REVIEWS.

IRISH WITCHCRAFT AND DEMONOLOGY.

By (Rev.) St. John D. Seymour, B.D.

(Dublin—Hodges Figgis and Co., Limited).

In the history of humanity, though it so largely consists of the records of sin and cruelty, there is no more horrible or humiliating chapter than that of witchcraft and demonology. The most horrible thing being that there is every appearance of its only being covered, not eradicated, by the hand of modern cultivation. It is easy for educated people of to-day to laugh at Cotton Mather and even greater intellects for their belief. So horrible are the facts, after every critical deduction, that it is hard even now to avoid the thought that some detestable external source of evil added itself to the merely human wickedness. In older days this view fell in with every prejudice and belief and evolved, in its turn, the devilish cruelty of those “doing God service” in their own opinion.

Ireland is a land of enchantment, half its glamour lies, to those that can see, in the survival of the customs and beliefs of hoary antiquity. Within our great towns haunted houses and uncanny tales meet us, but more in the country, much more on the lonely uplands and the wild glens and coasts. That it should have been left for the newly dead year 1913, to have seen the first attempt to collect and classify so important a branch of such beliefs is a proof (were any proof needed) that all scientific study of the antiquities, history and folk lore of our Island is in its infancy, and that in every direction beginnings, rather than final results are urgently called for. It is therefore our pleasant task to hail the book and congratulate its author on the industry with which one “remote from cities” and with other more urgent duties, has collected a mass of material and “roughed out” a path through the thickets of unexplored Irish folk lore for others to travel on.
It is no slight on his work to note here and there a failure in classification—a story not properly belonging to the title-matter of the book, for, in the beginning of any work, such redundance helps to illustrate side issues of the main subject. Those who at first glance say "oh! all the Kyteler witchcraft case has been worn threadbare long ago" do not see how necessary repetition of such a case must be in any study with a purpose of complete treatment. It was a strange dereliction from duty were a writer to leave out the best items of the connected history because they had been treated as isolated fragments by others. The book is well printed and carefully edited, and the author has left future editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica no excuse to omit the subject of Irish witchcraft so completely as is done in its latest edition.

Before turning to its contents—which it is important to indicate for our readers who may need information before obtaining the book—we first note that the older Irish, like the North and Saxons, regarded a witch or wizard, so to speak, by the results and object of their charms. The injured persons, or their relatives, could get redress if they suffered, the magicians were rather admired for their professional skill by those who were not its object or who benefited by it. Had Dame Kyteler (1320) not offended her hypochondriac husband and made him believe his illness sprang from her unlawful arts, had she not alienated her children of three later marriages by her favoritism to her eldest son, she might have emulated the weird sisters of Macbeth in her disgusting cookery, swept Killkenny streets, dismembered animals and red cocks and collected "abominations" with but little danger. Her accomplice, Petronilla, was burned, Nov. 3rd, 1324, but for heresy.

It is hard to sift out how far the enmity of De Ledrede, Bishop of Ossory, played a part in the tragedy, at least his Metropolitan Archbishop, De Bicknor, and the Crown treated him with severity for his share in it. The whole was probably an aftermath of the persecution of the Templars, who were accused of Devil worship and pagan rites. Few cases appear for long after. The burning of two MacNamara's at Bunratty, Co. Clare, in 1353 was rather for Arianism than for sorcery.

The terrible text "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" had not been taken over into Celtic Christianity as a command as sacred as that against murder. The attack on magicians and the idea of their supposed
compact with Satan only existed incidentally, and it was the Reformers, or indeed rather the extreme Puritan wing of them, that made both of common cognizance. I can, so far as my knowledge extends, bear out Mr. Seymour’s belief in the absence from the early Plea and Judiciary Rolls in Ireland of trials for witchcraft *per se* during the 13th and much of the 14th centuries. That Protestants should appear as the persecutors in the records from the accession of Elizabeth is only to say that the Government was in their hands and that their religious opponents dared hardly have brought a subject bearing on religious belief (in short a heresy) into the courts. That Roman Catholic belief in other respects tallied with that of Protestantism is absolutely certain. Ireland had no civil law against witchcraft till late in the reign of Elizabeth, and in another sense than that of St. Paul “the law was given that offences might abound.” It is interesting to find “the wizard, Michael Scot” nominated by the Pope to the See of Cashel and declining because of his ignorance of the Irish tongue (1223). He, like Roger Bacon, was a man of vast learning to whom the ignorant attributed unlawful science. Gerald, Earl of Desmond, who died, or disappeared, in 1398, was another reputed magician, but only in the following century did any real attack on Irish sorcery begin. As the previous cases probably came from the Templar trials so the rest began after the accusation for sorcery of the Duchess of Gloucester (immortalized by Shakespeare) in 1441. Similar accusations were made against a person of high rank in Ireland, but the Irish Parliament showed no sympathy with the traducers and (led by the Archbishop of Armagh) denounced the practice in the Statute of 1447. The enlightened act of the Archbishop probably quashed what might well have been the opening of another persecution. As we saw before where Archbishop de Bicknor censured and punished the persecuting prelate of Ossory, so now another of the higher clergy appears far in advance of his age.

In the 16th century a witch was sent to the Lord Deputy to be examined, in 1544, but it was only very late in Elizabeth’s reign that the beginning of the movement, so often connected with James I. & VI., began. In 1578 “thirty-six persons were executed, amongst whom were some good ones, a blackamoor and two witches, by natural law”; there was as yet no statute law to meet the case. England had passed two Acts
in 1541 (repealed 1547) and in 1562; the first for Ireland was enacted only in 1586. The causing of death by magic was felony without benefit of clergy, saving dower to the widow and right of succession to the heirs of the culprit. Injury to person or property was punished by a year's imprisonment, without bail, the criminal standing in the pillory once a quarter; the second offence was punishable with death. (3) Peers were to be tried by their peers. (4) Magic to discover treasure or win love was punished by similar imprisonment and pillory as in clause 2; the second offence, by forfeit of goods and chattels to the crown and by imprisonment for life. For its period it was most lenient, authorizing neither torture nor burning. Witchcraft was included among the ways of feloniously compassing death in an Act of 1634. The traditional Act against the selling of red swine (because the Irish could enchant wisps of hay and straw to personate such animals) is only found in a statement in Beware the Cat, not in the Statutes.

From 1606 onward a most interesting and representative collection of records appear. Strange to say the clergy were (it is alleged) not free from such practices (1). A Louth clergyman raised the Devil in 1608 to recover a silver cup stolen at Mellifont. Another in the first half of that century raised the Devil and offered his soul for a hatfull of gold. He slit the hat and held it over a limekiln (till even the resources of the Prince of this world were sorely trenched on) and meanly cheated the Demon by getting leave to read the bible till the candle burned out, and then, at once shutting the candle-end in the sacred volume, outwitted the fiend. It were long even to enumerate the stories recorded in the seventeenth century, each a lurid commentary on human credulity, malice and greed. The Presbyterians accused the Episcopalians of sorcery, and vice-versa; many accused the Quakers; some the Roman Catholics, but more rarely. It was an accusation easily made, fully credited by many, and nearly impossible to repel. The Irish records seem free from the loathsome obscenity of witch depositions elsewhere.

We may take exception to the inclusion of apparitions, such as those at Castleconnel, Portadown, Tipperary, and before the capture of Limerick, as acts of witchcraft. Nor was the calling of Margaret Burke

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(1) Even John Knox was said to have accidentally raised the Devil.
at the first place to be wife of the enchanted Earl of Desmond to be
classed as such. It is new to find the "rebel Earl" of Desmond, who
was crushed by the captains of Elizabeth, identified as the enchanted
Earl dwelling under Lough Gur. Yet we cannot be ungrateful to the
author for catering "items not on the menu," or for here and there
falling into one of the endless pitfalls in a new unworked field.

One story might have been written by Mr. M. R. James, in the
tale of Count Magnus in "Ghost tales of an Antiquary," so finely
suggestive is its sequel. The dying man, speechless for 24 hours; the
cHEST unlocking itself and opening without hands, before the terrified
bystanders, and the nearly dead man's words—"you say true, you say
true, you are in the right, I'll be with you by and by"—exceeds most of
the present-day "materially supernatural" tales of terror. The relic of
the Holy Cross, at that famous Abbey, cured a woman tortured by
magic spells. Even then there was balm in Gilead, and if all believed
that the powers of Hell were openly at work in those days, men could
also believe in the equally visible interposition of Heaven, which in
every age has given to the good and the merciful gifts of healing for the
benefit of the afflicted, and power "to destroy the works of the Devil."

The eighteenth century came, but even the reign of "Good Queen
Anne" was stained by a sorcery trial, the notorious one of Island Magee.
It is noteworthy that one judge charged the jury that there was no case,
the other, however, charged in a manner more consonant with their
prejudices, and the prisoners were found guilty. It was the last trial for
witchcraft as such in Ireland, and took place in 1710. The prisoners
were pilloried, pelted and imprisoned. The last condemnation in
England was two years later, but the witch was reprieved; the last witch
trial was under the present dynasty in 1717. Scotland was less
enlightened, a woman was condemned, strangled, and burned so late as
1722. The alleged burning of a woman for witchcraft in Ireland in
1786 really took place at Glaris in Switzerland, and should be noted as
an unfounded slander on our nation. An Irish prelate, Hutchinson,
Bishop of Down and Connor, four years before his elevation, wrote, in
1718, a strenuous book against this horrible belief which he probably
did much to discredit, even with juries and judges. During the 19th
century witchcraft, or rather violence, crimes and threats arising from it,
has occasionally brought (and may hereafter bring) persons into the
frip of the law. Most of these cases are connected with "taking" milk
and butter. We find a case of the "hand of Glory" (the horrible
corpse-hand with the candle) in 1831 (2). The terrible witch-burning
case near Clonmel took place in 1895. So late as 1911 one wretched
old woman was killed as a witch. The belief is very far from dead (3),
and it might only take a few angry and credulous people to carry out
a sentence of death any time without the sanction of the law.

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A DICTIONARY OF IRISH ARTISTS.
BY WALTER G. STRICKLAND.
(Dublin—Maunsell and Co., Limited).

This useful work may claim notice in our Journal from the fact
that in recording the lives of Irish artists, it becomes, in a sense, a
history of Irish art. The author has been most comprehensive in the
list of names included, for he travels so far afield as to include the
illuminators of the ancient MSS. in the seventh century; and it appears
odd to find "Columba," the artist of the Book of Durrow, sandwiched
between "Wellington Colomb" and "John Comerford" artists of the
nineteenth century. The setting appears almost incongruous, and it
might have been better if the artists before the twelfth century were
dealt with in an appendix; at present the identity of some of those
famous early workers in stone and metal work, as well as illuminating,
is lost amongst a crowd of mediocrities of modern times.

Irish art may be said to have reached its zenith by the end
of the twelfth century, after which it weakened and died, and for it
there appears to have been no Renaissance. Mr. Strickland has
included in his work artists of Irish birth who have worked out of
Ireland, as well as artists of other nationalities who have worked in

(2) The corpse-hand for bringing butter was still used in Co. Clare and Tipperary
after 1890. The author does not give the still more disgusting "cutting of the
Spansel," practised at Gress, Co. Mayo, in the last century (Caesar Otway's "Erris,"
p. 90, 1841).

(3) See Proc., R.I.A., Vol. XXXI., Clare Island Survey (Part 2, pp. 43) and
Ireland, and in that way this country is connected with many names, eminent in art, which would have been omitted, if the work was confined to Irish-born artists working in Ireland. Architects are not included, though it is difficult to explain why; some architects, who were also painters, are noticed of necessity, but it would have been better to include all. The author states he intends to publish in a separate volume the lives of Irish architects. The difficulties in collecting so much information, on a subject which has received so little attention in Ireland, must have been considerable, and the author is to be congratulated on succeeding so well; though there are still many names—particularly of men who died late in the last century—of whom it might be expected that more information was available. It is to be hoped this want will be supplied in future editions.

During the eighteenth century Art appeared to have awakened to a new life in Ireland, but at its close, and on the opening of the nineteenth century, political changes dealt it a crushing blow. After some years an attempt was made to revive it throughout the country; in 1843 the Belfast Arts Society was formed; in 1850 the Cork School of Design was founded; in 1852 and 1854 Schools of Art were formed in Waterford and Clonmel, but were closed eventually. The Committee of the Limerick Institution memorialised the Board of Trade, and had a School of Art established in Limerick in 1852, which was successfully carried on, and ultimately merged in the Municipal Technical Schools. Such is the history of Art in the Irish provinces; a history of struggle, marked by success in some cases, but showing clearly at all times a want of that impelling force by which victory is secured.

Outside Dublin, which is naturally first, Cork holds the position of honour as the birth-place of Irish artists, Belfast and the north claim a fair share, and the County Kilkenny has not a few. Of the natives of Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary it may be interesting to the members of the N.M.A.S. to learn some particulars from these interesting volumes. The names are taken in the alphabetical order in which they appear in the Dictionary, but the excerpts given in each case are condensed, and limited.

Francis Bindon (d. 1765), Portrait Painter
Was the fourth son of David Bindon of Cloney, Co. Clare, M.P. for Ennis, by his wife, Dorothy, daughter of Samuel Burton of Buncraggy,
Co. Clare. But little is known of his life; he appears to have been an architect and portrait painter. He painted several notable personages including Dean Swift, and designed many important buildings such as Woodstock, Bessborough, Castle Morris, Co. Kilkenny, and many others. He died suddenly, 2nd June, 1765.

**Samuel Frederick Burton (b. 1786, d. ?), Landscape Painter**

Was born on 2nd October, 1786. He was descended from Thomas Burton, one of the two sons of Sir Edward Burton of Longnor, Shropshire, who settled in Ireland, 1610. He was possessed of landed property in the counties of Limerick and Clare, and practised landscape painting in oils as an amateur. He was a member of the Society of Artists of the city of Dublin. By his wife, Hannah, daughter of Robert Mallet, an engineer in Dublin, he had four sons—1st, Edward William, surgeon in the 38th Regiment; 2nd, Robert Nathaniel, vicar of Borris in Carlow; 3rd, Frederick William the artist; 4th, John Bindon.

**Sir Frederick William Burton, R.H.A. (b. 1816, d. 1900), Water-colour Painter**

Was born on 8th April, 1816, at Corofin House, Co. Clare, son of the last-named artist, Samuel Frederick Burton. He learned drawing from the Brocas Brothers in Dublin. He made rapid progress in his art, and, at the age of 21, exhibited three portraits at the Royal Hibernian Academy. He painted in water colour only; many of his pictures exhibited at the Water Colour Society, and the Royal Academy, are well known from the engravings of them. He had an unequalled knowledge of the history of art, and the work of great painters, acquired by extended study on the continent, and was appointed Director of the National Gallery in 1874.

In Ireland he will be best known and remembered for his intimacy and friendship with such antiquaries as Petrie, Bishop Graves, Dr. Todd, Lord Dunraven, Samuel Ferguson, O'Donovan and O'Curry, and as one of the founders of the Archaeological Society of Ireland.

He died in Kensington, 16th March, 1900. About 120 of his pictures are recorded in the Dictionary.

**Henry Begley (fl. 1862-1890), Landscape and Subject Painter.**

It is strange that of this artist—so well known in Limerick up to a recent date—no particulars are given beyond that—"he was an exhibitor at the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1862 to 1870 while he lived in
Dublin," and "afterwards from 1877 to 1883 when he was in Limerick," and that "he was living as late as 1890." We may add that Henry Begley was an amateur; he was Clerk of the Court of Probate in Dublin, and afterwards, Registrar of the Probate Court in Limerick. He died at Limerick in 1895 in his seventy-sixth year. His paintings were hard in outline, and he was not successful as a colourist. Some of his pictures are still in Limerick.

Richard Staunton Cahill (b. about 1827, d. 1904), Figure Painter. Was born in Co. Clare about 1827. He exhibited in the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1851, and in the Royal Academy in 1854-1855, and in the Royal Hibernian Academy again down to 1886. The particulars given of this artist are very brief.

Timothy Collopy (fl. 1777-1810), Portrait Painter. A native of Limerick, where he began life as a baker's apprentice. Father Walsh, an Augustinian, organised a subscription to have him sent to Rome to study Art. He remained in Rome some years, and then returned to Limerick, where he was engaged portrait painting. He was in Dublin 1777-1780, and went to London about 1783 and exhibited at the Royal Academy 1786-1788. Only five of his pictures are recorded in the Dictionary, amongst them are: Portrait of Gerald Griffin, Corporation of Limerick. The Ascension, Painted in 1782, Augustinian Convent, Limerick. Cupid, in John Morton's Collection, sold in Limerick, January, 1900.

—Frith—(fl. c. 1840), Silhouettist.

An artist of this name was working in Cork and Limerick about 1840. His portraits are generally cut in black paper. No particulars of him appear to be available, perhaps some member of our Society, may know something of him and his work.

P. J. L. [TO BE CONTINUED].