

William King : a Great Archbishop.

By M. G. MEDCALF.

THE name of William King, though, perhaps, unfamiliar to English readers, has a just claim to our remembrance as a great church-builder, and a zealous champion of the material and spiritual interests of the Church. The greatest of the Archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation, no other prelate has left his mark on the diocese to the same extent. Dean of St. Patrick's in the days of the Revolution, he took a prominent part in the stirring events of these times. A strong ruler, a good fighter, he made many enemies as he passed through life. But his enemies were those whose vices gave them good cause to fear him. His was no faultless character. He was stern and unyielding, at times even arrogant and overbearing, but in days when everything was bought and sold, William King stands out as an upright and conscientious pastor of souls, who devoted all his powers and all his substance to the service of the Church.

William King was born in 1650 in the town of Antrim, the son of a Scotch Presbyterian. As a small boy he had the greatest difficulty in learning how to read. As a schoolboy he showed a very independent spirit, refusing to learn anything until satisfied himself as to its practical utility. He often played truant from school in order to read biography and history. Of this part of his life he says in his Autobiography : " I obtained a book of arithmetic and learned the rules with the greatest pleasure as far as the extraction of square root, but I dared not tell this to anyone lest I should be flogged." He rebelled against what he considered the unprofitable labour of learning by heart a Latin grammar in Latin, while all the time he was reading diligently in spare hours the works of Ovid, Virgil, Persius, and Horace.

Practically self-taught so far, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of seventeen, where he was soon elected to

a scholarship. It was his good fortune to come under the influence of a pious and faithful tutor, one John Christian, a man worthy of his name. The latter found the young student ignorant of the very elements of Christianity. In his school-days, King tells us, he learnt "nothing about the public or private worship of God, nothing about Catechism or Sacrament, about the Creed or Ten Commandments or Lord's Prayer." He had never known anyone who practised private prayers until he entered college. "When all forms of prayer were done away with," he says, "it was scarcely possible that rude and ignorant lads should make prayers for themselves." These almost incredible facts reveal the depth of irreligion to which the nation had sunk at this time.

King, in after-life, expressed the deepest gratitude to his friend, John Christian, from whom he received his first lessons in the Christian faith. Yet his own action was characteristically independent. He set about a systematic inquiry into the whole subject, working his way through natural to revealed religion, and passing in review all the various forms which Christianity had assumed in his day, until finally he ended by becoming a convinced Christian and obedient Churchman. That such a vast amount of reading, which occupied two years of his undergraduate life, should have been attempted by a young student, is sufficient proof of his earnestness. Nor were Arts neglected, for shortly before taking Holy Orders William King competed for a Fellowship, and failed by no means discreditably.

William King now became private chaplain to Parker, Archbishop of Tuam, by whom he was appointed to the charge of seven parishes and the Provostship of Tuam Cathedral. This part of Ireland was then, as to-day, an admirable playground for the wealthy classes. In the gay society into which he was thrown the young priest must often have been told he was a fool to waste his time over musty volumes or parish duties, when the salmon and trout fishing and duck shooting and red-deer hunting were in full swing. Encouraged by his patron the Archbishop, King, nevertheless, made time, often in

the small hours, for study, and acquired specially a knowledge of Canon Law, which stood him in good stead in after-life.

After six years of this life, Parker having become Archbishop of Dublin, King found himself, at the age of twenty-nine, Chancellor of St. Patrick's and Incumbent of St. Werburgh's, then one of the most important parishes in Dublin. He welcomed the change from the "lazy and indolent state of life which he led in the country," to quote his own words, and threw himself with characteristic energy into city parochial work. At this time King, like other Churchmen of his day, was a Tory in politics, upholding the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings and the duty of passive obedience.

In 1685, with the accession of James, came a time of sore trial for the loyal Church party. The charge of inconsistency has been brought against King. There is no doubt that he changed his opinions, as did many others, when the policy of James reduced the political doctrine of Churchmen to a practical absurdity. It is not true to say that he trimmed his sails and went with the tide.

He engaged in a controversy with Peter Manby, Dean of Derry, who, having turned Roman Catholic, and continuing to enjoy the emoluments of his Deanery, had the audacity to attack the doctrines of the communion which he had abandoned. The controversy, which turned on the essential matter and form of Holy Orders, caused much sensation at the time.

The appointment by James of a Jesuit priest, Dr. Stafford, to the Deanery of Christ Church, Dublin, was disputed by King in the ecclesiastical courts.

Panic prevailed among the Protestant population. There was a general exodus to England in the early part of 1689. Amongst those who fled were Dr. Francis Marsh, Archbishop of Dublin, and Dr. Huntingdon, Provost of Trinity College. The former appointed Chancellor King as his commissary, to rule the diocese in his absence. About this time also King was elected Dean of St. Patrick's by the Cathedral Chapter. The two appointments testify to the confidence and

respect with which King was regarded by his fellow-Churchmen. As Professor Stokes puts it, he was the only clergyman in Dublin that showed he had a head on his shoulders during those troubled times. When all his ecclesiastical superiors ran away, he alone stood his ground and faced the storm.

It soon arrived. King James entered Dublin on Palm Sunday, 1689. All Protestant citizens were disarmed. An armed force kept guard over Trinity College. Terror reigned in the city, and people went abroad at the risk of their lives. In May the Parliament was held, at which was passed the famous Act of Attainder, a comprehensive measure by which over 2,000 Irish Protestants found their property confiscated, and their persons liable to death or imprisonment.

These events removed the lingering scruples in the mind of Dean King as to the lawfulness of armed resistance. Henceforth he stood openly on the side of William of Orange. He continued to administer the affairs of the diocese, and, although many of the clergy had fled, he arranged so that "not one church was left without a curate during the whole time of the tyranny." His courage and abilities, however, marked him out as a dangerous person, and in July of that year he was imprisoned in Dublin Castle. When in prison he wrote a diary,¹ which has recently been published by Professor Lawlor (Dublin University), and which is valuable as throwing much light on events in Ireland during this period. Dean King was released before Christmas, but could not walk the streets of Dublin without risk to his life.

The Battle of the Boyne in the following June turned the tide decisively against the Stuarts. William entered Dublin in triumph after the battle. A thanksgiving service was held in St. Patrick's Cathedral, at which the Dean was the preacher. Inquiring afterwards his name, the Orangeman was pleased to make a jest thereon: "He is a namesake, since I am King William and he is William King!"

¹ The Latin autobiography quoted *passim* first appeared in the *English Historical Review*, 1898.

When all was safe and quiet, Archbishop Marsh returned to Dublin, and Dean King's services and sufferings were rewarded by promotion to the important See of Derry.

Consecrated Bishop in Christ Church Cathedral on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, 1691, William King tells us that he took that Apostle for his model. The circumstances of the time, however, compelled him to imitate St. Paul as the stern repressor of offences and abuses more than in the gentler graces.

On taking possession of the Diocese of Derry, Bishop King found it in a woeful condition. The three years' war, followed by the terrible siege, had left the land desolate. There was scarce a habitable house in the diocese, the churches were in ruins, and the clergy wellnigh destitute. The Bishop set to work with energy to restore the waste places. Seven churches were rebuilt at once; others were repaired. The Bishop himself contributed generously in each case, while calling on the parishioners to do their share. He also assisted the distressed clergy out of his own pocket. Schools were reopened, and the Bishop insisted on the restoration of a regular order of Divine Service, and the residence of the clergy in their parishes.

Bishop King found the greatest hindrance to the progress of the Church in these parts to lie in the power and influence of Dissent. To combat some of the false ideas that prevailed, he published a work called "The Inventions of Man in the Worship of God." In it he compares the rule of the Church with the practice of Nonconformists, showing the former to be in agreement with Holy Scripture, while the latter were merely human inventions. The fifth chapter deals with Holy Communion, and shows that the weekly celebration, which is the rule of the Church, is in accordance with Scripture and the usage of the Primitive Church. The book caused a great stir among those against whom it was aimed. Nonconformists were surprised to find their own favourite weapon turned against themselves. Two Presbyterian ministers attempted a reply. The Bishop retorted by addressing "An Admonition to

the Dissenters of the Diocese of Derry," which he followed up by a "Second Admonition." In the latter, illustrating the importance which the Church attaches to Holy Communion, he refers to the Rev. George Walker, who kept up constant celebrations of Holy Communion in Derry Cathedral all through the siege, and who, when wine became scarce, used to mix it with water in order to eke it out. With this he contrasts the practice of Dissenters who have put the sermon—the words of men—in the place of the Divinely appointed means of grace.

In a letter to a friend written about this time, the Bishop mentions returning from a visitation in which he carried the Consistorial Court with him and prescribed penance to near one hundred people, for one thing or another. He adds: "I had great crowds of dissenters everywhere, and entertained them with a discourse."

The famous trial of Bishop Hackett at this time affords a lamentable illustration of the neglect and corruption into which the Church had fallen. Bishops King of Derry, Dopping of Meath, and Wiseman of Dromore, were appointed a Royal Commission to examine into the state of the Diocese of Down and Connor and the charges against its Bishop and clergy. Bishop Hackett had neglected his diocese for nineteen years, residing in London, and selling the livings in his gift to the highest bidder. An Archdeacon named Matthews had made himself Rector of half the parishes in Down and many in Dromore, all of which he neglected equally. Bishop Hackett was found guilty of simony and neglect of duty, and was deposed. Matthews and other delinquents were also deprived. The case is interesting, because it afforded precedents and guidance to Sir Walter Phillimore and other great English lawyers and canonists in the famous ritual trial of the sainted Bishop King of Lincoln.

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In 1703 Bishop King was translated to the Metropolitan See of Dublin. He had not been long installed in his new dignity before he became involved in a quarrel with the

authorities of Christ Church Cathedral. The point in dispute was the Archbishop's right of visitation and jurisdiction. Flagrant abuses and irregularities in connection with the Cathedral made the latter especially anxious to assert that right. The Dean and Chapter appropriated the revenues of no less than twenty-seven parishes, and in several of these made no provision for the spiritual charge. Nor was this all. The sacred edifice and its precincts were allowed to be desecrated in a shocking fashion. The crypt was let to tapsters and tobacco dealers; the chapter-house was turned into a toy-shop, the judges had their robing-rooms within the precincts, and the entire edifice was in a pitiful condition of neglect. The case dragged on for more than twenty years, and was brought before several courts in Ireland and England. A less tough antagonist than King would have wearied of the struggle. It finally terminated in the House of Lords with a victory for the Archbishop. Anyone going into the history of this case and reading both sides will be satisfied that the Archbishop's long conflict was a noble battle for the cause of righteousness and true religion.

But King's episcopate in Dublin is memorable for better things than lawsuits. He was a great church-builder. Dublin, which had been a small city clustered round the two cathedrals, now began to spread on all sides. By Archbishop King's efforts the growth of the Church kept pace with that of the city. Dublin is to-day, as regards division of parishes, very much what this great prelate made it. The city parishes and churches of St. Mary, St. Paul, St. James, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. Ann, date from his episcopate. Also there is a list extant of some twenty suburban and country churches repaired and, in some cases, rebuilt under his rule. In nearly every case when a new church was built a residence for the incumbent was also provided. The Archbishop's efforts, seconded by Dean Swift, restored to the Church the first-fruits (known in England as Queen Anne's Bounty), and they were chiefly used for the purchase of glebes. It was his care also to make due provision

for the stipend, and by his efforts a quantity of tithes appropriated to the See were devoted to their original purpose—the support of the parochial clergy. The Archbishop's personal generosity and liberality were unbounded. He remained a bachelor to the end of his days, and, like his great model, St. Paul, all his care and provision for the future were concerned with the Church. And as he did not wish the parochial endowments¹ which he secured to be enjoyed by an ignorant or idle priesthood, the conditions were attached in each case that the incumbent must be a graduate and resident in the parish. His desire to insure a well-instructed ministry led him to found a Lectureship in Divinity in Trinity College, and none of his numerous benefactions have been more fruitful in promoting the welfare of the Church.

The Duke of Grafton, Viceroy of Ireland in King's advanced years, describes him as "very indiscreet in his actions and expressions, pretty ungovernable, to a ridiculous extent national, but, in justice to him, he is charitable, hospitable, a despiser of riches, and an excellent bishop, for which reasons he has generally the love of the country, and a great influence and sway over the clergy and bishops who are natives."

The last somewhat contemptuous expression reveals a policy to which both Archbishop King and Dean Swift offered vigorous opposition—that, namely, by which deserving Irish clergy were passed over for promotion and strangers from England put over them who cared naught about Ireland save as an easy means of wealth. But these were the days when, under Walpole's long régime of corruption, ecclesiastical promotion was bestowed entirely for political reasons.

The good Archbishop lived to the age of seventy-nine years, and died May 8, 1729. All his life a man of immense industry and energy, he was yet a constant sufferer from ill-health. The amount of literary matter he left behind is amazing,

¹ When the State robbed the Irish Church in 1869, some scruples were felt about taking Archbishop King's and other private benefactions, and a sum of £500,000 was handed over in their stead.

considering what a busy public life he lived. Besides works on theology and philosophy, he collected a large mass of material for an Irish Church history, and his letters fill seventeen large volumes. His "State of the Irish Protestants under James" is his best-known popular work.

The Divinity Professorship which he founded in Trinity College keeps alive among us the memory of the great Archbishop whose earnest desire was that the Irish clergy should be a learned and useful body. For the last twenty years that chair has been ably filled by the Very Rev. John H. Bernard, D.D., late Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, but whose recent appointment to the See of Ossory now causes his resignation of the Professorship.

To our shame, it must be recorded that the remains of our most illustrious Archbishop, to whom the Dublin Diocese owes so much, lie in a grave unmarked by the simplest tombstone in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Donnybrook.

The writer of the above sketch wishes to acknowledge indebtedness to the late Professor Stokes' "Irish Church Worthies," edited by H. J. Lawlor, D.D., Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Dublin University; to the Autobiography and Diary of Archbishop King, edited by the same; and to "Peplographia Dublinensis."

