardic Families.

of Father Bonaventure O'Hussey had, from father to son, fulfilled the same hereditary function with the Maguires of Fermanagh. The founder himself, then absent in Madrid, Most Rev. Dr. Florence Conry, Archbishop of Tuam, was of the famous literary stock of the O'Mulconry's. Father Hugh MacCaghwell, the Visitator, then in Rome, had in his youth made his bardic studies in the Island of Anglesey. "We needed but one of the O'Clerys to complete the company," said Father Guardian, smiling, "and lo! here we have him!"

And now Tadg O'Clery wears the brown habit of the sons of St. Francis, and has become for his brethren, Brother Michael O'Clery.

Was there anyone present that night, amid the little company of exiled Friars, who first called him by his new title, who dreamt

that the name they gave him was destined to become one of the greatest in Irish history—to be spoken with love and reverence by the children of the Gael, until the Irish race shall cease to exist?

Like his ancestors, from the days when the O'Clerys, in the person of Gilla Brighde, the son of Cormac and Nuala, the daughter of O'Sgingin, had entered on their great heritage, Brother Michael had been trained from his youth to the profession of historian and antiquary, and had gone through the severe course of studies which was demanded before the attainment of the Ollamh's degree in Ancient Ireland.

Father Hugh Ward was quick to see the great advantages to be gained by associating Brother Michael with his own labours, but it was soon felt by Ward—and his view was shared by Fleming, when he wrote to Rome to inform him of it—that the best sphere of labour for the new assistant was in Ireland itself. Accordingly, about 1626, Brother Michael was sent thither with a commission to travel the country far and wide, in search of MS. materials for the great history of the Irish Saints which Ward and Fleming had planned. As many of these MSS. were written in Old Irish, no one was so fitted for the task as that highly trained scholar, Brother Michael O'Clery.

Some of his labours during the next few years, and not a little of his discouragements, have been revealed to us by Brother Michael

Brother Michael's Wanderings.

himself in the moving words with which he prefaces his work on "The Succession of the Kings":—"Upon the arrival (*i.e.*, in Ireland) of the aforesaid friar he sought and searched through every part of Erin, in which he heard there was a good or even a bad book (*i.e.*, Gaelic MSS.); so that he spent four full years in transcribing and procuring everything that referred to the saints of Erin. Nevertheless, though great his labour and his hardships, he was able to find but a few out of many of them, because strangers had carried off the principal books of Erin into remote and unknown territories and nations, so that they have not left anything which is worthy to be enumerated of her books in her."

CHAPTER IX.

"THE FOUR MASTERS" (1630--1636).

IT was in the Convent of the Friars Minor in Athlone that Brother Michael wrote the words we quoted in our last paper.

Around the table at which he sat, as he penned them, three other "chroniclers by descent and profession," like himself, were

gathered: Fearfeasa O'Mulconry, from Bally Mulconry in the County of Roscommon; Cucogry O'Clery, from Bally Clery in County Donegal; Cucogry O'Duigenan from Castlefore, in County Leitrim.—“For when the aforesaid Brother Michael had gathered into one place all that he could find what he contemplated and decided on doing was this: viz., to bring together and assemble in one place three persons whom he should consider most befitting and most suitable to finish the work which he had undertaken with the consent of his superiors for the purpose of examining the collections he had made.”

These three chroniclers, with Brother Michael himself, are known to history by the famous title of the “Four Masters”—a name first applied to them by Father John Colgan. O'Mulconry and O'Duigenan were the hereditary historians of Roscommon and Kilonan respectively. Cucogry O'Clery came of the same learned family as Brother Michael himself, and was well known as the author of a notable piece of biography in Irish, “The Life of Red Hugh O'Donnell.”

The first fruits of their joint labours were the “Succession of the Kings,” and the “Genealogies of the Saints of Eire.” These works took them a month “of days and of nights with striving and study for the increasing of the glory of God, and of the saints, and of the honour of the kingdom,” according to the testimony of the Guardian of Athlone Convent, Father George Dillon.

When Brother Michael had thus gathered together his little company of scholars, he did not let them disperse until he had procured other tasks for them. We next find them in the Franciscan Convent of Lisgoole, in Fermanagh, engaged in their famous edition of the “Book of Invasions.” Here they had the assistance of another expert, Gillpatrick O'Luinin, chief chronicler to the Maguires of Fermanagh. They were employed on it from “the fortnight before All-Hallow-Tide until three days before Christmas” of the year 1631.

And now in the mind of Brother Michael a still greater project was maturing, and for its accomplishment he led his small band of experts to the modest little building where the Friars of the ancient monastery of Donegal had found shelter since the destruction of their own stately abbey. Here, their simple needs supplied by the brethren, the modest expenses of the work defrayed by the Lord of Coolavin, Ferghal O'Gara, the “Four Masters,” reinforced for a time by Maurice O'Mulconry and Conaire O'Clery, produced the most important monument of Irish History: *The Annals of the Four Masters*, called also from the place of their production, *The Annals of Donegal*. For four years, from 1632 to 1636, Brother Michael and his companions

laboured on these vast records. And do we wonder that the poet claims a mention of them

“When the theme is love of country.”

A pen picture. By none have those names and works been more splendidly celebrated than by that poet himself, Thomas D'Arcy McGee. Unforgettable is the picture he paints of them:—

Four meek men around the cresset,
With the scrolls of other days;
Four unwearied scribes who treasure
Every word and every line,
Saving every ancient sentence
As if writ by hands divine.

Not of fame, and not of fortune,
Do these eager pensmen dream;
Darkness shrouds the hills of Banba,
Sorrow sits by every stream;
One by one the lights that led her,
Hour by hour were quenched in gloom;
But the patient, sad Four Masters
Toil on in their lonely room—
Duty thus defying doom.

CHAPTER X.

GEOFFREY KEATING (1570--1650).

AS his scholarly wont was, he sat down at his books the very moment he returned from the missionary labours of the day to the modest cottage which was all the home those difficult times afforded to the Curate of Knockgraffon. But the day had been long, and full of work, and when he had lighted his taper, and sat down at the rough table, he was, for the nonce, more inclined to dream than to study.

How good God was to him! Though his body ached with weariness in every limb, his soul was flooded with an ineffable content. Even from the point of view of earthly happiness, had not

The “Better Part.”

his sacrifice been more than repaid? He had deliberately chosen, instead of the easy professional life which his triumphant successes at the great Universities of Salamanca and Bordeaux had put within his grasp.

the obscure life of toil and danger—even unto death—of a priest on the Irish Mission in the early days of the seventeenth century. But as he thought of this day's fruits he had no need to ask himself if he had chosen "the better part." He remembered, in particular, the face of a woman, who had been present at his sermon that day.

There was a gentle tapping at the little window near which he sat. A sick call? He opened the window and leaned out.

"No! Father Geoffrey," came the whispered answer. "It is danger that threatens you. Some of our men have been in Clonmel to-day. The churl whom the Galls call President of Munster is there. A woman who was at your sermon to-day has been with him to complain that you aimed at him in it—and already a Proclamation has been issued against you, and the soldiers are now on their way to seize you."

"How did you come to learn this?" For answer his interlocutor advanced into the light, "Your Reverence knows me, Seumas O'Hogan, the Rapparee."

No need to doubt was Hogan's information correct. No need to do aught but snatch up his mantle where it yet hung over the back of his chair, slip his breviary into one of its pockets, and follow his guide to the hiding-place he had already procured.

That hiding-place, as all the world knows, was in the historic Glen of Aherlow. The Rapparee leader had already found means to make some provision for the needs and even the comforts of his priestly guest. The cave which he had selected for his abode, hidden behind a thick screen of briars and quicks, was spacious, and not too badly lighted.

There was a heap of dry ferns in one corner which supplied, with Father Geoffrey's own cloak, all the bedding a reasonable man would need. There was a table and chair, not unskilfully constructed, of the fashion we moderns call "rustic." A bright fire of sticks burned in an improvised fireplace cleverly designed to carry off the pungent smoke through a hole in the roof. And before this fire was kneeling a young man, engaged in a culinary operation, whose agreeable odour suggested broiled salmon.

As Father Geoffrey lay on his fern couch that night, he could not help remembering that in just such a setting some of the old Irish saints had lived and worked, and already the germ of the great idea, which was to blossom into one of the most remarkable achievements of Irish history, was vaguely stirring.

One evening Hogan came to tell him that the soldiers had searched his house that night of his timely escape—but beyond ransacking his shelves, and leaving his books all scattered about, they had done no damage.

"My poor books!" sighed Father Geoffrey.

A sudden thought struck Hogan. "Why wouldn't we bring them here? Your Reverence will be lonely without them."

So the books were brought, and Father Geoffrey Keating was ready to begin his immortal *Forus Feasa*.

When the pursuit slackened and Father Geoffrey was able to get into touch with his friends in Clonmel once more, the Rapparees helped to convey him secretly to that city, and while "Forus Feasa." he worked in the libraries of friendly houses they watched over his safety. From Clonmel he found it necessary to go to Cork, and thence to travel all over Ireland in search of materials; but always he returned to work in the friendly shelter of the Glen of Aherlow, his labours sheltered by the untiring vigilance and devotion of Seumas O'Hogan and his dauntless Rapparees.

CHAPTER XI.

PHILIP O'SULLIVAN (1592--1640).

FROM the gateway of the Conde de Caracena's palace in Corunna, two figures emerged, and took the path to the seashore where the great Tower lifted its head to the February sky.

One of them—a tall, stately man in the prime of life—wore the brown habit of the Sons of St. Francis. The other, a ruddy-haired man of about thirty, was dressed in the conventional attire of a Spanish gentleman of the period—the opening years of the seventeenth century—silken doublet and hose, ruffle and short velvet mantle, broad hat with sweeping plume. He walked with a slight limp—but there was something in his high-bred, handsome face, a look in the clear eyes, that made the passers-by turn to gaze after him, and recognise in him—a king among men.

Red Hugh
O'Donnell.

"What think you, Father Flathri—shall we, too, perchance attain to a vision of Ireland, from this Tower whence the sons of Breogan first saw it? If longing could give our eyes power to pierce the mists of distance, surely Ireland would not be hiding from us." He spoke in Irish, and Father Florence Conroy felt, as he always did, his heart stirred by a strange emotion at hearing his voice—that voice which has been described by one of Father Florence's Franciscan brethren, Father Mooney, as having in it "the notes of a silver trumpet."

"It was in the stars of heaven on a winter's night, that the Children of Milesius first saw the land of their Destiny," said the Friar, smiling "And now it is a Spring noonday and——"

"Well, at least we may see a ship from Ireland," said his companion, interrupting him, while he led the way up the winding steps. "The Conde de Caracena told me that there is one expected from Desmond soon, bringing the hostages from O'Sullivan Beare." He sighed, and his eyes darkened with painful thoughts.

Father Florence laid an affectionate hand on that of his Chieftain. "Be comforted, O'Donnell," he said; "to be a hostage of the friendly King of Spain is a different lot from that which withered your bright youth and that of your comrades in the dungeons of Dublin Castle." "That is true," said Red Hugh, but his eyes did not lose the look of sorrow.

Nevertheless, long before his companion, those same eyes had made out the mast of a ship. A little later Red Hugh was positively identifying her as one of the fleet which had brought Zubiaur to Ireland. "Let us hasten to the harbour to welcome our young countrymen," he cried, running down the stairs.

What a cargo that caravel had brought to Spain! Little Irish boys, very frightened looking and forlorn, were clustered together on her deck, as she came slowly into the harbour. Red

"Hostage." Hugh could hardly wait for her to come alongside. Before she had come to her moorings he had leaped aboard and was amongst the boys, shouting vibrant Irish greetings to them.

One of the boys, the eldest of the party, recognised Red Hugh O'Donnell, and turned to the little band behind him to acquaint them with his discovery. This was the great hero of the national war—the victor of the Curlew Mountains, "the prophesied son of mighty deeds," whose advent the kind old Saints of Eire had long ago foretold. Then, indeed, was home-sickness forgotten, and from those boyish throats arose a ringing Irish cheer!

But one lad stepped forward from the throng, and kneeling before the Chieftain took his hand in his and kissed it reverently.

Hugh O'Donnell raised him up, holding the boy's hand in his. "Your name, little treasure?" he asked affectionately. And the boy answered "I am Philip, son of Dermot O'Sullivan."

Seven months later the boy, then busy with his Classics, heard of the tragic death of his hero at Simançás, of his royal funeral at Valladolid. But the memory of that radiant moment when Red Hugh had held him in his arms stayed all his life.

When his studies were ended and he had entered on his career, as naval officer in the Spanish service, Philip did not lay aside the project which had long been maturing in his mind—viz., to write the story of his country, and especially of the last great

fight she had made, against overwhelming odds, for her faith and sovereignty. During many years he collected the materials for it. He read all the books he could lay hands on, or which his old master, Father Synott, could procure. He made careful notes of all that his father, Dermot, could tell him of his own long campaigning. He collected information from the other exiled Irish soldiers of these wars. Thus, he was equipped for his famous "Catholic History." Compendium of the Catholic History of Ireland."

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLES O'CONNOR, OF BELANAGAR.

THERE had been much excitement all day in the house of Belanagar. Old Madame O'Rorke, the children's grandmother, had received a letter from "foreign parts," and its contents had speedily reached the little boy's ears, filling their minds with pleasant anticipations.

They stole into the parlour in the afternoon, and found stately old Madame, seated in her special chair by the window, dressed as ever in her silks and laces (they were faded now, but they had still the air of a King's court, at which they had been worn in their freshness!) dictating to their father, Denis O'Connor, her answer to the morning's letter.

The little boys, Charles and Terence, stationed themselves, each at one of their father's elbows, and looked with great interest at the sheet of paper spread out on the oak table, which he was filling, with his careful penmanship.

"My Lord Bishop," the letter began. It was true, then, that their uncle, the chaplain in Prince Eugene's army, of whom they had heard so often, had been made a Bishop?

Yes; he had been made Bishop of Killala, and had been consecrated in the great Cathedral of Vienna, by the express desire of the Emperor himself. And the Prince had given him a wonderful jewelled cross, and a splendid episcopal ring, and the Emperor Leopold had written with his own hand to the Queen of England, asking her as his "good sister" and ally, to relax the Penal Laws in Dr. O'Rorke's favour so that he might return.

"And he will come here and wear his jewelled cross, and his ring of diamonds, and be dressed in garments of purple silk, and of splendid lace, like the pictures of Bishops in Grandmother's French book? Grandmother, show us those pictures again, please."

Denis O'Connor, his letter-writing temporarily interrupted, was looking out of the window, which gave a good view of the entrance gate at the other side of the courtyard. "There is someone at the gate, Terence," he cried, "run down and see!"

"It is some old beggar," said Master Terence, "Cannot one of the servants attend to him?"

His father rose from his chair, a look in his eyes which the children knew.

"Remember," he cried, "that though I am the son of a gentleman, ye are the children of a ploughman." He pointed to the north, where the poor little house stood, where they had been born, and whence they had only come a little time before, when the family residence had been restored to them through the good offices of Councillor Terence MacDonagh, of Creevagh.

Charles was out of the room by this time. He came back panting: "it is yourself he wants to see, Father." Denis O'Connor rose at once.

But what sort of a beggar was this? Here was their father, his face radiant with joy, holding him by the hand, and leading him straight up to old Madame, and there was Madame

**The Beggar
at the Gate.**

herself, throwing herself on her knees, and calling to the children to kneel down, for this was their uncle, the Bishop!

Dr. O'Rorke's story was soon told. He had started for home straight after the despatch of his letter. But in London he had heard that, in spite of the Emperor's letters to Queen Anne, the Penal Laws against Catholic Bishops were not to be suspended for him, and he had been obliged to come in disguise.

He took up his abode at the house of his brother-in-law, and whatever leisure his episcopal duties allowed, he devoted to the education of his nephews. Charles, in particular, benefited

Education.

much from him. The boy had already begun the study of Latin. Dr. O'Rorke taught him English and Irish. One Christmas Eve, at a little meeting of friends, young Charles first read, amid great applause, a letter he had composed in English, addressed to a friend in Vienna, describing the miseries of the Old Irish. In the complacency of his success, he announced that he would never write in aught but English again. "No," said his uncle. "You shall not rest now until you have translated the *Miserere* into Irish." The boy did it at once. And when the sonorous Irish lines had been recited, a strain of exceeding sweetness fell upon the listeners' ears. It came from the harp of Turlough O'Carolan, who was present—and it was the prelude to his great song, "Charles O'Connor of Belanagar."

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