

## FATHER FRANCIS WHITE.

Francis White of Limerick, a young student for the priesthood in Paris, in the middle of the 17th century, met and was attracted by the religious zeal of St. Vincent de Paul, and in 1645 became one of the first members of his newly founded Missionary Order, the Vincentians.

At the request of Bishop O'Dwyer, he returned with several other Irish Vincentians to his native Diocese where, for several years, they devoted themselves to missionary work. In 1650, when the Cromwellian soldiers were devastating the county and the natives had flocked into the city, a great Vincentian mission was held, and it was estimated that 20,000 people attended and received the Sacraments.

In 1651, Father White, having in the meantime returned to Paris, set out on a mission to the Scottish Highlands in company with another Limerick priest, Father Duggan. They travelled from Holland, disguised as merchants, in the company of Mac-Donnell, Lord of Glengarry, but were detected by a renegade priest immediately on landing, and would have been discovered to the authorities but for the sudden death of the poor apostate.

Father Duggan went to the Western Isles but Father White remained in the Highlands doing missionary work under more hazardous conditions but protected by Donald McDonnell, an old chieftain of more than ninety years whom he had converted. When ministering to the household of the Marquis of Huntley on Ash Wednesday, 1655, he was captured and lodged in Aberdeen Gaol and, with some other priests, was sentenced to transportation to the Barbadoes. When St. Vincent heard of the sentence he went to his patron, the Queen of France, who, through diplomatic circles, had the sentence lifted. Father White was released and returned to his missionary work in the Highlands.

The work was strenuous and unremitting and eventually broke the body of the saintly priest. He visited Paris for a rest in 1660, and on his return to Scotland continued his work unceasingly until his death on 27th January, 1679. In spite of a lapse of close on three hundred years, Father White's name and his great work in preserving and renewing the Catholic Faith in the Highlands of Scotland is still remembered there with veneration and reverence.

## FATHER DAVID WOLFE, S.J.

Father David Wolfe, Jesuit and Papal Nuncio to Ireland, was born in the County Limerick about the beginning of the 16th century. While in Rome, on a mission from the Limerick Diocese, he met St. Ignatius Loyola, joined his Order, and became one of the first great Jesuit missionaries of the counter-Reformation.

To Ignatius he told the sad state to which the Reformation, etc., had reduced the Faith in Ireland and the clergy, and with the help of this powerful advocate at Rome he was able to effect many improvements in it.

He was sent as Papal Nuncio to Ireland in order to advise the Pope on the appointment of future bishops, and to report to him the full effects of the Reformation there. Leaving Rome with another Jesuit named Dermot, on 11th of August, 1560, he was detained a long while in France and did not reach Ireland till the following January—and although his mission was supposed to be secret, the English Government was kept aware of all his movements by spies. When not travelling, as he usually was, he lived at Kilquane, across the Shannon from Corbally, with his relative, David Arthur, then Dean of the Limerick Diocese.

Wolfe was captured and imprisoned in Dublin Castle in 1567, where he suffered much from privation and the dirt of his cell, but with the help of Thomas Stuckley, an English Catholic, he escaped and left for the Continent in the following year. In Rome he was commissioned by the Spanish Ambassador to write an account of affairs in Ireland, with a view to persuading Philip II to send assistance. The result was a most valuable treatise on the state of the country, but it had little effect, for Philip did not then consider it opportune to antagonize England.

In Rome also, Wolfe met James Fitzmaurice, who had come from Limerick to endeavour to interest the Pope and the Catholic monarchs in the Geraldine struggle against England and Protestantism. Fitzmaurice met with little more success than Wolfe and returned to Ireland after many misadventures, including the loss of his ship, to continue the struggle alone.

Wolfe remained on and his efforts eventually extracted six ships and about 500 men from the King of Spain. These, however, like most foreign expeditions to Ireland, seem to have been foredoomed. The men landed at Smerwick harbour near Dingle, were immediately surrounded by the English army under Lord Deputy Grey, and, although promised honourable terms, were mercilessly massacred when they surrendered. Sir Walter Raleigh, the cultured courtier, was one of the officers responsible for this base act.

In the meantime, Wolfe had returned to Ireland and was living in County Clare. Father Lynch, the author of *Cambrensis Eversus*, wrote:—"I have heard that he was a man of extraordinary piety, who fearlessly denounced crime wherever it was committed. When the whole country was embroiled in war, he

took refuge in the Castle of Clunoan, but, when he heard that its occupants lived by plunder, he believed it a sin to take any nourishment from them, and sickened and died." The date of his death is uncertain, but it probably occurred about the year 1582.

## STEPHEN WOULFE.

Stephen Woulfe, Chief Baron, was born in Ennis in the year 1787. He was descended from the Woulfes, of Limerick, from whom the great Wolfe of Quebec also came, and was the son of Stephen Woulfe, of Tiermaclane, near Ennis, by his wife, Honora, daughter of Michael MacNamara, of Dublin, and sister of Admiral James MacNamara, already treated in this series.

The Woulfe family had remained staunchly Catholic and Stephen was sent to Stonyhurst for his early education. Here he was the companion of Richard Lalor Sheil and others later to become famous in Irish history. He was one of the first Catholics to be admitted to Trinity College, where he pursued a law course and was admitted to the Irish Bar in 1814. From the beginning he was recognised as an outstanding barrister and established an excellent practice in a short while. He was active in the fight for Catholic Emancipation but showed his independent spirit in opposing O'Connell on the "veto" question. In 1816, he made a speech in Limerick advocating that the Government be allowed to exercise a veto on the appointment of Catholic Bishops, and later published the speech in pamphlet form. Needless to say, this made him very unpopular with the Catholic party and the people. On the other hand, the Attorney-General, Baron Plunket, remembered his moderate views and had him appointed third Serjeant in 1835.

In the same year he was elected Member of Parliament for Cashel, and, in the year following, was appointed Solicitor-General for Ireland. Although he did not distinguish himself in Parliament, his constant support of the Government ensured his rapid promotion—Attorney-General in 1837 and Chief Baron of the Irish Exchequer in 1838. The post was a coveted one and it had been hoped that it would have been offered to O'Connell. However, Woulfe accepted the post, apparently with some reluctance, and was a complete success in the job. Two years later, ill-health compelled him to go to Baden-Baden, and here he died on 2nd July, 1840.

He has been described as a man "careless in his attire awkward and angular in his movements, but very effective in his utterances; no profound lawyer but a man of quick and shrewd observation." He was married to Frances Hamill, of Dowth, Co. Meath, and had a son and a daughter.

