Reviews

POBAL MAINCHIN, 1949. ST. MUNCHIN'S FOLK. Issued on behalf of St. Munchin's Parish, Limerick. The "Limerick Leader," Ltd.

We congratulate the people of St. Munchin's Parish and their Very Reverend Parish Priest and Editor on this most interesting and valuable second number of their Parish Annual. So far as we are aware the review of the "Irish Independent" is correct in describing it as "unique." As a vehicle for creating a parish consciousness or for developing a corporate parish spirit its value can hardly be overestimated. As Stephen Rynne has pointed out forcibly there are so many parishes in Ireland where the parishioners are not able to give one any information on the most elementary aspects of their native place—such as who built the Parish Church, and when? The present number contains a number of items of general, as well as of more intimate interest. There is an account of the origins of the teaching authority of the Pope and of the Church, Aileen O'Brien writes an interesting comparison between a Siou Valley and her home in Limerick. There is a most valuable paper on the place of children in the home by Father Tynan, the Diocesan Inspector of Schools. There is an account of the New Parish Church, an explanation of the law of fasting, and a note on the Holy Year in relation to Limerick. This last is illustrated with a photographic reproduction of the Bulla or Seal of Pope Boniface VII, the first Pope of the Holy Year (A.D. 1300), which was found in a gravel-pit beside the graveyard of Knockmahola, Adare, in 1939, and may well have been related to the foundation charter of one of the religious houses there.

From our point of view, however, the magazine is most notable for Canon Moloney's extended account of one of the great figures of the Cromwellian siege of Limerick in 1651—Terence Albert O'Brien, Bishop of Emly. His name, and an account of his martyrdom on October 27th of that year, appear in many records. Now, for the first time, Canon Moloney pieces all these records together and, making use of that magnificent quarry for local history, the Civil Survey of 1653, and of various family traditions, and some hitherto unknown records, is able to tell us the full story of the antecedents of the famous Dominican, and, moreover, of his collateral descendants, and to relate it fully and precisely to the only relic of his, which remains to us, his episcopal pectoral cross, now preserved in the Dominican Friary of his Order. It is as fine a story of romance and heroism as is written in the Annals of the Cromwellian Ireland—bolder than anything the romantic novelist has to offer us, or, even, the cinema to put before our eyes. If we have a quarrel with the learned author it is that it did not grace the pages of this Journal in which it might, perhaps, have more readily met the eye of some of the many scholars still needed to complete the historian's conquest of Ireland. What a cross section it gives us of the Ireland of that tragic century of the story of our country—the 17th! Davis might almost have seen it in his mind's eye when he wrote his Salute to O'Brien of Araph. For the Bishop's grandfather was that Turlough Mac Ui Briain Araph, chief of his name, and descendant of Brian Ruadh and Brian Ban, Kings of Thomond, whose death, in 1601, at his house in Castletown Araph on the shores of Lough Dergh was the occasion of one of the best-known panegyrics in the whole of the Annals of the Four Masters, and the grandmother was Maire Ni Cearta, daughter of Sir Charles O'Carroll, of Eil, and of the family which later gave Charles O'Carroll of Carrolton, as a signatory to the American Declaration of Independence. Their daughter married Connor, Earl of Thomond, and father of Donough the 4th Earl, and of the famous Donal, the 1st Lord Clare—first cousin of the Bishop. Turlough's second son—the Bishop's uncle—was that extraordinary character, Maurice O'Brien, of Castletown, the 2nd "Queen's" Bishop of Killaloe, or as the list in Irish of the Killaloe Bishops, in the R.I.A. Mss, has it, "gan ceart o'n bPapa." This Bishop's son—another Sir Turlough, and first cousin of Terence Albert—was he who married the daughter of the 11th Earl of Ormonde (Walter of the Rossaries), and who was buried, as a "secret" State Paper has it, in a friar's habitation in a superstition Island in the Shannon, where their tomb is still to be seen (on Iniscahir, or Holy Island, in Scariff Bay), and as his will directed, "in a chapel to be made for me near Our Lady's Church." The third son, and Bishop Terence's father, was Murtagh O Briain, of Tuath Esa Greine or Pallagreane, who married the daughter of Sir Geoffrey Galway, Mayor of Limerick, whose massive Tudor-stone house survived in ruin until 1893 behind St. Mary's Cathedral, the site being now covered by St. Mary's graveyard. Sir Geoffrey's grandson, another first cousin of the Bishop, married Elizabeth Sarsfield, and, at the age of 34, he, too, was executed by Ireton in 1651. All these Canon Moloney works skilfully into this remarkable story and gives us illustrations of the Galway House, of the Old Dominican Priories of Lorrha and Limerick, where Terence Albert served, and of the Latin inscription from the still preserved tomb of old Sir Turlough in the graveyard at Castletown by the lake shore. Nor is this all, for in incidental flashes we have an account of the Ronans (one wonders of the famous Father Ronan, S.J, the founder of Mungret College was of this family), the origin of the name of Garveyowen, and much other information of the old people and the old places of this old city.

D.F.G.

As the author points out in his introductory chapter, it is now nearly ninety years since O'Donoghue published his "Historical Memoir of the O'Brien." Since then a good deal of new material relating to the family has come to light. From new and old the author has compiled a pedigree of the entire family and of its various branches, from Brian's time down to our own day. This of its nature was an immense task and this book shows it to have been very faithfully performed. Be it said at once that there is here no attempt to enlarge on the history of the family in Irish history or in its particular demesne in Clare as between Brian's time and Elizabeth's day, when its leading members abandoned the titles of ancient Irish nobility and accepted (with the law of primogeniture) English Earldoms and baronies. An outline of this earlier story is presented—mainly from the pages of Frost and O'Donoghue. From the time of the institution of the Earldoms of Thomond and Inchequinh however, the reader will find a full and complete account of the descent of each branch of the family, and, for the main branches, the story is carried on up to the present time. The pedigrees, especially in the later stages and in the lesser branches, are much fuller and more detailed than those given by O'Donoghue. They show, for instance, very clearly the relationship which existed at various times between the leading O'Brien families and the royal house of England. Moreover this genealogical presentation is embellished by the reproduction of a very large number of the magnificent family portraits which still adorn the picture gallery at Dromoland Castle, or were formerly at Ennistymon House or are still in other repositories. These are presented in the manner one has learned to expect from the firm of Batsford and form in themselves an item of the greatest interest and value to the historian and the artist.

The author deals with the six main lines of descent of the family, from Turlough Dónn who died in 1528, and whose immediate descendants first took English titles and adopted the English law of descent. These are:—1. The Earls of Thomond. 2. The Viscounts Clare. 3. The Ennistymon O'Brien. 4. The Earls of Inchequinh (Marquis of Thomond). 5. The Dromoland O'Brien (now the Senior Branch). 6. The Stonethall (Cratloe) O'Briens. He deals also with the cadet branches, such as the Aran Island O'Briens, the O'Briens of Ballinalacken, the O'Briens of Grenaum (Earls of Lismore), the Waterford O'Briens, the O'Briens of Arad, and gives some account of other families, such as the MacDonnells of Kilkee and Newhall, who intermarried with the family. His attempt to connect Marshal MacMahlon, President of France, with the family is not so happy since, on the same analogy, every Dalcaisian has at least an equal connection, and that would include a good half of the population of Clare and Ormond.

The authors lack of acquaintance with the language (or perhaps only the printers and proof readers) has involved him in very serious difficulties with the family and place names. It does seem a pity that in such a work, the product of what must have been an infinity of labour and expense, somebody equipped with such a knowledge was not allowed to read and correct the proofs. Thus amongst the family names the famous Maire Ruadh becomes 'Moira Ruhr,' and we find 'Conor Sron,' 'Teige an Chumhaid' (correct form) and 'Teige an Chomard' on the same page (p. 41), while Connor na Slapar Salach becomes 'Conor an Slaparfelas' (p. 33), with a legend of his gown instead of his shoe. Amongst the place names Fiadh Mac n-Aenghusa of the Synod is rendered as 'Fad Aengusa,' Leth Culinn as 'Leith Conn,' Uachtar Laman (Holy Cross) as 'Oughterlamaan' and (in the Aradh pedigrees) Kilcoleman as 'Kilkolinany' and Aesgreine (Pallasgreen) as 'Adsgreina,' while Lorcha of St. Ruadhcan become 'Lorilha.' These are but a few of very many instances which the reader may find irritating. One may, perhaps, also cavil with the author in not stating his sources in many instances where it would have been easy to do so and for not giving us at least a catalogue of the interesting family documents and letters of the 18th century in Dromoland Castle to which tantalising reference is made. At present rate of progress most of us will be dead and buried before they see the light through the Irish Miss. Commission, and the Stationery Office.

These points are however points of detail and we have to congratulate the author in making available to the historical student and also to the very many who must be interested in a very human way in this great historic family of the descendants of Brian Boru, so clear and concise a table of descent, and so much detail of vast interest. The Egyptian printer has done his work well and the well-known publishers, as has been said, have made the presentation in their usual superlative manner.—D.F.G.