

THE POPES AND IRELAND.

BY THE REV. F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK, D.D.

IN the year A.D. 1155 Henry II requested Adrian IV to sanction and bless his projected invasion of Ireland. Here was an opportunity for the Pope to show himself a friend to that island which his emissaries had just succeeded in Romanising. But the offer was too tempting to refuse. He gave his blessing to Henry at a price—Peter's pence, a silver penny a year from every house in Ireland. It is evident from Adrian's letter that Henry had represented the island as abounding in "nurseries of iniquities," and that he had proposed "to extend the borders of the Church, and to teach the truths of the Christian faith to an ignorant and rude people," and to extirpate the "nurseries of iniquities." The condition on which the papal sanction is granted to Henry to do all this is set out again in emphatic terms—"reserving to St. Peter and the Holy Roman Church the yearly payment of one denarius (a silver penny) from each house." The Pope made a good bargain for himself, but in order to gloss over it he painted a gruesome picture of Ireland as sunk in the depths of iniquity, ignorance and unbelief, and sorely in need of one like Henry II, who would "arrest the progress of wickedness, reform morals, plant virtues and increase the Christian religion in that island." This Bull was given in A.D. 1155 by Adrian, who is said to have been the pupil of an Irish scholar, Marianus, formerly a monk of the Irish monastery of Ratisbon. It was confirmed, so it is stated, afterwards by Alexander III, in A.D. 1172, for the same price—*Peter's pence*—in a Bull which describes Ireland as a "barbarous nation, full of filthiness, Christian only in name,"¹ which Henry is "to clothe with the beauty of morals and to bring its church into proper form." It is said that Henry desired to bestow Ireland upon his brother, William of Anjou. At all events a man of his morals was not the person to correct the morals of others.

Now the ground on which the Pope claimed Ireland was a forged document—the donation of Constantine. He said: "As your highness acknowledgeth, Ireland and all the islands on which Christ, the Sun of righteousness, hath shed light and which have received Christian instruction belong to St. Peter and the holy Roman Church." John of Salisbury,² who was a friend of Adrian and had obtained this Bull *Laudabiliter* from him, writes: "At my request he granted Ireland to Henry II, the illustrious King of England, and gave it to be possessed by inheritance, as his own

¹ Contrast with this audacious libel an account of Ireland in the life of Sulgen, Bishop of St. David's (1070), by his son, who says his father, following the example of his fathers, went to the Irish "renowned for their wonderful wisdom," to study the Scriptures. After a visit of thirteen years he returned proficient in dogma, "dogmate clarus," to divide his treasures among his own people. (Ussher, Preface to *Sylogæ*, IV, 394. Elrington.)

² *Metalogicus*, IV, 42.

letters attest. For all islands of ancient right are said to belong to the Church of Rome by the donation of Constantine." On the same ground he might have offered England to a Frenchman. Now the passage in this fictitious donation of Constantine (who had never had anything to do with Ireland, which had never been invaded by Romans) in which "islands" are mentioned, also speaks in the same connection of Judea, Greece, Asia, Thracia, and Africa, which never belonged to Peter's patrimony. Some writers attempt to represent the Bull¹ as a forgery, but to quote two out of many, P. W. Joyce, a Roman Catholic historian, says, "The evidence is overwhelming,"² and Dr. Lanigan, another, declared, "Never did there exist a more authentic document."³ The new *Catholic Encyclopædia* maintains it. On the other hand, the claim asserted in the Bull is based upon a universally acknowledged forgery. See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article "Donation of Constantine," which discusses the date and the object of this concoction. Its date was not earlier than the eighth century, and its manifest object was to give a legal basis to the dominion the popes had acquired or intended to acquire. This Donation gave not only spiritual supremacy over the other patriarchates and over all matters of faith and worship, but also temporal dominion over Rome, Italy and "the provinces, places and *civitates* of the western regions." It has been admitted to be a forgery by Roman Catholics, who attribute its authorship to strangers, Baronius, for example, ascribing it to a Greek!

It is now time to say a word in answer to the charges of immorality brought so frequently by the popes against Ireland, probably as a pretext for their own treatment of the Irish. We shall summon as witness Giraldus Cambrensis, a distinguished writer, tutor and secretary of Prince John, then on a visit to Ireland. In 1186 a Dublin Synod was held under the presidency of Archbishop Comyn. On the first day the Archbishop spoke on the Sacraments, on the second day Abbot O'Mulloy of Baltinglass inveighed against the morals of the English and Welsh clergy, brought over to Ireland to reform the Church. He declared that they had their mistresses with them. On investigation it was found to be so. On the third day Giraldus pronounced a panegyric upon the good morals and devotion of the Irish clergy. "The clergy," he said, "of this country are sufficiently commendable for their attention to religion,

¹ The text of the Bull is to be found in the *Book of Leinster* (an almost contemporary work), p. 342, also in Giraldus Cambrensis, *Conquest of Ireland*, II, 5. It is asserted that there is no copy to be found in the Vatican and that it is therefore a forgery. The reply is that in Theiner's *Vetera monumenta Hibernorum* there is no document dealing with Ireland to be found there before 1215.

² *Concise History of Ireland*, p. 81.

³ *Ecl. Hist.*, IV, 167. So the *Lebar Brecc.*, p. 162. "Peter's successor sold the tribute and due of Ireland to the Saxons." Ussher (IV, 548), Bossuet, Fleury, Lanigan, Dollinger regard it as genuine. Those who doubt it have to explain the fact that succeeding popes expressed approval of Henry's invasion. See *Excursus*.

and among the several virtues in which they excel their chastity is pre-eminent. They also attend vigilantly to their psalms and hours and to reading and prayer." ¹ He also praised them for their attention to their religious duties, devotion to their churches, and general abstinence. As Dr. Lanigan observes with justified sarcasm—"The guilty clergymen were a sample of the missionaries, who, as Adrian IV and Alexander III had flattered themselves, were, under the auspices of Henry II, to instruct and reform the people of Ireland." ² Now if the Irish clergy were chaste, the people also would be chaste, according to the maxim of scripture—like people like priest (Hosea iv. 9. Cf. Is. xxiv. 2 and Jer. v. 31).

In the meanwhile Henry's plans had been advanced by the treachery of Dermot, King of Leinster. In 1168 this man, a fugitive from justice—he had stolen another man's wife and the Irish did not tolerate that kind of thing—implored Henry's assistance: and the King gave him letters which permitted any of his barons or knights, who wished, to help him. Strongbow, the Fitzgeralds, Barrys and others—many of them grandsons of a licentious Welsh princess, Nesta—joined him. After a stern campaign they took Waterford and Dublin. Then Dermot died and Strongbow proclaimed himself his successor and King of Leinster, 1171. This action led to a peremptory summons to the presence of Henry, who was preparing to invade Ireland with a great army. Henry shortly afterwards landed at Waterford. His march to Dublin was a triumphal progress, the Irish chiefs and princes flocking to him in great numbers and making cheerful submission.

In 1172 a Synod was held at Cashel and various disciplinary decrees were drawn up which "do not indicate any very serious state of religious corruption in Ireland, such as had been falsely represented to the Pope." ³ The Pope, however, cannot be exonerated, for he had many satellites in Ireland who could tell him the truth, as Giraldus told it. But it was the habit of the Roman party to disparage those who would not accept Roman jurisdiction in Ireland as well as in England. The independent spirit of the Irish clerics abroad was bitterly resented by the sternly disciplined Roman clergy, and yet the former are allowed by many to have done no small things. Columban in his letter to Boniface IV, censured Pope Vigilius for his notorious vacillation over the "Three Chapters," and urged Boniface to be vigilant and to summon a Council to clear his See of the heresy of Vigilius. "I am pained," he said, "at the infamy attached to the Chair of St. Peter." It is amazing to find the Roman Catholic historian Baronius ⁴ abusing the Irish as schismatics because all their bishops defended the

¹ *De rebus a se gestis*, II, c. 13. See also his *Irish Topography*, III, 27, where he repeats the same eulogy on the chastity of the Irish clergy. This could not have been said of all the previous popes. See Platina, *Lives of the Popes* (Eng. Trans. Griffith & Farran).

² *Eccl. Hist.*, IV, 267.

³ Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁴ *Annales Ecclesiastici*, VII, p. 557. Antwerp, 1658.

Three Chapters, after the Roman Church had condemned them. "They departed from her and joined the other schismatics in Italy, Africa and elsewhere, fondly imagining that they were standing up for the Catholic faith."¹ The passage in Columban's letter to Boniface is worthy of quotation: "The Irish are disciples of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of all the disciples, who wrote by the Holy Ghost the Divine Canon. We be men who receive nought beyond the doctrine of the evangelists and apostles." He proceeds to say, "There has been among us no Jew, nor schismatic, nor heretic." Yet in spite of the protest of Columban and others in the following centuries, the story gained ground that they were not only heretics "clean out of right rule of Christendom and right belief," but "led an evil life and sinful, worse than wild beasts."² So runs an old English version of the account of Henry's charges and proceedings against the Irish in Giraldus Cambrensis, of which the manuscript is in Trinity College (E. 3, 31), which also mentions that Henry purchased his "privilege" from Adrian, and describes a letter to the above effect sent by Henry after the Synod of Cashel to the Pope. In two other places Giraldus describes the Irish as "a race most untrained in the rudiments of the faith" (*Topography*, III, 19), and *De Rebus* (c. 14), for they do not yet pay tithes!

The story lost nothing in the telling. When we come to the reign of Edward IV we have it in the rhyming *Chronicle* of John Harding³.

"The King Henry then conquered all Ireland
By papal doom, there of his royaltee
The profytes and revenues of ye land,
The dominacion and the soverayntee
For error which agayn the spiritualtee
They helde full long and would not been correcte
Of heresydes with wch they were infecte."

In another portion of the same work Harding, addressing Edward, said he had right also

"To Ireland also by King Henry le fytz (fils)
Of Maude daughter of firste King Henry
That conquered it for theyr greate heresyde."

¹ The story of Vigilus is told in the *Dict. Chris. Biog.* Theodora the Empress, a Monophysite, had bribed Vigilus with the promise of the popedom and much gold to condemn "The Three Chapters," the writings of Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas, who had been acquitted of heresy by the Council of Chalcedon. At first Vigilus condemned "The Three Chapters," afterwards he supported "The Three Chapters." Then pressure was brought to bear on him by the Emperor Justinian, and he anathematised them, A.D. 553. Baronius tries to whitewash Vigilus, but see the article mentioned.

² A different view of Ireland and its culture is presented in the letter of Giraldus Cambrensis, who had first-hand knowledge of what he was talking about, which cannot be said of Adrian. Giraldus refers in this letter to William, Bishop of Hereford, to his own writings on Ireland, describing the morals and culture of the Irish, and "the incomparable skill of that nation in playing musical instruments" (*Gentis ejusdem in musicis instrumentis peritia incomparabilis*). See Ussher's *Sylloge*, letter 49. "A nation that had cultivated literature, poetry, and music to the extent the Irish had was not a barbarous nation."

³ Ussher, IV, p. 365 (Harding, *Chronicle*, c. 132).

Any charge was good or bad enough to make against those who did not hold orthodox views on the papal supremacy, and who were consequently considered guilty of "error against the spirituality."

The Synod of Cashel, presided over by the papal legate, was not attended by the Irish primate or the northern bishops. It enacted many decrees regarding tithes, wills, obsequies, the clergy, the Church services and offices. The Council was acceptable to the bishops because it placed them above the abbots; to the clergy because it gave them tithes, large funeral fees, and freed them from *erics*, taxes and various exactions of money and food levied by the Chiefs. It recognised the King's supremacy, but said nothing about the supremacy of the Pope. Its regulations were chiefly disciplinary. But it drove a wedge between the Norman and the Celtic inhabitants of the island, the former the bitter partisans of the new Roman order, and the latter the faithful adherents of the ancient Celtic customs of State and Church. The old Brehon law which enacted *erics* or fines for all criminal offences and had its own elaborate rules for the settlement of property and succession at death was annulled; and it was decreed that a third portion of the property should be spent on the obsequies, which included masses, vigils and decent burial after a good confession. The decree which probably caused the most opposition was that ordering that the Church services in all parts of Ireland should henceforth be celebrated according to the observances of the Anglican Church. "For it is right that as by divine providence Ireland has obtained her lord and king from England, she should also receive a better form of living from the same source."¹

Dr. Lanigan's assertion² that wherever the natives were able to maintain their independence "clergy and people followed their own ecclesiastical rules as if the Synod of Cashel had never been held," is substantiated to some extent by the Bull of Innocent VIII (Feb. 8, 1484) for the foundation of the Church of St. Nicholas, Galway, which stated "that the people of the parish of the said church of St. Nicholas did not practise the same customs as the wild people of the mountains," and owing to their hostility and opposition "were unable to hear divine service or receive the sacraments of the Church, according to the rite and custom of England, which they had always followed." Archbishop Alan, a friend of Wolsey, appointed by him when papal legate to distribute dispensations for sale, reported that there was little or no demand for such. "The Irish," he wrote (1528), "had so little sense of religion, that they married within the prohibited degrees without dispensations." Comment is unnecessary. Much depends upon one's point of view in such cases.

The Irish parliaments, in which the English lords sat, proved by no means subservient to the popes, whose encroachments were restrained by various enactments, while the native princes had little cause for gratitude to Rome. In the year 1315 Edward Bruce

¹ Giraldus Cambrensis, *Conquest of Ireland*, Book I, c. XXXIV.

² IV, 217.

had come to Ireland at the request of the northern chieftains, who sent a long letter to John XXII, reciting the injuries and cruelties that had been inflicted on the Irish by the English, ever since Adrian's Bull had been given to Henry II, and informing him that they wished to have Edward Bruce as their King.¹ With this letter, containing an appalling list of treacherous outrages and massacres committed on defenceless Irishmen, even at the instigation of the Cistercian monks, who preached that it was no more sin to kill an Irishman than a dog; and boasted that if they killed an Irishman they would celebrate Mass the same day, they sent a copy of Adrian's Bull, pointing out that the Normans had not carried out their part of the bargain. Instead of "implanting new virtues in the land and eradicating the nurseries of crime," they had depraved, oppressed, penalised and murdered Irishmen in their perfidious endeavour to exterminate them. The Irish Chiefs attributed all the miseries of their distressful country to the Bull which was given by Adrian upon the false and iniquitous representations of Henry, who should, they declared, have been deprived of his own kingdom for the murder of St. Thomas of Canterbury. The Pope sent this letter—which A. G. Richey described as "one of the most important documents in our history"²—to Edward II, with one of his own requesting the King to remove these grievances so that if the Irish should persist in their rebellion, they would convert their cause into a matter of open injustice, while he would stand excused before God and man. This letter has been described by a Roman Catholic writer³ as "a piece of affected commiseration."

From the same Pope were issued Bulls to the Archbishops of Dublin and Cashel, excommunicating by bell, book and candle Bruce and all his followers, and pronouncing the same sentence against the Friars Minors who had preached rebellion to the Irish people.⁴ In 1515 Leo X issued a Bull confirming the exclusion of the native Irish, "any royal dispensation notwithstanding," from St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. And yet in 1577 Gregory XIII asserted in a Bull that the nation of the Irish is one which this apostolic see has ever embraced with singular love and affection." Cardinal Vannutelli, papal legate in 1904, re-echoed the same words at Killarney.⁵ Well might Michael Davitt speak of "Ireland's crucifixion between the tyrannies of London and Rome." There is no space to refer to the continual exactions of the popes, who levied exorbitant taxes on Ireland for their wars, notably the twentieth of the whole land, demanded in 1240, under pain of excommunication, for a war with Frederick II.

¹ The text of this letter is in the *Scotichronicon* of J. Fordun at A.D. 1318. A translation is in King's *Church History of Ireland*, II, Appendix XIX.

² *Short History of the Irish People*, p. 189.

³ Dr. O'Connor, *Historical Address*, I, p. 134.

⁴ Rymer's *Fœdera*, tom. III (Edinburgh, 1706), anno 1317, contains these Bulls. John XXII, Platina tells us, "left behind him in the treasury such a mass of gold as never any Pope did before him" (Eng. Trans. (Griffith), p. 147).

⁵ *Freeman's Journal*, Aug. 8.

In 1367 the Statute of Kilkenny was passed with the object of completely separating the two peoples, Norman-English and Celtic. Under pain of excommunication the former was to have no social or other intercourse with the latter, who were to be excluded from all benefices and monasteries among the English, who were ordered in 1447 to shave their upper lip if they did not wish to be taken for an Irish enemy. In 1486 Lambert Simnel, whose claims were supported by all the Irish bishops save four, was crowned in Christ Church, Dublin, by the Bishop of Meath. The Pope sent a Bull to the four bishops, Cashel, Tuam, Clogher, and Ossory, who had not joined Simnel, ordering them to excommunicate their brethren. Henry, however, proved more merciful and graciously forgave them,¹ on renewing their oath of allegiance. The Irish have often been led away by sentiment and sympathy to support a losing cause.

It is evident from the whole story of Ireland's woes, especially from the letter of the Irish Chiefs to the Pope, that the Irish regarded Adrian's Bull granting Ireland to Henry II as the source and the beginning of all their misfortunes and miseries, that the hatred for England did not begin at the Reformation, and that there was no unity even in the Roman Church in Ireland, the clergy of both races regarding one another with mutual suspicion and hatred. It was the English policy to keep important sees and the richest benefices in their own hands. Not until 1678 was an Irishman, Michael Boyle, appointed Archbishop of Dublin, whereas in 1206 we have the first papal appointment to the See of Armagh—Eugene Mac-Gillivider, the papal nominee, who somehow overcame the opposition of John, who had chosen another man. The King, of course, could always prevent the Pope's nominee from enjoying the temporalities—the lay revenues—of the see, so that he would have to depend upon the spiritualities, such as visitation fees, for his living, unless he renounced all right to the same by virtue of papal provision.

It is also obvious from the Bull of Alexander, conveying to Henry his sanction and his permission to make any one of his sons King of Ireland, that Ireland was a kingdom before Paul IV conferred that dignity upon it in 1555. Ussher quaintly remarks: "And therefore Paul the Fourth needed not make all that noise and trouble the whole court of heaven with the matter, when in the year MDLV he took upon him by his Apostolical authority (such, I am sure, as none of the apostles of Christ did ever assume unto themselves) to erect Ireland unto the title and dignity of a Kingdom."² The doctrine of papal supremacy was strongly held

¹ Leland's *History of Ireland*, II, 56.

² IV, p. 369, the Bull is quoted. It begins: "To the praise and glory of the Omnipotent God, and his most glorious mother, the Virgin Mary, and to the honour of the whole court of heaven, at the supplication of King Philip and Queen Mary, by our apostolic authority, we erect the island of Ireland perpetually to the status of a kingdom." Roger Hoveden (*ad ann.* 1177) states that "he (Henry) made his son king in Ireland by the concession and confirmation of Alexander the supreme pontiff" in a council at Oxford.

by ambitious clerics, when it meant their own supremacy, but when it conflicted with their interests they opposed it. King (I, p. 669) refers to the Irish Statutes 1454 and 1475, which circumscribed that pernicious influence, and we have seen how they could act in defiance of the Pope in the case of Lambert Simnel. The views of the common people never counted in those days. What many desired was a quiet life. Those who were under native chiefs, with whom they were connected by ties of clanship and fealty, were guided by them completely; and when their chiefs preferred their own "barbarous simplicity" and native independence in Church matters to the Roman methods they followed them loyally. On the other hand, those who were under the control of prelates, and who had been impregnated with superstitious awe regarding the Pope, were too timorous to resist his demands, especially when backed up by threats of violence and excommunication. While the prelates themselves, as the Irish nobles said in their letter to John XXII, were influenced by "a slavish timidity" and observed "a scandalous silence," when they should have voiced the wrongs of their country.

In the meantime learning was languishing. The Irish parliament of 1475 sent over one James Maddock to Oxford to be educated. There was no preaching done except by the poor friars. There was no progress except in civil strife, dissensions, and conflicts, open and secret, between the two races, who were not allowed by either Church or State to live in harmony with one another. The times were maturing for a complete reformation of life and doctrine.

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H. D.

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H. D.