The Episcopal Succession of Killaloe, A.D. 1317-1616.

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The Catholic Record Society of Maynooth are now engaged in the edition and publication of the Annates or First Fruit transcripts for the Munster Dioceses as a companion volume to the valuable Ulster volume issued many years ago from the same source and edited by the transcriber, the late Father Costelloe, O.P., and by Father Coleman, O.P. The extended and indefatigable labours of Father Costelloe have left in Maynooth Library a huge number of transcripts and notes from the Vatican records concerning the Irish dioceses, of which this transcript, available for all the dioceses of Ireland, forms the most important part. It deals with the period which commenced about A.D. 1400 and ended with the Reformation. Its contents are the bonds of the parochial bonds and correlative matter. The Ulster Diocesan Annates have already been printed, as has been said, and those for the Dioceses of Dublin, Glendalough, and Kildare, are available with notes in issues of Archivium Hibernicum (Vol. II). The projected volume for the Munster Diocese must form a very valuable addition to the materials for the largely unwritten diocesan history of Ireland in the mediaeval period. With these annates has to be read and collated the relatively enormous mass of material of the most detailed kind now available in the printed Calendars of the Papal Registers up to the year 1470, in which year Vol. XII. ends, and in the still unprinted Vol. XIII., which deals with the period 1470-85, and is available in proof only in the London Record Office. Amongst the whole of the Irish dioceses, that of Killaloe is singular inasmuch as the entries in these various papers which relate to it, form a part quite disproportionate to the whole. Thus while for Dublin and Glendalough there are available but forty entries in the Annates, there are no less than two hundred and forty-six for Killaloe. In the Papal Registers Calendar in the period covered by these Annates—the century and a quarter between 1400 and 1525—there are nearly 400 entries of Mandates, Induits, provisions, etc., dealing with Killaloe parishes or its Bishop and Chapter—a number which far exceeds those for any other diocese, or indeed for many of them taken together. In Vol. VI. alone for the period 1419-27 there are no less than 85 Killaloe entries for the eight years covered. The reasons for these remarkable figures are many and varied, and their discussion belongs rather to the edition of the Annates, on which the present writer has been for some time engaged. Suffice it to say here that for the most part they will be found in human fallibility but, be that as it may, the result has been to make available a huge mass of detailed material concerning the history of the parishes, the ancient parochial divisions, the names of the parochial clergy and the Capitular provisions, and to throw quite a lot of incidental light on the social and economic conditions of this obscure period. Moreover, it provides a quantity of hitherto inaccessible material on the episcopal succession and enables a number of errors in the printed lists of Bishops of the Diocese to be corrected. For that reason it occurred to the writer that a succession list for the period covered would be a valuable appendix, and as, in the circumstances, it would occupy a disproportionate part of the Annates Volume, it is here offered as a separate and complementary contribution to diocesan history, collated with all those lists of Bishops of the Diocese which have been hitherto available.
It must be added to this introduction that there are still in the Vatican a number of records relating to the Irish dioceses which neither Father Costello’s or Monsignor Hagan’s great industry had time or opportunity to transcribe. These are now being investigated by the Irish Mss. Commission, and it is possible that, if and when they become available, something may be added or subtracted to what is here written on the Killaloe succession. Meanwhile, at least as a help to the future, what is now to hand is put on record.¹

THE BISHOPS OF KILLALOE FROM 1317 TO 1616.

THOMAS O’CORMACAIN, 1317.

A.D. 1317. Thomas O’Cormacain, Archdeacon of Killaloe, was provided to the See. His predecessor, David McMahon, died on February 9th, 1317, New Style, by Fragmentary Annals, edited Gwynn, in Proc. R.I.A., 1926, Vol. XXXVII., pp. 149 et seq., and per Rep. Deputy Keeper in 3.A.11.R.I.A. MSS. Thomas had been a pledge for payment of a fine for his predecessor, David, per Cal. Justiciary Rolls (1295-1303), p. 243, and he is there called “Master Thomas O’Cormacain.” Cotton says he was lawfully elected by the Chapter in 1316 (i.e., Old Style) adding “yet the Pat. Roll of 2 Edw. II. mentions Matthew as Bishop at that time” (Rot. Chanc. Hib.). As Cotton remarks, this is apparently a confusion with one or other of the Bishops of Ross or Waterford, both of whom were then “Matthew.” One may interpolate that it is unlikely that the name of a Bishop of Killaloe would figure in a Royal Patent during this century, since by contemporary estimate the diocese was “situé amongst the Irishire where no Englishman dare distrain or act to the King’s advantage.” (cf. M.V. Clarke, Irish Parliament under Edward II., in “14th Century Studies,” Oxford Univ. Press, 1937). Bishop Thomas O’Cormacain died in 1321 in the month of July (Ware) and was buried in his Cathedral at Killaloe (Ibid.).

BENEDICT O’COSCRY, 1322.

1322. Benedict O’Coscry, Dean of Killaloe, was elected and consecrated in 1322. He died in 1325, per Ware, or perhaps in 1326, per Cotton. In 1325 the Union of Killaloe and Cashel was suggested but not carried into effect (Arch. Hib., 5., p. 133.

DAVID MAC UI BRIEN, 1326.

1326. David Mac Ui Brien, commonly called “David of Emly,” who was a native of that diocese, per Cotton, succeeded by Papal provision. The date of his provision is 8 Kal. June, 1326, and it is set out that as the Archbishop of Cashel was then excommuniate, the election could not be confirmed by him; it was, therefore, examined by three Cardinals of the Curia, and David having resigned his right owing to the election, was appointed by special Papal provision. Concurrent Letters issued to the Chapter, the clergy, the people and the King. (Cal. P. Reg. 2, p. 251, and Theiner, 223). A mandate addressed to him by the Pope to decide a dispute in the Archdiocese of Tuam will be found in Arch. Hib. 6, p. 140, sub ann. 1330. Before his profession he had held the canonicry and prebend of Emly (CPR. 2, 288). His death is recorded in the Annals of Nenagh as follows: “Item in vigilia vigilis Luciae Virginis 12 Dec. obit Dominus David Mac Brien, Laonensis Episcopus, cui successit Magister Thomas O’Hogain.” It is also recorded under the same year in the Fragmentary Annals (ed. Gwynn cit. supra), but these Annals also contain the curious entry under the year 1334 “Obit Unatus O’Heine (O’Heidhin als. Hynes, per Gwynn), Laonensis Episcopus.” It would appear that this is a scribal error and may concern the succession of Kilfenora, which is in doubt at this period. No trace of this Bishop occurs in any authority concerning Killaloe.

THOMAS O’HOGAIN, 1342.

1342, Old Style, or 1343, New Style. Thomas O’Hogain, Canon of Killaloe, was consecrated Bishop of the Diocese (Ware, Cotton, etc.). In his episcopate the Black Death ravaged Ireland and also the Diocese of Killaloe, as we know from contemporary papers like the Annals of Nenagh. A great number of the Friars of Nenagh and the

¹ For an account of the Bishops between 1200 and 1317 see my paper on the Diocese in the 13th century in this Journal for 1898.
Canons of Tyone perished in the pestilence. Probably that is the reason why notices of the episcopate of this Bishop are not more fully available. He was almost certainly of the Ardcroney family, as the Nenagh Annals, in recording his obit on the Vigil of All Saints in 1354 say: “et 5 die apud fratres minores de Nenagh traditus sepeltura.” His obit is also mentioned in 1354 in the Fragmentary Annals (cit.).

THOMAS O’CORMACAIN, 1355.

1355. Thomas O’Cormacain, the second of his name to hold the staff of Flannan in this century, succeeded by the Pope’s provision (Ware, etc.). He was consecrated in the same year, and had the restoration of his temporalities in September, per Cotton. The latter adds the somewhat curious note: “The King employed him much in the affairs of state, so we may conclude him to have been a person of considerable talents.” At the time the diocese was much disturbed by the internecine wars of the Butlers and the O’Kennedys, and before the end of the century the Irish revival was fairly complete over all its territories. He had been Archdeacon of Killaloe, and his provision was made at Avignon directly by the Pope on 6 Kal. June, 1355. He had been elected by the Chapter but this was annulled, as the provision had been reserved to the Pope in the lifetime of Thomas, the late Bishop (CPR. III. 541, and cf. Theiner, 308). Previously in 1343, he had been dispensed super defectu natalium and allowed to hold two benefices, being described as “skilled in the law” (CPR. III. 133). From these papers we may reasonably conclude that he had been at the Papal Court at Avignon in person, an impression confirmed by the issue to him in the year of his provision of an Indult appointing two public notaries to be nominated by him (CPR. III. 549), and of a grant of plenary indulgence in articulo mortis to him and to two of his diocessans—Mór, daughter of Moriartagh O’Brien, and Richard, son of Geoffrey de Burgo (CPR. III. 559). In 1345 he was described by the Archbishop of Cashel in a petition as “my ancient servant” (C. Papal Petitions, 119). That there is some ground for Cotton’s assertion, supra, may be gathered from some entries regarding the Bishop in the Calendar of the Ormond Deeds. He appears there (II. 24) as witness to an agreement between the Earl of Ormond and Sir Richard de Burgo, while in another paper dated 1374 Edmund, son of Arnold le Poer, affixes the Seal of Thomas Bishop of Killaloe in the latter’s presence to a deed (C.O.D. II. 138). In the same volume is a paper by which William Haket, Lord of Barnaneely and Burgagenefarne (Bearnain Eli and Borrisnafarne) presents to the Bishop of Killaloe, Sir David, Abbot of Holy Cross and the convent there, for the rectory of the Church of Burgagenefarne in the diocese of Killaloe, and prays him to admit them (C.O.D. II. 84. March 23, 1364). This is a case like that of Bunratty where, by Norman establishment, the presentation to a rectory was in lay hands. Whether Bishop O’Cormacain complied with this request is not too clear, but later on in the century is found the Mandate of a later Bishop (Matthew Magrath) in 1389 directed to Archdeacon O’Dea, later Bishop of Limerick, commanding him to admit the Abbot and community of Holy Cross to this rectory (C.O.D. II. 242 and cf. Cal. E. & M.D. 12 and 33f). Bishop Thomas was also prominent in opposing the unsuccessful attempt of his namesake to gain admission to the ancient See of Iniscathaigh in 1363, an account of which will be found in my paper Iniscathaigh in this Journal (Spring), 1940. He died in 1387 and (per Ware) “was buried in his own Church in the common burial place of the Bishops.” By this, no doubt, is meant Killaloe, to which parish in all these centuries no provision of a rector is found in either the Annates or the Calendar of Papal Registers.

MATTHEW MACRAGH, 1391.

1391. Matthew MacCragh succeeded to the See of Killaloe by Papal provision (Ware, Cotton, etc.). There was trouble about the restoration of the temporalities. This would have been of small account but for the fact that the most valuable of these were comprised in the Manor of Newcastle Lyons, in Co. Dublin. These the King handed over in 1389 to the Bishop of Leighlin, describing Matthew MacCragh as “mere Hibernicus et de natione ac inter inimicos nostrorum commorans et eis adherens et mandatis vestris minime intendens” (Rot. Pal./13 Ric. II apud Chart. et Priv., p. 84). The Bishop of Killaloe, however, had them restored to him in 1389 (Cotton and Ware), and the King pardoned his contempt in taking them without licence “since his diocese is situated amongst the Irish and so destroyed that he was unable to ask for them.” (Tresham, Cal. Rolls I., 149/16 Ric. II.). The date of the Obit of Bishop Matthew is uncertain, but he was certainly still Bishop at the end of 1399 (Old Style) since his Mandate regarding
Borrisnafarney quoted supra is dated at Killaloe the Wednesday after the Feast of St. Luke, 1399 (23 Oct. in C.O.D. II. 242). He must have been dead in the following year, however, as several Mandates are addressed in that year to Donatus, described as “Elect of Killaloe,” as mentioned infra. Ware says he sat in 1400, but he does not know how long after. I fix the date of his death early in that year. He was buried in the Dominican Church at Limerick.

**DONATUS, (1399-1407/9).**

1399-1407/9. Described as “Elect of Killaloe.” Donatus had the Pope’s license to be consecrated by any Bishop he chose, assisted by two or three other Bishops in communion with the Holy See, on the 8th February, 1399, per Costello’s transcript. He had been Abbot (rectius Prior) of SS. Peter and Paul’s Augustinian Priory “de Fergio”—i.e., Clare Abbey, near Ennis “of the Fergus” (CPR. V. 288/9). Eubel and Brady give him under 1400, by which year, no doubt, he had been consecrated. Mandates for the Diocese were addressed to him from the Curia in 1399, in which he is described again as “Elect of Laonensis” (CPR. V. passim). Ware says his predecessor (Matthew Magrath “sat in 1400, but I don’t know how long after.” Donatus is not mentioned by Gams, Cotton or Crockford. He is called “Bishop Donatus” in CPR. VI. 122 sub an. 1407, and again at p. 301 of the same volume. I do not find any note of his obit, but it must have occurred in 1407/8 as his successor’s provision dates 11th September, 1409. Brady (II. 115) in noticing the appointment of his successor de Mulfield says it was made “per privacionem Domini Donati,” so that he may have lived after that date.

**ROBERT DE MULFIELD ALS. DE LORINGFIELD (1409-18).**

**EUGENIUS O’PHELAN (1418-31).**

**THAETUS MAGRATH (1423—7).**

**JAMES O’LONERGAN (1431-43).**

These four Bishops, who were all undoubtedly consecrated as Bishops of Killaloe, must be taken together, as, during the years 1418-43, a prolonged struggle took place for the possession of the See. Robert de Mulfield, an Englishman and a Cistercian monk of Meaux, in Yorkshire (Ware, etc.), was provided to the See of Killaloe on 11th September, 1409. He is the only Englishman ever canonically provided to the See, for Robert Travers (1218-21), though consecrated, was removed by the Pope as “an intruder” and never had a Papal provision at all. (See this Journal, 1939). De Mulfield seems never to have been able to obtain proper possession of his diocese or the fruits of the episcopal mensa owing to intense and natural local opposition. Eventually a document, which is would appear was forged, was exhibited at the Roman Curia by James O’Lonergan, who alleged that it appointed him as Robert’s proctor to resign the See on his behalf as he (Robert) was ignorant of the Irish language, ill versed in Canon law, and weak in mind and body. This was in 1418, or a little before that date, as in this year, through the Bishop of Lichfield in England, where he is recited to be living “as a Vicar in Pontificals.” Robert indignantly denied all knowledge of this document. The Bishop of Lichfield, moreover, certified that Robert was sound in mind and body, a bachelor of theology, and “could speak the language of these parts as well as English” (CPR. VII. 7/8). It was alleged in this petition from Lichfield that, as a result of the forgery, Eugenius O’Phelan had been translated from Kilmacduagh to Killaloe. As a result of the petition of Robert, the Pope appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury to inquire into the matter and, if he found the document to be a forgery, “to punish the forgers”: if not, he was to translate Eugenius to Killaloe. What his finding may have been I have found no record, but it would appear that a compromise was arrived at. At all events, Eugenius O’Phelan retained Killaloe and, in 1423, the Pope sent an Indult to Robert “who has undergone much toil in visiting his church, his city, and his diocese, and who, on account of conspiracies and other malefice which he has suffered when so visiting, and on account of his poverty, has betaken himself to England, where he was born, and who is unable to enjoy the fruits of his said church, as a certain adversary is in possession.” The Indult allowed him “so that he might not be compelled to beg,” to hold a benefice “wherever he can get it” and not be bound to reside in it (CPR. VII. 279). The recitals in these papers throw doubt on the question as to whether the translation of Eugenius O’Phelan from Kilmacduagh on 19th July, 1418 (recited in CPR. VII. 85) was not obtained by fraud. However that may be, he continued to hold the See until his death, although with opposition.
On 5th November, 1423, Thateus "Bishop Elect of Killaloe," obtained license to be consecrated (CPR. VII. 286). The cause of vandalsc of the See is not mentioned, but it seems probable that it was the result of some resignaion of the See by De Mulfield in consequence of the Indult (supra), which is actually dated 5th October, 1423, or only a month before the license issued to Thateus. Thateus was probably in Rome at the time, and the two papers can be read in conjunction. There is no entry in the Annates of a Bond by Thateus to pay the obligations consequent on his provision, but he is mentioned and called "Thateus Magrath" by Brady and Eubel, who give the date of his provision as October 25th, 1423, from the Consistorial Records. Brady adds that the See was "vacants per mortem" but does not give the name of the deceased Prelate, and also says that Thateus had been Prior of Clare Abbey. Cotton and Gams mention him as sedens sub an. 1430. Ware mentions a "Donatus Magrath" sedens in 1429 and obit in that year, and gives a "Thady Magrath" as his successor in 1430, adding that he (Thady) had his temporalities from Henry VI. on 1st September, 1431. It is apparent that Ware has confused Bishop Thateus Magrath with the Donatus Magrath who was provided in 1443 (ut infra). The fact that the temporalities were not restored formally until 1431 is of no significance, having regard to the small importance of the royal power contemporarily in Killaloe dioceee, then in native hands, and to the struggles between Eugenius and Thateus. The position, then, after 1423 was that De Mulfield was in England, having left his See and almost certainly resigned; Eugenius O'Phelan was in possession since 1418, and that now Thateus Magrath had been provided in opposition to Eugenius, apparently in consequence of the resignation of De Mulfield. The confusion which contemporarily existed in the affairs of the Papacy was apparently responsible for this situation. Eugenius at once appealed to the lawful Pope (Martin V. 1417-31), and in 1429 (15 Kal. September) a Mandate issued from Rome to the Archbishop of Cashel and the Bishops of Conservans and Emily (CPR. VIII. 105). This recited a petition of Eugenius that he had been provided to Killaloe on the resignation of Robert de Mulfield (dated by him it would thus appear, in 1418), made by Robert's proctor, James O'Loner- gan, Canon of Killaloe, to Antony, Cardinal Bishop of Porto, at the Apostolic See, and admitted by the said Cardinal by viva voce, Mandate of the present Pope (Martin V.). This, of course, is the document named by De Mulfield and the Bishop of Lichfield as a forgery (see supra), and, as already stated, it raises considerable doubt as to whether Eugenius O'Phelan's provision to Killaloe was not obtained by fraud. His petition, then, proceeds that, notwithstanding his provision to Killaloe in 1418, Thateus "Bishop in the universal Church," claimed the See of Killaloe and had prevented the provision of Eugenius from taking effect, had unduly detained possession, and had taken the fruits of the episcopal mensa. The petition went on to recite that the Pope had committed the question between Eugenius and Thateus, at the request of the former, "though not lawfully devolved to the Roman Curia," to the late William, Cardinal Priest of St. Martin's, and afterwards to William, Bishop of Rennes, presiding in the said Court, who had, by a definitive sentence, pronounced in favour of Eugenius, exposed silence on Thateus, and condemned him in the costs to the amount of 30 gold florins of the Curia, and to the restitution of the fruits. Finally, the petition of Eugenius went on to say that he feared "that others might intrude themselves or had done so." The Mandatories were, therefore, ordered to induce Eugenius and remove Thateus, cause restitution of the fruits to be made, and execute the mandate against all intruders "invoking the aid of the secular arm." Eugenius did not long survive this Mandate, as it appears from an exemplification of Letters made at the request of James O'Loner- gan, priest of Killaloe, and sometime Bishop of Annaghdown, that he (James) was provided to the See of Killaloe on 5th Id. December, 1429, and had letters of recommendation to the clergy and laity of the dioceee and to the Archbishop of Cashel on the same day. His provision is recited to be made "on the resignation of Eugenius made at the Apostolic See by his proctor, William O'Hedian, Canon of Lismore, and, therefore, reserved to the Pope" (i.e., because made at the Curia). This exemplification will be found in CPR. VIII. 446. We are thus left with the position that Eugenius had resigned the See in 1429, James O'Loner- gan had been provided in his place, and Thateus Magrath, in spite of the judgment in the Curia, recited supra, was still alive and claiming the See. A violent struggle ensued between them.

In 1431 there appears (4 Kal. Aug.) a further Bull of provision made to James O'Loner- gan, reciting the resignation of Eugenius ut supra and also that James had been consecrated but now doubted if his provision held good, seeing that the See may have
been voided by the death of Eugenius *extra Curiam* before his resignation had been formally accepted "or void in some other way." This, of course, would have voided the reservation of the See to the Pope, on which the first provision was founded (*ut supra*) and in an age when canonical technicalities were taken advantage of to the most extravagant degree, have caused O'Lonergan serious difficulties. The Pope now granted that the provision of James should hold good, notwithstanding the manner in which the See had become void. It is apparent from the recitals in this paper, and so noted by the editors (CPR. VIII. 377) that the news of the death of Eugenius reached the Curia on some day between June 6 and July 24 of the year 1431. In the Annates the Bull of Appointment for James appears under date 22nd September, 1431. It is not clear if O'Lonergan is he who had acted as proctor for the resignation of De Mulfield in the alleged forged instrument of 1418, but it would seem that he was the same.

Thateus Magrath had survived his rival Eugenius and now engaged in a contest with James. In 1434, in the Pontificate of Eugenius IV., Thateus petitioned the Apostolic See that James "Bishop in the Universal Church, sometime Bishop of Annaghdown," hindered him from exercising the administration of the Church of Killaloe, and from taking the fruits of the *mensa* and prevented his vassals from obeying him: further, he alleged that he and Macconmara, Captain of his nacion; John and Donatus MacMahuna (three other names in obscure script), Thady and Cornelius O'Reyn, O'Kennedy Ruadh O'Kennedy Lyreath, and O'Kearryll, laymen and other ecclesiastical and lay persons of the province of Cashel" hindered him in respect of certain tithes, fruits, possessions, etc., of the said *mensa*. The Mandatories were ordered to summon Bishop James, hear both sides, and decide what was best without appeal. They were the Bishops of Ardfer, Cork, and Killenora (CPR. VIII. 304/5).

In 1439 (8 Kal. June) Bishop O'Lonergan further petitioned the Holy See. He set out his two Bulls of provision *ut supra* and that by virtue of them he had obtained possession of the rule and administration of his diocese, and that Richard, Archbishop of Cashel, and several of his suffragans in provincial council assembled, had upheld his right to the See, and ordered him to be obeyed, having first summoned Thady McCrath, who acts as Bishop, and falsely claims said right and administration." "Nevertheless," goes on the petition, "the said Thady and O'Reyn, Prince of Thomond, and his brothers, and MacMahuna and Macconmara, and several others clerks and laymen," prevented Bishop James from exercising his rule and administration and receiving the fruits of the See (CPR. IX. 50). In consequence of this Mandate, the Pope ordered the Bishops of Emily and Limerick and Ardfer to summon Thady and, after inquiry, "to monish him under pain of excommunication, etc., to desist from his molestations " and to cause obedience to be rendered to Bishop James by the clergy and people of his diocese. It is somewhat curious to find both Bishops describing members of the same families (O'Brians and MacNamas and MacMahons) as each other's partisans, and it would appear that the clans were divided also. There is a further Mandate (4 Non. May 1439 in CPR. IX. 61) to the Archbishop of Cashel directing him to absolve Bishop James of simony committed before his consecration and, after imposing penance, to rehabilitate him so that his provision and acts of administration should hold good, notwithstanding the simony. Notice of this Bull appears also in the Annates and that it issued "sine obligatione." It is possible that it was obtained to counter some further proceedings by Thateus.

The dates of the obits of Bishops James and Thateus are none too clear. James O'Lonergan had been provided originally to the See of Annaghdown, but before his Letters were drawn up he was translated to Killaloe and never actually sat as Bishop of the former See (CPR. X. 610, and see also Brady II., 1451). He is, apparently, the "Trad O'Lonergan" (als. "Frederick") mentioned by Gams sub. an. 1490, and it would seem also that he is identical with the "James O'Chonelain" given by Cotton and Gams sub. an. 1441, who is called "James O'Connellan" in Crockford. At all events, he is the only "Jacobus" who appears in relationship to the See of Killaloe in this period in the printed records of the Curia or in the Annates. He (as "Jacobus Laonensis") appears in a Sheriff's return to a Writ summoning the nobility and commons of Tipperary to the Palatinate Court of the Earl of Ormond in 1431 (C.O.D. III. 91, 98). It should be, however, noted that Dr. Curtiss's description of the Bishop Cornelius in this paper as "of Killaloe"
is an obvious slip—he was the contemporary Bishop of Emly (cf. also CPR. IX. 386). The last mention of O’Loneran I can find as Bishop of Killaloe is in Cal. E. & M.D. 27, sub an. 1435, in which year “with the consent of the Dean and Chapter” he granted the advowson of the Parish Church of Dunamona to the Monastery of Holy Cross. This now long forgotten parish comprised in the main the areas of Tullagheady and Bawn, near Nenagh. His rival, Thatheus Magrath, had died by 1443, as appears from the provision of the next Bishop.

DONATUS O’BRYEN, 1443.

1443. (7 Kal. Aug.) On this date the Pope made provision of the See of Killaloe to Donatus O’Byren, of the reigning house of Thomond. The See was expressed to be void “by the death outside the Roman Curia, of Thatheus, in whose lifetime it was specially reserved by the present Pope” (CPR. IX. 343). The other documents available in connection with the provision of Donatus are his license to be consecrated “by any Catholic Bishop, assisted by two or three others, without prejudice to the Archbishop of Cashel, the Metropolitan” (CPR. IX. 336—Prid. Id. Aug., 1443). There is also a dispensation to him to exercise the powers of a Bishop, notwithstanding his defect of age—it being recited that he was but twenty-eight years old and of noble race (CPR. IX. 376). He had been a Canon of Kilfenora before his elevation to the episcopacy—“in which Church (Kilfenora), although there are a fixed number of Canons, there are no separate prebends” (CPR. IX. 346). This provision shows, as mentioned supra, that Bishop Thatheus had died before it was made. In a document of almost equal date with the provision of Donatus O’Brien (viz. Prid. Kal. Aug. 1443) there is a mention of James O’Loneran as “James (now) Bishop in the universal Church, formerly of Killaloe.” Reading this paper (CPR. IX. 375) with the provision of Donatus “per obitum Thathe” it would seem that Bishop James had either died or had resigned the See of Killaloe before 1443 or had been deprived. Indeed, it would seem from a reference to him in connection with the Bishopric of Annaghdown in 1450 that he was even then still living and so the Editor of the CPR. notes (X. 510). At all events, he is not described in this paper as “bony memorie” as is usual in the case of deceased prelates. But it is, at all events, clear that he had ceased to be Bishop of Killaloe by 1443 and with that we must leave him.

Following the fortunes of Bishop Donatus O’Brien, we find him mentioned in 1445 as instituting a Rector in “Bunnarty als. Trardy” on the nomination of the lay patron of the parish, O’Brien, Prince of Thomond (CPR. IX. 438), and also in connection with the resignation to him of the prebend of Clonagad in 1446 (CPR. IX. 552). In the same year he instituted “Maurice Mickakayn” (i.e., MacCathain, now Keane) as Vicar of Kilmaecuan (CPR. IX. 544). In a document of date 1449 (20 Dec.) it was alleged that he had unduly taken the fruits of the vicarage of Drumline, in ecclesiastical fees, after its provision had lapsed to the Apostolic See for length of vacancy or some other canonical reason (CPR. X. 435). In another paper of date 20th April, 1455, it is mentioned that he had deprived Henry “Olacdeayn (Leyden?)” of the vicarage of Doora and instituted Denis O’Daly in his place. This event happened in 1444, as O’Daly is recited to be then (1455) “in possession about eleven years” (CPR. XI. 212). Bishop Donatus was then (1455) sedens as he is not otherwise described. This becomes clearer from further reference to the same transaction (CPR. XI. 347) in which an allegation is made that Bishop Donatus had instituted O’Daly (in 1444) on a simoniacal bargain that he (O’Daly) would pay some of the fruits to the Bishop and that O’Daly had done so for some years.” The date of this last is 6th June, 1458, and it would appear to be clear from it that Bishop Donatus was then still living. He would, indeed, have been but 43 years of age.

We now come to an entry in the Four Masters and the Annals of Ulster in almost identical terms under the year 1460. “The Bishop O’Brien of Killaloe was killed by Brian of the Fleet, the son of Donough, the son of Mahon O’Brien, at Inis Cluana Ramphadh.” (AFM.) It may be parenthetically noted for the interest of place name investigators that O’Donovan renders “Inis Cluain Ramphadh” instead of “Cluana,” as in the original. Father Myles Ronan, who has helped in this investigation with many valuable suggestions and much information, drew my attention to this point. Now Ware, Gams, and Crockford call this Bishop who was murdered “Terentius.” Cotton calls him “Terence O’Brien, second son of the King of Thomond.” Here is a very important historical error. Ware advances no reason for calling the Bishop “Terentius,” and Cotton, Gams, and Crockford simply followed him. Neither Brady nor Eubel mentions any Bishop of the name Terentius at this period, and there is no trace of the provision of
any Bishop of that name, or even of any cleric of the name, in the contemporary Annates or Papal Registers Calendar. Father Ronan has pointed out to me that Ware’s error is apparently due to an entry in Athen. Oxon., which he (Ware) quotes later in reference to a later Bishop Terentius of Killaloe. This contains the passage in relation to the later Terentius “Several years before his time” (he was provided in 1483 ut infra) “was another of both his names bishop of that place and another after him; whereupon, by writers, this Bishop” (i.e., of 1483) “was commonly written and called Terentius O’Brien the second” (Athen Oxon. I. 663). Terence is the Irish Toirdhealbhach, or Turlogh. The Bishop who was murdered at Clonroad was Donatus O’Brien, who had been provided, as we have seen, in 1443 and was sedens in 1458. When I had discovered this error of Wares, Father Ronan pointed out to me that Chancellor Leslie, working quite independently, had also noted it in his list of Bishops of Killaloe in the Handbook of British Chronology, issued last year (1839). He, however, says in error that Donogh was “deposed.” In addition to the papers already quoted, showing that Donatus O’Brien was alive 1458, there is (CPR. XII. 96) a document of the Roman Curia of the date 24 May, 1460, relating to the vicarage of Kilfeardagh, in which he is referred to as living at that date. Moreover, the O’Brien pedigree in O’Donoughue’s Memoir of the O’Briens, shows the second son of Turlogh Bog O’Brien, Prince of Thomond, to have been “Donogh the Bishop.” This shows the Bishop to have been a brother of Teige an Chomhaid (Coal, near Corofin), King of Thomond, 1459-66, and also of Connor na Srona, who succeeded Teige and ruled Thomond until 1496. If the Bishop had lived until 1496 he would have been the eldest of the ruling family. His murderer was his cousin, Donogh, grandson of Mahon Dall. The reason for the murder is lost in the mists of history, but quite clearly it may have been due to an attempt by Donogh to oust the Bishop, elder brother of Teige an Chomhaid, from the rulership of Thomond. Mahon Dall was the elder brother of Turlogh Bog, father of Teige, and of the Bishop and Connor na Srona. O’Donoughue says that Donogh, son of Mahon, succeeded Turlogh Bog for a brief period in 1459 “but was obliged to give way to his cousin, Teige an Chomhaid in less than two years from his accession.” (Hist. Memoir, 143). In Frost (p. 637) Donogh the Bishop is described as “Donogh of Cahercahill” and is not called the Bishop. But even Frost does not mention any Terentius.

THADDEUS “MACRAIDI” OR MAGRATH, 1460.

1460. Aug. 18. Thaddeus “Macraidi” or Magrath was provided, according to Eubel, who gives this as the date of his bond to pay the obligations of his provision. The bond does not occur in the Annates transcribed by Costello, but there is a gap for all the dioceses in this source between the years 1446-60. Brady does not mention this Bishop. Gams gives him as “Thaddeus” under 1461. Cotton gives “Thady” under 1460, as does Dean Lawlor in Crockett, while both Father Ronan and Chancellor Leslie accept his provision date as 1460. Ware writes “Thady succ. 1460, sedens 1461.” and adds “On 18th June, 1461 he renewed the foundation Charter of the Abbey of Kilmoney or De Forgio (i.e., Clare Abbey, O.S.A.) within his own diocese.” Ware also says “Some entirely omit this prelate and place the following—John MacCragh, Maurice O’Canassa, Dermot MacCragh, of whom, but the names, I have nothing to relate.” Of these latter names given by Ware, Brady says (II. 115) that no trace can be found in the Consistorial Acts. Neither is there any mention of any of them in either the contemporary Annates or CPR. Eubel’s date is exact and his reference is precise, besides which the provision of the next Bishop is expressed to be made “per obitum Thadet.” We may, therefore, accept that Thaddeus Magrath ruled the See of Killaloe between 1460 and 1463. We may with equally good reason reject the names given by Ware. It would also seem that Ware has confused the name of this Bishop with his namesake, Thaddeus, Prince of Thomond, in the Charter reference to Clare Abbey quoted (cf. Cal. E & M.D. 26f). This is the last of the Magrath Bishops who had an extended connection with the diocesan rule, and also with the Priorship or Abbacy of Clare Abbey, in this century and earlier.

MATTHEW OGRIFFA (MOD. GRIFFEY), 1463.

1463. 23 May. Matthew Ogriffa (mod. Griffey) was provided to the See of Killaloe by Pope Pius II. (CPR. XII. 187). He is here described as “Elector of Killaloe, Archdeacon of Limerick, a bachelor in decrees, in priest’s orders, of lawful age,” and his provision to be made “by the death of Thades, in whose lifetime it was specially reserved to the present Pope.” Concurrent Letters issued to the Chapter and Clergy of Killaloe, the people of the city and diocese, the Archbishop of Cashel and the king of England. On
the same date there issued to Mattheus a dispensation to exercise the office of Bishop "super defectu natalium." The contemporary Calendar of Papal Registers shows this Bishop to have had a remarkable career. In 1449, when he was Rector in ecclesiastical fee of Drumcliffe (i.e., Ennis) an accusation of irregularity in common form was jevelled at him by a cleric name O'Meeure, of a family who had more or less farmed this rectory for several years (CPR. X. 444). It apparently did not succeed, as he continued to hold the benefice. In 1458 (27 April) two Papal Mandates issued in his regard (CPR. IX. 72, 74). In the first he is described as dispersed super defectu natalium, perpetual vicar of "Disert Melacalla" (i.e., Disert Tola), and it is recited that he also held the rectory of Drumcliffe and a canonry of Limerick without prebend. The Mandate allows him in addition to hold four other benefices with or without cure, compatible, and in addition to have the prebend of St. Munchin's in Limerick Chapter, and the Vicarage of Garre (Ballungarry) in Limerick Diocese. The second Mandate contains his collation to Ballingarry, and it is directed that when he gets it he is to resign Disert. Apparently he either did not get it or did not resign, as he appears later as Vicar of Disert. In the same year (4 July) he obtained a further Mandate from the Pope to the Abbots of Holy Cross and Kilcooley and a Canon of Cashel, to collate to him the Deanery of Cashel, if they found certain charges against the existing Dean to be proven. In this paper it is set out that "he has for more than four years in the University of Oxford and for four years in Ireland in a place which is not a University, lectured publicly in the Canon Law." The Mandate also allows him to hold the rectory of Drumcliffe, the vicarage of Ballingarry, the prebend of St. Munchin's, and any other compatible benefices (CPR. XI. 345). A further Mandate of 18 Sept., 1458, recites him to be Vicar of Disert, Rector of Drumcliffe, and to have obtained the Archdeaconry of Limerick and Deanery of Cashel—benefices value in all up to 109 marks annually—a sum which Father Ronan estimates to be over £2,000 in our modern money. He is directed, however, to resign all benefices in the Archdeaconry or Deanery if he obtain possession of these offices (CPR. XII. 16). He never actually got possession of the Deanery of Cashel, as in 1463 when he had become "Elec of Killaloe" his rights to a collation to that dignity were surrogated to one Redmond Baren, it being recited that there were two other claimants and that the cause was before the Archbishop (CPR. XI. 496). He did become Archdeacon of Limerick, as is mentioned in his provision to the See of Killaloe (cf. also CPR. XII. 167).

Bishop Mattheus Ogriffa was consecrated at Rome by direction of the Pope (CPR. XII. 398). There are few notices of his episcopacy up to 1470, when the printed calendars of the Papal Registers come to an end, but there is mention of him in the proofs of Vol. XIII. on more than one occasion in connection with diocesan provisions. He lived and ruled the See up to 1482, when he died and was buried in the Augustinian Priory at Canons in the Shannon estuary (AFM. sub an.). The Four Masters in recording his obit describe him as "a fountain of hospitality and wisdom," and say that he was interred "with due honour." Ware omits all mention of him, but he is recorded by Gams and Euel. Cotton and Crockford incorrectly give the date of his obit as the date of his accession, as does Gams. Euel correctly places him in the succession but does not give his dates. In 1470 he received the resignation of the Abbey of Clare (O.S.A.) from Mattheus Magrath, Bishop of Clonfert, who had been its Abbot or Prior before becoming Bishop and had been allowed to hold it commendam thereafter (CPR. XII. 791). In Father Costello's transcripts of the unprinted registers, it appears that he appointed John Maccomarra to the Cathedral Chapter some time before 1482. In 1469 he is mentioned as a Papal Mandatory (Cal. E. & M.D. 37). Having regard to his record and to his standing as a scholar, he must be accounted as one of the great Bishops of Killaloe.

Torlogh O'Brien, 1483.

1483. September 19th. Theodoricus als. Terentius als. Torlogh O'Brien, was provided to the See of Killaloe. His provision date is given by Euel (II. 190) and he is described as "nobilis." He was the son of Mahon, younger brother of Connor na Srone, King of Thomond, and, therefore, first cousin of the Bishop who was murdered in 1460 (O'Donoughue, pp. 158/9). He is given by all the authorities. I do not find his bond in the Annates or the proofs of Vol. XIII. CPR., though I have had but small opportunity to examine the latter source, as it is inaccessible at the moment without difficulty. No doubt Euel took his date from the Consistorial Acts, and it can be, therefore, relied on. He must have been a very young man at the date of his provision as he lived until
1525. This gives him an episcopate of 42 years—the longest save one hitherto known in the diocese. He also seems to have been a remarkable character. Ware writes of him: “He was a Prelate of great account amongst his people for his liberality and hospitality, but was more addicted to martial affairs than became his function.” Here Ware is relying on Wood’s Athen. Oxon., where (I. 668) the Bishop is referred to as follows: “Theoderick O’Brien, sometimes written Terence and Trelack O’Brien, was descended from an ancient and noble family of his name in Ireland, and, after he had spent some time in good letters here in Oxon, became Bishop of Killaloe in the said country, and a person of account for his liberality and hospitality, yet addicted to warfare more than became his coat. He paid his last debt to nature in 1525. Several years before his time was another of both his names Bishop of that place, and another after him, etc. (ut supra).”

The error in the last statement has already been pointed out. The Four Masters, in recording his death, describe him as “Torlogh, son of Mahon, son of Bryan Catha an Aonaigh.” The Annals of Ulster (III. 559) call him “The unique Gaidheal who got and spent most of the world in his own time, and who least hoarded beyond his spending (was) he, and a man of general hospitality to everyone (was) that Bishop, and who defended his right in his country and borderland (partly) by consent and (partly) by despite; and a man who often brought a large host to muster and destroy his enemies, so that there was not in proximity to him any good person who did not accept his stipend. Another thing also—(the death of) that Bishop was the (sore) deed above every other deed, and the loss above every other loss that happened to learning in his time.” The Annals of Lough Cé eulogize him in similar terms (II. 253). He had a suit in the Curia of Waterford Diocese by delegation from Pope Clement VII in 1525 against Peter White, concerning the Priory of Athassell (Cal. E. & M.D., 145). The record of a further suit before the Vicar General of Limerick in 1523, in which his daughter, Anie (“filiæ episcopi Laonensis vulgarisr nuncupate episcopi Obreyng”) sought restitution of conjugal rights against her husband, the Earl of Desmond, will be found in the same volume (256ff). He appeared by his attorney, Thomas White, in answer to the Sheriff of the Palatinate of Tipperary to do suit in the County Court of the Earl of Ormond in 1508 (C.O.D. sub. an.). In 1523, through the Precentor of the Diocese, Hugh O’Hogan, he presented 100 gold florins to the Holy See (Frost. 157ff).—cf., also An. Hib. I, 138. In 1522 he went on a hosting against O’Donnell to Sligo, with O’Carroll, the O’Keneedies, and others (An. Ulster, III., p. 543). He is there called “Easbog Og,” which is interpreted by the editor to mean “junior,” the “senior” Bishop O’Brien being he who was murdered in 1450.

**JACOBUS O’CURRIN, 1526.**

1526. Aug. 24th. Jacobus O’Curren, priest of Meath Diocese, was provided to Killaloe Diocese “vacant by the death of Terentius.” The Bull of provision transcribed by Father Costello, goes on “Henricus Anglic Rex illustri, qui etiam Hibernie, in qua dicta ecclesia consistit, dominus in temporalibus existit, nobis super hoc per suas litteras humiliiter supplicavit.” Except for Ware’s reference to the restoration of the temporalities by Henry VI, in 1430 to Thates Magrath, this is the first mention of the intervention of an English King in the selection of a Bishop of Killaloe since the 14th century, and is a clear sign of the changing times and of the success of the new policy of surrender and re-grant and of the reconquest of the West. Father Costello also notes Bishop O’Curren’s license to be consecrated, and a dispensation super defectu natalium in his regard as well as a Bull absolving him from censures ad cautelam. In this latter he is called “James Curryan,” which suggests that he came from the influential Upper Ormond family of that name, who were still freeholders there in the parish of Templecerry at the time of the Civil Survey of 1653. The Diocese of Killaloe closely adjoins that of Meath at one point of its boundary, so that there is nothing unusual in finding a Meath priest provided, although the name, as noted, is an Upper Ormond one. Eubel gives the same provision date as Father Costello, and apparently took it from the same source. Brady also agrees. Ware, Crockford, Cotton and Gams all interpolate Richard Hogan, a Franciscan, as Bishop, between Torlogh O’Brien and O’Curren. This is an error. Father Costello’s provision date is taken from the Vatican records and is correct, apart from the statement in it that it was made “per obitum Terenti.” In the absence of a further inspection of the Vatican papers, it is, perhaps, difficult to be certain as to how Richard Hogan became first connected with the Diocese of Killaloe. O’Curry seems to have, at least temporarily, accepted the Reformation, and he certainly resigned in 1546 “for the sake of retirement and private living” (Ware), or perhaps was deprived or resigned on
some reconciliation with Rome (vide Ronan, op. cit. 281 n. and Edwards, "Church and State in Tudor Ireland"). Brady (II. 115) interpolates another Theodoric or Terentius O’Brien between O’Curry and Hogan, while Lynch, quoting "Tabulae Romanae" says "5 May (1542) per cessionem reginæm D. Jacobi Curri (sic) hic episcopus illustrissimo D. Demetrio O’Brien collatus" and adds, again without giving the year, "25 May per obitum Jacobi Currin (quem Wareus episcopus se anno 1546 ut secum habitat, abdiacse scribit) Laonnensis episcopus D. Theodorico O’Brien concessus. Obiit 1569." What is certain is that Richard Hogan, O.F.M., was provided to Clonmacnoise on 16 June, 1539, and to Killaloe as well on the same date, and that he died a few days after his collation. Cardinal Moran so refers to this event (I.E.R., 1885) in his note of the collation of Florence to Clonmacnoise on 15 Dec., 1539. He says that Bishop Kirwan was appointed to the See of Clonmacnoise and to Killaloe "per obitum Richardii et Terentii" and they were united for his life only. All the other authorities mix up Richard Hogan, Dermot O’Brien, and Theodoric O’Brien with O’Corryn’s episcopate in the most inextricable confusion. Father Ronan (op. cit) suggests the following succession of events:—

O’Corryn, apparently, accepted the supremacy of 1536, and Terence O’Brien was appointed by the Pope. As Terence died in a short time, Richard Hogan (appointed Bishop of Clonmacnoise, June 16, 1539) was appointed on the same day Administrator of Killaloe. He died in a few days, and as O’Corryn resigned the See in 1546, Hogan was succeeded in the Administratorship by Dermot (als. Demetrius) O’Brien, a youth of 22 years, and a natural son of the Prince of Thomond. He held office until the death of O’Corryn in 1554.

This neglects the appointment of Bishop Kirwan recorded by Moran, while it is clear that Dermot O’Brien was a Vicar only in 1542. Moreover, it seems possible that the Theodoric O’Brien whose obit is mentioned in the provision of Richard Hogan (per Brady) is identical with the Bishop of that name who died in 1525. None of the authorities give his provision, and in 1539 it would appear that Currin was schismatic. I suggest the following as the correct succession in those years: —James O’Curry, 1526 to 1542, when he resigned. He had apparently accepted the Reformation in 1536 whence, in 1539, first Richard Hogan, and secondly Florence Kirwan, Bishops of Clonmacnoise, were appointed to hold Killaloe in administration. Florence Kirwan survived until 1554, when he died, and "Terentius" O’Brien was provided to the See of Killaloe as Bishop. Brady’s quotation from the Barberini Mss. regarding "Dermitius" O’Brien reads: —"1542. May 5. Admisit resignationem Jacobi Currin, moderni Episcopi Laoneni in Hibernia, de dicto ecclesia et ille sic vacanti providet in administrationem Dermitio filio naturali Principi YBrien, in 22 suae aetatis constituto, usque ad 27 suae aetatis annum." This conveys that he was allowed the administration for five years, being too young to be provided Bishop. No doubt he held the fruits while the Bishop of Clonmacnoise administered the diocese. I suggest that it is highly probable that he is identical with the "Terentius" O’Brien provided as Bishop in 1554, who had a dispensation super defectu natalium and who is described as "of noble and illustrious birth." He would have been then 34 years old. In this connection it is, perhaps, significant that this provision of 1554 is recited to be made "per obitum Jacobi Currin olim Episcopi Laoneni" (Brady), and there is no mention in it of the "Terentius" interpolated between Currin and the Clonmacnoise administration. The succession is, therefore, Currin to 1542, administration by Clonmacnoise 1539 to 1554, with Dermitius as Vicar in Killaloe from 1542, and finally the succession of Dermitius sub nomine "Terentius" in 1554. It may be added that the appearance of the form "Dermitius" in Curial documents is rare: the identification of the two names in this case is, however, admittedly speculative.

TERENCE O’BRIEN, 1554.

1554. 25. June. Terence O’Brien, dean of Kilmacduagh, dispensed super defectu natalium, was provided to Killaloe (Brady, and see supra). He is given by all the authorities, though Ware goes on to the Protestant succession, the first royal provision being that of Cornelius O’Dea, chaplain to the Earl of Thomond, who was made Bishop by Henry VIII. in 1546 when O’Curry had resigned. He sailed to Spain in the Autumn of 1569 (ERIU, Vol. IX., p. 160) with Padraigin Mac Muiris, the original "Captain Mac Morris" of Shakespeare’s plays.
MALACHIAS O’MOLONEY, 1571.

1571. 10th Jan. Malachias O’Moloney was provided to the See of Killaloe. The entry in the Consistorial Records reads (Arch. Hib. V. 171/2) “Feria quarta X Januarii Romae in palatio apostolico . . . fuit primum consistorium secretum anni præsenti 1571 et hæc acta sunt . . . Referente Revmo. D. Cardinale Morona Sanctitas S. providit ecclesiae Læonensi in regno Hiberniae, vacanti per obitum bone memorie Terentii ultimi possessoris, de persona Rev. Domini Malachiae Omolona, nobilis Hiberni, sacro presbyteratus ordine, actate et doctrina commendati, ac fideam Catholicam in curia professi, ipsumque dictæ ecclesiae in episcopatum praefecit et pastorem. Absolvens, etc. Et facta est gratia, etc.” On the 2nd August, 1576, Dr. O’Moloney was translated to Killmacduagh (Arch. Hib. V. 173).

CORNELIUS RYAN, O.F.M. 1576.

1576. 22nd August. Cornelius Ryan, O.F.M. (Obs.) was provided to Killaloe. The entry of his provision will be found at large in Arch. Hib. V. 173, following that relating to the translation of Bishop O’Moloney. Dr. Ryan, O.F.M., had a long and interesting career as Bishop, most of which he spent on the Continent. He was one of the leading figures in the organisation of the Spanish invasion of Ireland at this period. He lived until 1618. Very many papers relating to his activities will be found printed in Arch. Hib. II. in the Vatican Miscellany edited by the late Monsignor Hagan, D.D., and also in Ibid. Vol. VII. With regard to the death abroad in 1616, we may end our investigation of the succession of Killaloe over a very troubled period of its history.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED:


Ware. Harris edition. Lists of Bishops of Ireland.

Gams. Series Episcoporum.


Cotton. Fasti Hiberniae.

Theiner. Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotiae.


Crockford. Directory of the Church of Ireland. The Bishops’ List edited by the late Dean H. J. Lawlor.


Lynch. De Praesulis Hiberniae.


I.E.R. Irish Ecclesiastical Record.