

REVEREND FRANCIS HIGGINS

Reverend Francis Higgins, Archdeacon of Cashel, styled by Walter Scott the "Sacheverell of Ireland," on account of his vitriolic political writings, was the son of a City of Limerick apothecary and was born in that city in the year 1669. He was educated as a sizar of Trinity College, was elected a scholar there in 1688 and graduated B.A. in 1691 and M.A. in 1693.

Higgins's early clerical career may be summed up as follows: Reader in Christ's Church Cathedral in 1690, Rector of Gowran, Co. Kilkenny, in 1694, and Prebendary of Christ's Church Cathedral in 1705.

In 1706 he preached several sermons in London, warning the public against the danger of the overthrow of the Church of England by the State, but on Ash Wednesday, 1707, in a further sermon, he went too far and was imprisoned for sedition. An anonymous pamphlet supposed to have been written by Higgins himself and in support of his views, was ordered to be burned by the public hangman. In 1708, showing a repentant spirit, Higgins was released from gaol.

On his return to Ireland, this stormy petrel of Christianity was again in trouble with the magistrates, who denounced him as "a disloyal subject and a common disturber of Her Majesty's peace." The Church of Ireland, however, not so keen herself on the State control at that time, upheld Higgins and described him "as one that hath both in his life and doctrines upon all occasions shown himself to be an orthodox divine, a good Christian and a loyal subject."

In 1725 he was collated to the Archdeaconry of Cashel and seems to have disappeared from the public prints. He died in August, 1728, and was buried in St. Michael's Church in Dublin.

Contemporary opinions of Higgins were not very kind. A satirical poem refers to him as "the son of pudding and eternal beef," whilst another pamphlet describes him as "a plump red-faced man, zealous, talkative, very fond of quoting law (not always accurately), who thinks too little and talks too much." Even Doctor Reeves, the antiquarian, talking of him late in the nineteenth century, said:—"Three sermons and his 'cases' were his only productions from the Press, and even these were rather the development of political excitement than the expressions of calm consideration or benevolent feelings."

JOHN KEOGH

John Keogh, scholar, was born at Cloonclieve or Rivers, on the banks of the Shannon just three miles above Limerick, in the year 1653. He was the son of Denis Keogh by his wife, the widow of the Reverend Mr. Eyre, and his grandfather, Mahony