

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

Keogh, had lived in the very fine stone house, Castle Troy, the ruins of which can still be seen, jutting out into the Shannon. The family was deprived of its estate through its loyalty to Charles I.

Keogh was educated at Trinity College, where he graduated M.A. in 1678, and gained a high reputation as a mathematician. He entered the Church of Ireland, and, having married the daughter of Dr. Rous Clopton of Stratford-on-Avon, he was given the living of Strokestown. Here he settled down, and, although he had twenty-one children and was by no means rich, was reputed never to have taken tithes from the poor.

His published works consist of 1, *Scala Metaphysica*, or a demonstration of the dependance which the several degrees of animated nature have on the Creator. 2, *A Hebrew Lexicon*. 3, *De Orthographia*. 4, *The solution of mystical problems*. 5, *A Latin Grammar*. 6, *A prosody*. 7, *A Greek grammar*. 8, *An analogy of the four Gospels*. And 9, *A demonstration of the Trinity in Latin verse*.

Keogh's work was much admired by Sir Isaac Newton, particularly the one last listed; and for answering a problem which was sent from a mathematician in Paris and baffled all the experts in Great Britain, the following inscription was fixed in gold letters over one of the hall doors of Oxford University.

"Reverendus Doctor Johannes Keogh, magnus
Hibernicus solvebat talem questionem tali die."

Keogh died in the year 1725, being survived by six only of his children, one of whom was also an eminent Irish author. Many of his manuscripts are still preserved in Trinity College Library.

SIR HEMPON PIERCE DE LACY

Sir Hempon Pierce de Lacy, the first great Irishman from that ancient Norman family, was the son of Sir William de Lacy, Lord of Bruff, by his wife Honora Mulryan, who afterwards married Sir Richard Bourke and was mother to Sir John Bourke of Brittas. He was thus a uterine brother of Sir John, and, like him, was a staunch supporter of the old Anglo-Irish Catholic regime. He fought fiercely in support of the House of Desmond until the latter's destruction and the death of the Sagan Earl. Contemporary descriptions of de Lacy vary, according to the bias of the writer. O'Sullivan, the Irish Catholic historian, describes him as a "man of spirit and an eloquent speaker," while Lord Carew, President of Munster, calls him "a wise and malicious traitor," and "a son of perdition, not to be admitted on any terms."