





FROM AN OLD PAINTING PRESERVED IN THE MONASTERY OF OSSEK, BOHEMIA.

# LIFE OF ST. MALACHY

BY

AILBE J. LUDDY, *O.Cist.*

**Dublin**

M. H. GILL AND SON, LTD.,

50 UPPER O'CONNELL STREET

1930

**Nihil Obstat :**

FR. STANISLAUS HICKEY, *O.Cist.*

FR. AUGUSTINUS ARCAND, *O.Cist.*

**Imprimatur :**

FR. HERMAN-JOSEPH SMETS,

*Abbas Generalis O.Cist.*

Die 18° Novembris, 1930.

**Imprimatur :**

† BERNARDUS,

*Episcopus Waterfordiensis et Lismorensis.*

Die 18° Novembris, 1930.

*Printed and Bound in Ireland at the Press of the Publishers.*

To His Eminence  
Joseph Cardinal MacRory,  
Successor of SS. Patrick and Malachy  
In the Primacy  
of Armagh,  
This Life of St. Malachy is  
Respectfully and humbly  
Inscribed.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD .. .. .	vii
INTRODUCTION .. .. .	ix
CHAPTER I	
Malachy's Family—His Childhood and early Education ..	1
CHAPTER II	
The Patrician Church Organisation—Gilbert, Celsus, and Malchus—Rathbreasail—Malachy becomes a Disciple of Ivor O'Hagan—Ordained Deacon—Reproached by his Sister .. .. .	8
CHAPTER III	
Malachy ordained Priest—Vicar-General of Armagh—Reformer—Visit to Malchus at Lismore—Death and Apparitions of his Sister—Appointed Abbot of Bangor—First Miracles .. .. .	22
CHAPTER IV	
Malachy appointed Bishop of Down—State of the Diocese—Reform—Second Visit to Lismore—Driven from Bangor—Foundation of Iveragh—Death of Celsus—Primate .. .. .	31
CHAPTER V	
Maurice succeeded by Niall—Conspirators punished—Malachy installed Primate—The Staff of Jesus and the Book of Armagh carried off and recovered—Malachy resigns and appoints Gelasius as his Successor	

## CHAPTER VI

	PAGE
Malachy returns to Down—Death of Christian—Death of King Cormac—Malachy contemplates a Journey to Rome—Opposition of Clergy and People—Meeting with Sycarus and St. Waltheof—Visit to Clairvaux—Meeting with Pope Innocent—Petitions—Second Visit to Clairvaux—Miraculous Cure of Prince Henry .. ..	53

## CHAPTER VII

Saint Bernard's first Letter to St. Malachy—Malachy as Papal Legate—His Poverty, Humility and General Character—Miracles and Prophecies—Fasting against the King—Taming the Shrew .. .. .	66
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER VIII

Saint Bernard's second and third Letters—Mellifont and its Filiations—Albin O'Molloy—Healy on the Cistercians in Ireland .. .. .	81
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER IX

Malachy predicts the Place and Time of his Death—Extricated from a Difficulty—Detained in England—Clairvaux again—Illness and Death—Miracle after Death—Bernard's Letter to Irish Communities—Malachy's Relics .. .. .	94
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

## APPENDIX I

Saint Bernard's first Sermon on St. Malachy .. ..	123
Saint Bernard's second Sermon on St. Malachy .. ..	133

## APPENDIX II

Saint Malachy's Prophecies .. .. .	144
------------------------------------	-----

## APPENDIX III

Anniversary of the Foundation of Mellifont in 1142—Father Gannon's Discourse .. .. .	165
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----



## FOREWORD

**T**HIS *Life of St. Malachy*, such as it is, has been inspired by a sense of gratitude towards the great and holy Bishop who first introduced into Ireland the religious Family to which the Author has the happiness to belong. The time, moreover, appears opportune for the publication of a new Biography. Diligent inquiry has brought to light the almost incredible fact that—apart from the Catholic Truth booklet—there is at present no *Life* of this illustrious Saint available for the English reader. The valuable works of O'Hanlon and O'Laverty have most unfortunately been permitted to go out of print. We may, therefore, entertain the hope that our little Volume will not only serve as a long-delayed tribute from an Irish Cistercian to an eminent benefactor of his Order, but will also fill a gap in Irish hagiography.

In compiling the work, we have, of course, drawn most extensively from St. Bernard's classic *Vita*, but we have also carefully consulted other ancient authors likely to prove helpful, particularly our native Annalists. Amongst modern publications, we must acknowledge our special indebtedness to Dr. Lawlor's scholarly work, *St. Malachy of Armagh*, Coleman's *Memoirs of Armagh*, MacCarthy's *Annals of Ulster*, and Kenney's *Sources for the Early History of Ireland*. The Rev. Professor Power, University College,

Cork, and the Rev. Myles Ronan, Dun Laoghaire, have assisted us with their expert knowledge in the solution of some historical difficulties. Rev. Father Duggan, S.T.L., M.A., Cork, has also rendered important help by his painstaking reading of the proofs and by his valuable suggestions.

Finally, our best thanks are due and hereby tendered to His Eminence Cardinal MacRory for granting us the great privilege of adorning our front page with a name so illustrious and so deservedly dear to all Irishmen.

MOUNT MELLERAY ABBEY,

*Feast of St. Malachy, 1930.*

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE period 492-795, that is, from the death of our National Apostle to the coming of the Norsemen, has been called the Golden Age of the Irish Church. And not without reason. During those three centuries Ireland presented the closest approximation to the ideal of a Christian State that this world has even seen. The seed sown by Patrick, "falling upon good ground, sprung up and yielded fruit a hundred-fold." In the history of religion can be found nothing comparable to the generous enthusiasm with which the Irish people welcomed and put in practice the faith of Christ. Multitudes of the neophytes, both men and women, not content to purchase heaven at the lowest price, entered immediately upon the steep and narrow path of Christian perfection. Along with this yearning after a life of holiness, there was also excited in souls an insatiable thirst for knowledge. And with such zeal and success were both these objects pursued that the country soon became known as the Island of Saints and Scholars.

Although monks have played an important part in the establishment or development of Christianity in many lands, history will justify us in speaking of the early Irish Church as pre-eminently a monastic Church. You will hardly find one amongst its myriad Saints that was not trained in the cloister.

From the very beginning of our Christianity, as indeed ever since, despite the vivaciousness of the national character, monasticism made a powerful appeal to religious-minded Gaels. Hence, even before the close of the fifth century, we see great monasteries and convents springing up as if by magic in every part of the country. Many of them were inhabited by thousands of fervent souls. And in these communities might be found nobles and princes, even sovereign rulers, who for the love of God had renounced all worldly advantages to put themselves on a level with rustics and serfs.

As a rule, the monastic institution became in time a busy seat of learning, where the religious freely imparted the knowledge they had acquired. The numbers of students attending some of these schools would undoubtedly appear incredible had we nothing but native testimony to rely upon. But the evidence of our ancient annalists is fully corroborated by the statements of unprejudiced witnesses, such as Venerable Bede. And the students came not alone from every part of Ireland, but from various Continental countries, from Rome itself and even from Egypt, as we learn from the *Felire* of St. Aengus. There was welcome for all, and everything was given gratis: books, food and lodging, as well as instruction. For this also we have the testimony of Bede, who further informs us that the young Anglo-Saxons, his compatriots, were treated with particular favour. In Armagh they had a third part of the town assigned for their residence, called the Trian Saxon. As late as 1169 we find the Ard-Ri Rory

O'Connor making liberal provision for the support of these students from Alba. Alas for human ingratitude! Within a very few years other natives of Alba were to visit Armagh, not for the sake of its sanctity and learning, but to burn its churches and schools and to pour out like water the blood of its teachers. They would come from the fertile South, leaving behind them ruin and desolation. And that would be but the beginning of woes. A day was to come when their descendants would put the same price upon the head of an Irish wolf and an Irish schoolmaster, and give God's wondering angels a new sight to see: the slow martyrdom of a nation.

As for the learning imparted in the Irish monastic schools, nothing equal to it could be found elsewhere in Christendom, not even at Rome. The Professors, writes Bishop Turner, were "not only the chief teachers of grammar, poetry, astronomy, music and geography when these branches had no other or scarcely any other representative in Europe, but they also profoundly influenced the course of medieval thought in matters of philosophy and theology. Their elucidation of the Gospel of St. John and their commentaries on the Epistles of St. Paul formed a new school of exegesis. . . . They introduced the Neo-Platonic point of view in metaphysical speculation, and carried the art of dialectic to a higher point than it had ever before attained. It is no exaggeration to say that they were the founders of scholasticism and that Ireland is the Iona of medieval philosophy." According to Cardinal Newman, "Philosopher in those days was almost synonymous

with Irish Monk." The curriculum included the classic languages, the various arts, and all that was then known under the name of science, sacred and profane. Modern savants, such as the Frenchman De Jubainville and the German Traube, tell us that at least in the ninth century Irishmen had the monopoly of Greek scholarship. Hebrew also must have been taught in some of the schools, as is evident from the writings of Augustine, Erigena, and King Cormac of Cashel. Amongst the decorative arts special attention was devoted to calligraphy and illumination. The specimens surviving show to what perfection they were brought. Says Westwood: "At a period when the fine arts may be said to be almost extinct in Italy and other parts of the Continent, nearly from the fifth to the end of the eighth century, the art of ornamenting MSS. had a perfection almost miraculous in Ireland." And in the judgment of another competent critic, Sir Edward O'Sullivan, the Book of Kells, produced about the middle of the ninth century, "occupies a position of abiding pre-eminence amongst the illuminated MSS. of the world." Much the same might be said of Irish sculpture and metal-work.

The work of teaching and preaching in their native country did not afford sufficient scope for the zeal of the Irish monks. Accordingly they issued forth from their peaceful cloisters and from the land of their birth, which they loved with a love inexpressible, to bring the light of life to the peoples that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. Not alone monks, but bishops also, were stricken with the divine

wander-lust. In every part of Europe they were to be met with, those peaceful crusaders, from the geysers and snows of Iceland to the shores of the Black Sea, from the Seine to the Dnieper. Well might they appropriate the words of the Mantuan Bard :

“ Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris ? ”

And whithersoever they went they founded monasteries and schools which radiated the light of faith and knowledge through all the surrounding districts. According to an ancient author quoted by Reeves, there were twenty-five Irish monasteries in Britain, seven in France, twelve in Armorica, seven in Lorraine, ten in Alsatia, sixteen in Bavaria, fifteen in Rhetia, Helvetia and Allemania. Of Irish missionaries, one hundred and fifty (of whom thirty-six are martyrs) have been raised to the honours of the altar in Germany, forty-five (six martyrs amongst them) in France, thirty in Belgium, thirteen in Italy, eight (all martyrs) in Norway and Iceland. Many of them also, as Dungal, Virgilius, Dicuil, Augustine and Marianus Scotus, won immortal fame by their services to science. Zimmer does them no more than justice when he says : “ They were instructors in every branch of science and learning of the time, possessors and bearers of a higher culture than was at that time to be found anywhere on the Continent, and they can surely claim to have been the pioneers—to have laid the corner-stone of Western culture on the Continent.” In the language of Renan, they were “ the scientific colonisers of Western Europe.” And Bellesheim affirms that not alone Britain, but

France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, owed their Christianity in large measure to Irish missionaries.

The close of the eighth century found the Irish Church at the zenith of its power and splendour. It possessed innumerable churches, monasteries and schools, a learned and devoted clergy, and exercised a dominant influence on social and domestic life. Everything seemed to augur well for a glorious future. Nevertheless, evil days were at hand. In the year 795 the Danes or Vikings made their first attack upon Ireland. It was only a piratical raid, and the marauders were content to escape with their booty. But they came back again and again, established strongholds at strategic points, and at last made it clear that they aimed at nothing less than the conquest of the whole island. The lack of union amongst the native princes favoured their design. How intense was the invaders' hatred of Christianity may be inferred from the fact that they made churches, schools, and monasteries special objects of attack, and, though ruthless towards all, they showed themselves particularly ruthless towards priests and monks, who were massacred without mercy wheresoever found.

For more than two centuries the struggle continued with varying fortune, until April 23rd, 1014, when the sword of Brian and his brave Dalcassians broke for ever the Norseman's power. It is a high tribute to Irish generosity that after the victory of Clontarf the Danish towns of Dublin, Waterford and Limerick were in nowise molested. Their populations quietly accepted the new *régime* and submitted to the laws



of the land. In Dublin, at least, the majority of them had already become Christian. But if one in faith with their conquerors, they showed how far they were from being one in sympathy by sending their bishops for consecration, not to the successor of St. Patrick at Armagh, whose jurisdiction they disowned, but to the successor of St. Augustine at Canterbury.

War has always and inevitably a demoralising effect upon a nation. When people are inured to violence and bloodshed nice distinctions between what is lawful and what is not are apt to be overlooked. Moreover, the excitements and alarms of the time, the hourly appeals to passion and the often unavoidable intermission of religious duties, tend to call out all the animal in our nature. So we cannot reasonably expect that Ireland emerged from her conflict with the Danes on the same spiritual level as she entered it. Whilst the long struggle lasted it was no easy matter to recruit the ranks of the clergy, to rebuild the demolished schools and churches—Armagh was plundered and burned nine times—and to replace the books which the invaders loved to destroy. Nor was it much easier to do so after 1014. Brian's victory brought, no doubt, freedom from foreign oppression, but it did not bring peace. The period separating the defeat of the Danes from the advent of the Normans (1168) was occupied with a fierce contest between three families—the O'Briens of Munster, the MacLoughlins of Ulster and the O'Connors of Connacht—for the dignity of Ard-Ri. This war of Gael against Gael was marked with

sacrileges and atrocities quite equal to the worst attributed to the Norsemen. No wonder, then, that the opening of the twelfth century found religion and morality at a low ebb in some parts of Ireland. The great wonder was that anything at all survived of the old Christianity and culture. Yet, sad as was the spectacle which the country then presented, it had not fallen to the depths of demoralisation in which many another nation found itself after a much shorter period of warfare—France, for instance, after the Napoleonic wars. This must be borne in mind when we contemplate the ugly picture of twelfth century Ireland painted by St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

In order to preclude the necessity of long digressions further on, we shall here consider the abuses existing or alleged to exist in the Irish Church at this time. There is no question of doctrinal errors: "As ye are Christians, be ye also Romans," was St. Patrick's injunction to his beloved Irish children, and the words were never forgotten.

About the year 1075, Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury, to whose jurisdiction were subject the Danish settlements in Ireland, writing to the Ard-Ri, Turlough O'Brien, and his vassal, King Gothric of Dublin, implored them to put a stop to certain scandals reported to be prevalent in the Irish Church. The scandals were these: (1) the omission of chrism in the administration of Baptism; (2) the practice of simony; (3) consecration of bishops by a single prelate; (4) marriage within the forbidden degrees; (5) such a contempt for the sanctity of marriage that not only did men divorce their wives, but were in

the habit of exchanging them. Some twenty years later Lanfranc's successor, St. Anselm, complained of the same abuses in letters addressed to King Murtough O'Brien, adding to the list the unreasonable multiplication of Irish bishops for whom there was no diocese or only churches of small importance, a practice which he considered calculated to bring the episcopal office into contempt.

Now, with regard to the first of these charges, it may be pointed out that the use of chrism neither belonged to the essence of Baptism nor was it prescribed as yet by any general law of the Church. In early times when Baptism used to be administered ordinarily by a bishop, it was the custom to confirm the baptised without delay. But when the practice of postponing Confirmation came into vogue, the anointing with chrism, essential to this Sacrament, was in many places retained as part of the ritual of Baptism also. But the Irish Church did not adopt the anointing as a baptismal ceremony until the twelfth century. The charge of simony seems to have been well founded, as we find the Synod of Kells legislating against it in 1152. Yet anybody familiar with the writings of St. Bernard will be disposed to doubt if this vice could have been more widespread in Ireland than elsewhere. The large number of Irish bishops<sup>1</sup> in the twelfth and preceding centuries as well as the consecrations by a single prelate can be partly explained with reference to the fact (which appears

---

<sup>1</sup> St. Aengus mentions 141 places in Ireland each of which possessed at the same time *seven* bishops. Cf. Todd, *S. Patrick*, p. 35.

to have escaped the English primates) that the institution of rural bishops (chorepiscopi), abolished elsewhere, continued still in Ireland. These ecclesiastics made their first appearance at the end of the third century in Asia Minor, whence they soon spread throughout the Church. Although called bishops, it is doubtful if they had, at least as a rule, more than priestly orders. In accordance with a decree of the Council of Antioch (341), they were ordained by the diocesan and assisted him in the administration, usually by taking charge of outlying country districts. It is supposed they were introduced into Ireland by St. Patrick himself, which would render intelligible the statement of St. Aengus that the Apostle conferred their orders on "seven times fifty holy bishops"—the Tripartite puts the number up to 370, cf. Healy's *Life of S. Patrick*, p. 550. At the same time it must be admitted that the number of dioceses in this country as compared with other nations, was excessive. Moreover, these Irish dioceses lacked territorial definition, a most serious inconvenience. We shall see the National Synod of Rathbreasail in 1110 putting a stop to this anomalous state of things.

Ecclesiastical legislation on the forbidden degrees of kindred has undergone a good deal of change in the course of the centuries. The divine positive law, as laid down in *Leviticus*, ch. xviii, does not extend the prohibition beyond the second degree, nor even entirely to that. It is possible that the primitive Church contented herself with the same measure of strictness. But she became more rigorous as time

went on, accommodating herself to the Roman civil law, and in the eighth century her forbidden degrees included the seventh: not all, however, were considered diriment impediments. Before St. Malachy's time, and even down to the Synod of Cashel (1172), the only forbidden degrees generally acknowledged by the Irish were those specified in *Leviticus*, with which, by the way, the Justinian code was at one in this respect. It would have been extremely difficult to carry out the common law in Ireland on account of the marriage restrictions imposed by the clan system. Even where no such system prevailed the difficulty of observing the seven degrees was so great that Innocent III, in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), reduced them to four; recent legislation has still further narrowed the prohibition, limiting it to the third degree. Cf. Gilmartin, *Manual of Church History*, II, p. 415.

There was another peculiarity about Irish marriages which, although it is not mentioned by either Lanfranc or St. Anselm, must have been in St. Bernard's mind when he accused the Irish of not contracting legitimate marriages. It was ignorance of the same that led Cambrensis (Gerald Barry) to affirm that the institution of marriage did not exist amongst the Irish. The ancient canons distinguished two kinds of espousals, *sponsalia de futuro* and *sponsalia de praesenti*—the marriage proper. The former, called now espousals simply or betrothal, was a solemn contract, made before witnesses and accompanied with elaborate ceremonies and the sacerdotal benediction, by which the parties

pledged themselves to unite with each other in marriage within a definite time. Violation of this contract was punished by Church and State as severely as violation of the marriage bond. Hence, in the early middle ages the opinion became current that this contract, when followed by cohabitation, sufficed for the validity of marriage, so that the second was regarded as superfluous. Certain decrees of Popes Alexander III and Gregory IX could be cited in confirmation of this view. (Cf. Lanigan's *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, Vol. IV, pp. 70-72 and 88.) Now, it was in this way the Irish and some other Christian peoples, not to mention the Jews, used to celebrate their marriages. The custom was retained in some parts of Ireland to the end of the sixteenth century.

Coming now to the archbishop's most serious indictment, viz., a contemptuous disregard for the sacredness of the marriage bond, we confess to a feeling of scepticism with respect to this accusation. If there had really been a widespread habit of the kind it must have vanished very quickly without leaving a trace, since neither of the National Synods, Rathbreasail, 1110, and Kells, 1152, apparently made reference to it, nor is it mentioned by so well-informed a writer as St. Bernard, who certainly does not mince his words when denouncing the faults of the Irish. Yet experience shows that it takes time and persevering efforts to extirpate such moral disorders. We may therefore conclude that the Archbishop's informant exaggerated, at least, if he did not invent. Slandering the Irish was even then

a pleasurable and profitable employment amongst those who owed to them what Christianity and civilisation they possessed. A little later we find Brompton of Jorval gravely informing his readers that in Ireland every father baptised his own children by immersing them thrice in milk or water, according as the family was rich or poor! <sup>1</sup> (Cf. Bellesheim: *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche in Irland*, Erster Band, s. 383.)

It is an astonishing thing, and shows how ill-informed were Lanfranc and his successor with regard to conditions in Ireland, that whilst complaining of abuses which were either non-existent or wildly exaggerated, neither of them said a word about the monstrous and manifest scandal of lay abbots and bishops, for centuries the plague of the Irish Church. At the very time when they were writing their reproaches, the primatial see was occupied by laymen, the brothers Moeliosa and Domnald, who bore in succession the titles of coarb of Patrick and archbishop of Armagh, as did their father before them. This abuse, so vigorously denounced by St. Bernard, seems to have owed its development, if not its origin, to the Danish wars. Sometimes the family of the founder of a church or

---

<sup>1</sup> Another story current in England at the time was that in baptising their male infants the Irish "used a damnable superstition" to prevent the grace of the Sacrament from flowing into the right arm, "to the intent that it might give a more ungracious and deadly blow." For further gems of this kind the reader is referred to Gerald Barry's *Hibernia Expugnata* and Campion's *History of Ireland*, both of which belong to the same class of historical works as *Jack the Giant-Killer* or *Gulliver's Travels*.

monastery claimed perpetual proprietary rights therein, and insisted that one of its members should always be the bishop or abbot. This right was actually secured to them by law: "The tribe of the patron Saint shall always succeed to the church as long as there shall be a person fit to be an abbot (or bishop) of the said tribe; even though there should be but a psalm-singer of them it is he that shall obtain the abbacy (or bishopric)."—(*Senchus Mor*, Vol. III, 73.) Sometimes a cathedral or abbey entrusted its temporalities to the management of a layman, generally a neighbouring chief, who, after deducting from the revenues what was needed to cover the expenses of his charge, was to hand over the remainder to the bishop or abbot.<sup>1</sup> But in course of time these stewards—called coarbs or erenachs, according to the greater or lesser importance of the church—came to look upon themselves as the real owners of the church lands, with the obligation of contributing a certain annual sum towards the sustenance of the clergy or community. The contribution, needless to say, was often withheld for one reason or another. But the

---

<sup>1</sup> "The established rule of succession to an Irish abbacy was that the abbot should be selected from the kindred of the founder; if they could not provide a qualified person, the selection was to be made from the kindred of the secular prince who had granted the land on which the monastery was built; next from among the monks of the church; and then in order from various other classes which were duly specified. But in practice the local ruling family usually got, sooner or later, complete control of the office, and by a lax interpretation of the qualifications required, converted it into their permanent possession."—(*The Sources for the Early History of Ireland*, by James F. Kenney, Ph.D., p. 748.)



usurpers did not content themselves always with appropriating the temporalities, they often assumed the title of bishop or abbot, even when married men, employing regularly consecrated prelates to discharge the spiritual functions attached to the office. For two hundred years the See of Patrick was thus made the hereditary possession of a family of usurpers; eight of the pseudo-archbishops (who called themselves the coarbs of Patrick) had no orders whatever, and belonged to the married state.

One of the least of the evil consequences of this intolerable system (which also existed in Wales, as *Cambrensis* testifies), was the state of beggary to which the clergy were reduced. The Norman ecclesiastics who came over with Henry II were amazed at the poverty of the Irish bishops. Who has not heard the touching story of Primate Gelasius and his one white cow, on the milk of which he lived and which he used to drive before him on his journeys?

An irregularity connected with the administration of Baptism was that parents often neglected to bring their infants to the baptismal font in the parochial church, and had the ceremony performed either in private oratories or in their homes. This was one of the most serious disorders which occupied the attention of the Synod of Cashel convened by Henry II to find some excuse for his presence in Ireland.

The diversity of liturgies in the Irish Church of the twelfth century was so great that almost every diocese had an Office of its own. Before St. Malachy's time,

Gilbert, bishop of Limerick, and papal legate, had endeavoured, at the request of some of his brethren in the episcopate, to put an end to that abuse by pleading for the universal adoption of the Roman Office. He composed, with this purpose in view, a learned treatise entitled: *De Statu Ecclesiae*. But his efforts were not altogether successful.

These, if not all, are the principal irregularities with which the Irish Church of the twelfth century has been reproached. If even after deducting exaggerations and falsehoods the residue of fact appears humiliating enough, let us recall that the country had just then passed through three centuries of fearful and incessant warfare. And even thus, the impartial student of history will, we think, agree with Dr. Lanigan's conclusion: "On the whole, notwithstanding the great relaxation of discipline, etc., in some parts of Ireland, the greatest portion of the Irish Church was, even before the times of Celsus and St. Malachy, as pure as any other national Church of the period, which might be shown from St. Bernard's own writings."—(*Eccles. Hist.*, iv, 36-7.)

## CHAPTER I

### MALACHY'S FAMILY—HIS CHILDHOOD AND EARLY EDUCATION

**M**AOLMHAODHOG UA MORGAIR, anglicised Malachy O'Morgair, or O'More, died on the night of November 1st, 1148, in the fifty-fourth year of his age. Consequently, he must have been born either in 1094 or 1095. There is also some uncertainty with regard to his birthplace. Writers usually take it for granted that this honour belongs to the city of Armagh. Saint Bernard, however, does not say that he was born there, but only that he was there brought up—*alitus*. Be this as it may, the child of destiny began life surrounded with every advantage both spiritual and temporal. His illustrious panegyrist, the great Abbot of Clairvaux, informs us that he belonged to a noble and powerful family. This would ordinarily mean that his father was one of those proud and warlike chieftains who could claim more familiarity with forays and battles than with the arts of peace. But Mugron O'Morgair had nothing in common with the wild clan-captain. He was a man of culture and learning, occupying the position of lay-professor in the great school of Armagh. The Four Masters describe him as "chief Lector of Armagh and of all the west of Europe."—(*ad an.* 1102.)

It may seem strange to find a man of Mugron's rank engaged in the business of teaching. But the Irish of that and preceding ages did not regard the instruction of youth as simply a means of gaining one's livelihood, but rather as something to be loved for its own sake, as a noble exercise of patriotism, philanthropy, or charity. Hence, even sovereign princes were proud to act as professors; for instance, Fedlemidh MacCrimthan, king of Munster, in the ninth century, and his successor, Cormac MacCulinan, at the beginning of the tenth.

Nor is the Annalists' high-sounding eulogy so extravagant as it may seem. Prior to the year 795, the school of Armagh, founded about 445, first in eminence as well as in origin amongst our Irish seats of learning, had certainly no equal in Europe, east or west. During the Danish wars it was plundered and burned several times, only to rise again, phoenix-like, from its ashes. But although it managed to carry on in spite of dangers and difficulties, the attendance naturally dwindled, since foreign students, heretofore numerous represented in its lecture-halls, could no longer approach the coast of Ireland except at the peril of their lives. After Clontarf, notwithstanding the interminable civil war, the influx of aliens became as great as ever. The great school recovered its prestige at home as well as abroad: there was actually a law prohibiting the teaching of theology in any part of Ireland by anyone, no matter how well qualified he might be, who had not studied some time in its halls. The professor who filled the principal chair of theology in such an

institute might be called, without any bombastic hyperbole, "chief Lector of all the west of Europe." And we may safely assume that Mugron O'Morgair would not have been appointed, layman as he was, to so important a position unless he were as distinguished for probity of life as for profundity of learning. Archbishop Healy gives him the title of Blessed.—(*Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*, p. 121.)

Thus happy in his father, our Saint was not less so in his mother. Her name unfortunately has not been transmitted to us. There is evidence that she belonged to a powerful family resident in the neighbourhood of Bangor, Co. Down, which claimed proprietary rights in the famous monastery founded by St. Comgall. According to St. Bernard, she united with the nobility which comes from illustrious descent that higher nobility due to the possession of rare mental endowments. She bore her husband at least three children, two sons, Gillachrist, the elder, and Maolmhaodhog,<sup>1</sup> and a daughter, who, like her mother, is nameless: if there were others, they have left no trace in history. Whether the family resided in Armagh at the time of Malachy's birth, which seems the more probable view, or removed thither later, they certainly had their home there very soon after that event. And what a happy home that must have been, presided over by Christian love and pervaded by an atmosphere of piety and culture!

---

<sup>1</sup> Gillachrist means Servant of Christ; it is anglicised Christian. Maolmhaodhog signifies one dedicated to St. Maodhog, who was the first bishop of Ferns.

In 1102, when Malachy was seven or eight years of age, a great affliction befell the family by the premature death of Mugron. The bereaved wife and children had not even the consolation of receiving his last blessing, for he died far from home in the land of the Dalcassians. The Four Masters chronicle his death, under year 1102, as follows: "Mugron O'Morgair, chief Lector of Armagh and of all the west of Europe, departed this life on the third of the Nones of October at Mungret in Munster." As to what brought the eminent professor so far south we can only conjecture. Probably the long journey was undertaken in the interests of education, for Mungret also had a celebrated school, which owed its foundation to St. Nessian and its fame to St. Munchin the Wise.

Divine Providence manifests itself to us as a happy combination of sweetness and strength: "it reacheth from end to end mightly and ordereth all things sweetly."—(*Wisdom*, viii, 1.) Human parents, as a visible providence, appear to possess the same two attributes divided between them: we naturally associate softness with motherhood, whilst the idea of fatherhood suggests just as naturally a certain degree of austerity. Both qualities are indeed essential to good government. Hence, when children happen to be deprived at an early age of one or other parent, there often appears a lack of symmetry in their characters, because their training has been one-sided. They have been either cramped by the sternness of the father or spoiled by the mother's indulgence. But the widow of Mugron O'Morgair

did not spoil her fatherless children. Even before her bereavement she had charged herself personally with the responsibility of their moral and religious education. Keenly appreciative though she was of the advantages of profane learning, she despised it as dross when compared with the knowledge of Christ and His teaching. Their secular education she entrusted to pious and competent masters, not difficult to find in a city like Armagh.

As Malachy distinguished himself at home by the readiness with which he assimilated the sentiments of piety inculcated by his mother, so did he surpass all his companions in the exercises of the schoolroom. Wondrously beautiful is the portrait of the young scholar presented us by the great Abbot of Clairvaux. Even at this early age he felt a strong attraction for a life of prayer, mortification, and solitude. He was never so happy as when pouring out his heart before the altar in some of the many sanctuaries of his native, or home, town; but as his studies and the dread of appearing singular prevented him from visiting the churches as often as he would have liked, he endeavoured to make up for this by the constant practice of ejaculatory prayer. One of his teachers was accustomed to recreate himself with frequent walks into the country as far as a certain village, and usually chose Malachy as his companion in these excursions. The boy would have preferred, doubtless, to give the time to his devotions or studies, but could not well refuse. He contrived, however, to keep his soul in the presence of God by repeated aspirations, and to avoid attracting his companion's

attention he would from time to time fall back a pace or two and, thus unseen, lift up his hands with his heart to the Lord: for, with true Celtic instinct, he felt no satisfaction in prayer unless accompanied with appropriate bodily gesture. Humbly obedient and respectful to superiors, he showed himself ever obliging, courteous, even deferential, to the least of his comrades. And the charm of his personality was so wonderful that he became a favourite with all. Although he found no pleasure in the usual boyish sports and pastimes, we may be sure he was too kind-hearted not to take part in these innocent amusements whenever sociability or charity suggested it. Austerity of manner has nothing in common with saintship.

One incident of his boyhood days is particularly stressed by St. Bernard, mindful, as we may suppose, of a somewhat similar experience he had himself in early life with some of the teachers at Châtillon. It shows us that if Malachy possessed the simplicity of the dove he was likewise endowed with the wisdom of the serpent. Amongst the many learned professors living in Armagh, there was one who enjoyed a very high reputation as a teacher of the liberal arts.<sup>1</sup> Malachy arranged to take lessons from him. But at his first visit he found the professor employed in making drawings of a dubious character, which so disgusted the young student that he fled precipitately

---

<sup>1</sup> In the Continental schools of the period, the Liberal Arts comprised seven subjects arranged in two groups: the *trivium*, including grammar, rhetoric, and logic; and the *quadrivium*, including arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. What went by the name in Armagh, we cannot tell.



from the house and could never be prevailed upon to cross that threshold again.

Thus the precious years which other boys are wont to waste in pastimes and frivolities, Malachy employed in the diligent acquisition of virtue and knowledge, so that what the Evangelist says of the Saviour can be applied in due measure to him : as he advanced in age he advanced also in wisdom and grace with God and men.

## CHAPTER II

THE PATRICIAN CHURCH ORGANISATION — GILBERT, CELSUS, AND MALCHUS — RATHBREASAIL — MALACHY BECOMES A DISCIPLE OF IVOR O'HAGAN — ORDAINED DEACON—REPROACHED BY HIS SISTER

**A**FTER the conversion of the Irish, St. Patrick, wishing to interfere as little as possible with the social and political institutions of the country, made the clan-system the basis of the ecclesiastical organisation. For every tribe and sub-tribe—practically autonomous political units—he consecrated, we are told,<sup>1</sup> a church and a bishop; and as the clergy lived together,<sup>2</sup> the bishop usually became an abbot also, like Patrick himself, and his church a monastery. The ecclesiastical chief was chosen from the ruling family,<sup>3</sup> as his successors, too, should be, so long as a suitable person was to be found amongst its members, even though “he were only a psalm-singer.” If the territory of the clan happened to be very extensive, the bishop was given coadjutors—*chorepiscopi*—to assist him in the administration. To monasteries founded at a later period the same law of succession applied: none but members of

---

<sup>1</sup> Healy, *Life and Writings of St. Patrick*, 550.

<sup>2</sup> D'Alton, *Cath. Ency.*, art., *Ireland*.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes St. Patrick chose as bishops eminent bards or scholars, who, although not of princely rank, yet exercised a strong influence over the people. Cf. D'Alton, *ibid.*

the founder's or first abbot's family could be elected superior, and these only by their own kinsmen. This was the law of Tanistry, introduced from the social and political into the ecclesiastical order of things. Hence, Montalembert could say with something more than the semblance of truth that "the first great monasteries in Ireland were nothing else, to speak simply, than clans organised under a religious form."—(*Monks of the West*, III, 86.) The abbots became the spiritual rulers of the surrounding districts, even when, as often happened, they did not belong to the episcopate, in which case they would have a member of their communities promoted to episcopal Orders for the service of their churches. Such monastic bishops possessed no jurisdiction, but were subject to the abbot's authority, just as the other monks.

Six important consequences of this system merit our attention: bishops were multiplied beyond all precedent, dioceses lacked fixed limits, the independent status of the different churches led to variety in liturgy and discipline, churches and abbeys came to be looked upon as part of a family estate, there was always the danger of unworthy prelates being elected under the restrictions imposed by the law of Tanistry, lastly, the episcopal dignity became subordinate in a sense to the abbatial. In illustration of this last point, we may mention the fact that Irish bishops were wont to describe themselves as coarbs of abbots who had not been raised to episcopal rank. Thus, the bishops of Glendalough were called the coarbs of St. Kevin; the bishops of Derry, coarbs of

St. Columcille; the bishops of Clonmacnoise, coarbs of St. Ciaran. On the other hand, the coarbs of St. Patrick, archbishops though they were, seemed to prefer the title of abbots of Armagh. And Father O'Laverty has pointed out in his *Life of St. Malachy*, p. 30, that "it is a custom very common with the Irish Annalists to designate their bishops merely by the title of abbots." It is undeniable, therefore, that in spite of the absolute identity in all doctrinal matters, the early Irish Church differed widely from the English and Continental Churches as regards liturgy, discipline and external constitution. The differences continued to exist down to the twelfth century.

This condition of things did not escape the notice of the eagle-eyed pontiff, Pope St. Gregory VII, in obedience to whose instructions Archbishop Lanfranc, and after him St. Anselm, interested themselves in Irish ecclesiastical affairs. With a good deal of exaggeration, they described the manifold irregularities of the Irish Church, and called for their removal. The idea of reform, thus originated, was eagerly welcomed in Ireland by a group of ecclesiastics and laymen of high rank. Chief amongst them must be named Giolla Easpuig, *anglice* Gilbert, who, after having been abbot of Bangor,<sup>1</sup> Co. Down, became bishop of the Danish

---

<sup>1</sup> Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, Vol. IV., p. 23-25. Gilbert could have been only titular abbot and proprietor of the monastic estates, for there had been no community in Bangor for many a year, and the monastery itself was in ruins. The fact that he was coarb of St. Comgall proves him to have been a blood relation of St. Malachy, since this title was hereditary in the family of Malachy's mother.

city of Limerick about 1105, and some years later first papal legate in Ireland. He was a travelled man, an eminent scholar, and the intimate friend of the illustrious Doctor of the Church, St. Anselm, whose acquaintance he made at Rouen some time previous to his promotion to the episcopate. There is good reason to suspect that he owed the high honour of the legatine office to St. Anselm's influence with Pope Paschal II. It is not quite certain whether it was before or after his appointment as legate that he published, at the request of some of the Irish bishops, his celebrated treatise, *De Statu Ecclesiae*, in which he condemns in the strongest terms the bewildering variety of offices used in the churches of Ireland, and advocates the general adoption of the Roman liturgy. In the same work he describes with elaborate detail the hierarchial organisation of the churches abroad.

Another prominent reformer was Cellach, or Celsus, archbishop of Armagh (1105-1130). He belonged to a family in which for almost two centuries the primatial see had been regularly transmitted and possessed as by hereditary right. His grandfather, Moelisa, his granduncle, Domnall, and six other married laymen of his line had borne the titles of archbishop and coarb of Patrick. Celsus himself was a layman when "instituted archbishop in the place of Domnall," but he broke away from the bad tradition by having himself duly ordained and consecrated. The later acts of his episcopate did not belie the promise of its beginning, for he proved himself a man of sterling virtue, with nothing

more at heart than to put an end to the many abuses that disfigured his native Church.

Hardly less influential than the preceding, assuredly not less zealous in the cause of reform, was Moelisa or Malchus, first bishop of Waterford. An Irishman by birth and extraction, he made profession as a monk in the Benedictine monastery of Winchester, where the news of his election found him. He was consecrated at Canterbury by St. Anselm in 1096. Waterford certainly has every reason to be proud of the man who began its long line of illustrious prelates; for Malchus, as St. Bernard testifies, was distinguished amongst his coevals for wisdom and learning, but not less so for sanctity of life.

The bishops of Dublin, from Patrick (1074-1084) to Gregory (1121-1161), may be counted amongst those who were working for reform, since, as suffragans of Canterbury, they had no option but to carry out Canterbury ideas. It is certain, moreover, that Bishop Patrick gave an account of the Irish Church and its shortcomings to Gregory VII.

Amongst the laymen in favour of reform must be mentioned Turlough O'Brien, king of Munster, and his son Murtough, who became Ard-Ri.

In the year 1110 a great national Synod was held at a place called Rathbreasail,<sup>1</sup> probably in Westmeath, under the presidency of the papal legate,

---

<sup>1</sup> Following Lynch (*Cambrensis Eversus*, p. 37) and the best modern authorities, we assume that the names Rathbreasail, Usneach, and Fiadh-Mac-Aengussa have reference to one and the same Synod, that of 1110. Lanigan holds a different opinion.

Gilbert, and attended by more than fifty bishops,<sup>1</sup> between three and four thousand other ecclesiastics, and a large number of distinguished laymen, including King Murtough O'Brien. The result of the deliberations, so far as known, represented a triumph for the reforming party, although they were soon to learn that it is a much easier matter to pass reformatory decrees than to get them carried out in practice. Taking the English Church organisation as model, the Synod divided the country into two ecclesiastical provinces. The territory north of a straight line drawn between Dublin and Galway—Leath Chuinn—was distributed into thirteen dioceses, with Armagh, of course, as metropolis. The southern province—Leath Mogha—comprised the same number of sees with an archbishop at Cashel, who, however, should be subject to the coarb of Patrick. All twenty-six dioceses were approximately equal in extent, and in their limits, consequently, not coincident with the clan boundaries. Dublin was left dependent on Canterbury, as it had hitherto been.

It concerns our narrative to note that in the new list of dioceses Lismore and Waterford (as also Down and Connor, Wexford and Ferns, and other pairs) are mentioned disjunctively: Lismore *or* Waterford.<sup>2</sup> They were evidently to be united thenceforth, and the bishop given the option of establishing his see in one place or the other. Thereafter Malchus, so it would appear, resided at

---

<sup>1</sup> As it is said no bishop from Leinster or Connacht attended the Synod, we may infer that the episcopal order had about one hundred representatives in the whole of Ireland at the time.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Keating's *History*, Book II, ch. xxviii.

Lismore; it is as bishop of Lismore St. Bernard always refers to him.

Another important decree of the Synod was intended to protect Church property from the greed of unscrupulous laymen. It is passing strange, in view of Gilbert's ardent desire to see the Roman liturgy universally adopted, that we find no legislation on the point; but perhaps he considered that his ideas would materialise in a sense automatically under the new hierarchial arrangement. Stranger still is it that nothing seemingly was done to prevent the intrusion of laymen into abbeys and episcopal sees. Surely an attempt at reform which left the capital evil untouched was foredoomed to failure. Even the measures enacted could not be fully carried out. Instead of twenty-seven, we find thirty-eight dioceses in existence at the time of the Synod of Kells, 1152; whilst the appropriation of Church property by laics was one of the chief abuses that occupied the attention of the Synod of Cashel some twenty years later. Hence, we must conclude that the reform effected by Rathbreasail, strongly supported though it was by the secular power, was neither thorough nor lasting. The task it undertook Providence had reserved for other hands. It was not Gilbert or Celsus, but Malachy O'Morgair, who should deserve to be known as the Reformer of the Irish Church. Nor should he live to see her cured of all her disorders: his merit should be to have discovered and applied the remedy by bringing her into closer relations with Rome, which, as the Mother, so must ever remain the model and pattern of all the Churches.



The Rathbreasail decrees, although in many ways disappointing, were still, as we have said, a triumph for the reformers. It was no small gain and required no small courage to have so drastically reduced the number of episcopal sees. That the Synodists themselves anticipated difficulty in the execution of the decrees is evident from the solemn imprecation with which the proceedings concluded: "The cross of the comhorba of Peter and of his legate, that is, Giolla Easpuig, bishop of Luimneach; the cross of Giolla Ceallaigh, the comhorba of Patrick and primate of Ireland; the cross of Maoiliosa O Ainmire, archbishop of Cashel;<sup>1</sup> the crosses of all the bishops and of all the laity and clergy at this holy Synod of Rathbreasail against whomsoever shall transgress these decrees, and the malediction of them all on whomsoever shall oppose them."

---

<sup>1</sup> Keating's *History*, Book II, chapter xxviii (Dineen's Trans.) The Four Masters *ad annum* 1135 refer to Bishop Malchus of Waterford under the name of Maoiliosa Ua hAinmire. Hence, Dr. Lawlor, somewhat hastily, as it seems to us, identifies him with the third signatory of the Rathbreasail decrees, and concludes that he must have been transferred to Cashel sometime before 1110, probably in 1106, when that see was raised by Celsus (so far as depended on him) to the dignity of a metropolis: in fact, Malchus is represented as the first archbishop of Cashel. Lawlor's *S. Malachy*, pp. xxxvi, 18. But Keating (II, 297) mentions Maolmuire O'Dunain as archbishop of Cashel in 1106, evidently the first. Besides, Lawlor's theory would oblige us to suppose that Malchus was again transferred, between 1110 and 1121, from Cashel to Lismore, where Malachy found him. Lanigan, *Eccles. Hist.*, IV, 43, says that the Maoiliosa O'Ainmire who signed the decrees belonged to the O'Foghlada family, but called himself after his father, who bore the cognomen Ainmire. Both Maoiliosa and Ainmire appear to have been very common names in Ireland in the twelfth and preceding centuries. Rev. Professor Power, the distinguished historian of the diocese of Waterford and Lismore, does not believe that Malchus was ever archbishop of Cashel. Cf. also Kenney, *op. cit.*, p. 765.

We must now introduce to the reader a personage whose destiny it was, in a degree beyond all others, to influence the future of Malachy and, through him, of the Irish Church. We refer to the holy monk, Ivor O'Hagan. Of the early life of this remarkable man nothing is known. We meet him for the first time at the commencement of the twelfth century as abbot of a community in Armagh, and the confidential friend of Archbishop Celsus. But about the time of the Synod of Rathbreasail he lived as a recluse in a cell adjoining the great church of Armagh, devoting his time exclusively to prayer and the practice of penance. Saint Bernard describes him as "an inexorable chastiser of his body who spent his days and nights in the service of the Lord." No wonder people revered him as a saint. Malachy had scarcely entered his teens when he resolved to put himself under the spiritual direction of this man of God, to become in fact his disciple. As we find no further reference to his mother after his boyhood, we may suppose that she did not long survive that period. Perhaps it was her death inspired him with the resolution to withdraw from the world.

Whether Malachy lived with his master is uncertain. More probably he occupied a separate but nearby cell. Whatever about this, there can be no doubt that, despite his tender years and delicate constitution, he began to imitate faithfully his master's austere mode of life. Great was the astonishment of his friends and acquaintance when they heard of his conduct. Some cried scandal and some cried folly, but all disapproved, because all

regretted to see a youth, so amiable and richly-endowed, burying himself alive in a hermitage, and disappointing the promise of a brilliant and useful career in the world. "To what purpose this waste?" It is a question often asked and always for the same reason: "The sensual man perceiveth not those things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand it, because it is spiritually examined."—(I *Cor.* ii, 14.) And having no appreciation of spiritual things, the world, under pretence of zeal for the welfare of society, has for its real design to rob God of His glory.

Very often the first effect of grace in the soul is a sense of irritation. It disturbs our peace by its importunate urging to better things. The same is true, specially true of the external grace of good example. We feel it as a challenge: "Canst thou not do what these and those have been able to do?" Their fervour rebukes our lukewarmness. In the case of the well-disposed, this irritation quickly passes into admiration, and admiration results not seldom in imitation. So it was with St. Bernard's school friends. And so it was with St. Malachy's. Having begun with worldly-wise criticism of their friend, they finished by following his example. Thus it came to pass, as St. Bernard observes, that Malachy, at first Ivor's only spiritual child, became before long "the first-born amongst many brethren." And the first he always remained, both in the esteem of his master and in merit of life.

Ivor was too experienced a man not to know that

exclusive attention to purely spiritual things on the part of his young disciples would probably end in weariness and disgust. So he prudently divided their time between spiritual exercises and external works of zeal, including study. So much we may infer from what we read of Malachy's activities at a later time. We must suppose also that the young men continued to attend the public lecture-halls, since Ivor apparently gave them no other instructions than such as concerned the spiritual life and perhaps the Roman liturgy, for he was a zealous reformer. Malachy, as we know from St. Bernard, acquired a knowledge of the Gregorian chant in his youth. He could not have learned it in the churches of Armagh, for the same authority assures us that the liturgical offices had ceased to be sung there. Besides, the chant used generally in Ireland from the introduction of Christianity until Malachy's reform was not the Gregorian but the Ambrosian or Gallican. We may take it, then, that his instructor in the chant was Ivor himself. Ivor must have been well qualified for this rôle, if the community he had governed as abbot were, as we think most likely, Culdee monks, because amongst these none could be appointed superior who did not possess a thorough knowledge of Church music. (Cf. O'Hanlon's *Life of St. Malachy*, p. 15, note.)<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For an adequate account of the Culdees, see Reeves: *On the Céli-dé*. These religious came to Armagh in the ninth century and continued there until the sixteenth, that is, long after they had disappeared from other parts. Their principal duty in the primatial city was to conduct the liturgical services in the great church, but they also looked after the sick and the poor.

Archbishop Celsus, as an intimate friend of the holy recluse, took a deep interest in his spiritual family. Malachy's virtues and talents particularly impressed him. About the year 1117, after consultation with Ivor, he decided to confer the Order of Diaconate on the saintly and brilliant young man, anticipating the canonical age, which was then twenty-five, whereas Malachy was not yet twenty-four. From a sense of unworthiness our Saint would have declined the proffered dignity, but being no less obedient than humble, he yielded at last to the will of his superiors. His ordination as deacon he regarded as obliging him to spend himself without reserve in the service of God and his neighbour. Accordingly, he became more assiduous than ever in the practice of prayer and good works. His biographer tells us that he showed a predilection for those exercises of charity which appear most contemptible in the eyes of men, such as attending the sick poor and providing for their decent burial when dead. Indeed, St. Bernard's language implies that the young cleric considered these services as duties attaching to his diaconate not less than the ministrations at the altar. As a matter of fact, the deacons in the early Church were specially charged with the care of the sick and the poor.

What could be more edifying than to see this noble youth for the love of God repudiating the traditions and prejudices of his caste, and rendering to the poor and the friendless services which the meanest might be ashamed to perform? There was one person, however, who was not edified, who felt rather

irritated and disgusted. That person was his own sister. She does not seem to have profited much by the instructions and example of her pious mother. Worldliness with all it implies had taken deep root in her heart. Hence, the sight of her brother busy-ing himself with the burial of deceased paupers aroused all the pride in her aristocratic blood. She sought him out and bitterly reproached him with bringing disgrace on his name and family. Surely he must have taken leave of his senses to demean himself like that. His conduct was even opposed to the teaching of the Gospel, which tells us to follow Christ and let the dead bury their dead. "Unhappy woman," he replied, "you can quote the words of Scripture accurately enough, but you know nothing of its spirit." She could not see that her own conduct and sentiments were as much in opposition to the humility of Christ as were his to the pride of his forebears. If his retort silenced her, it was only for the moment. She returned to the attack not once or twice, but day after day. Malachy had always the best of the argument. Less happy, however, than Bernard with Humblina, he did not succeed in winning his sister from love of worldly pomp. She was to be saved, indeed, "yet so as by fire"—of which later. Meantime, Malachy continued to walk in the way he had chosen, heedless alike of human applause and censure, because he desired to be approved by God alone.

It must not be supposed that his advancement to Holy Orders made any change in his relations with Ivor O'Hagan. After his ordination, just as before,

and indeed as long as that holy man lived, he continued to regard him as his superior, and never undertook anything of importance without his knowledge and consent. From this writers have inferred that Malachy and his companions were not merely under the spiritual direction of Ivor, but constituted a regular religious community, observing a common rule under his government. According to O'Hanlon, the rule followed was probably St. Comgall's,<sup>1</sup> but Lawlor prefers to think it was that of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine.<sup>2</sup> It may be of interest to note that the external occupations in which Malachy busied himself, particularly after his reception of the diaconate, were exactly those prescribed for the Culdees of Armagh: attendance at church services, the study of sacred chant, and the care of the sick and the poor.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Life of St. Malachy*, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Malachy of Armagh*, p. 11.

## CHAPTER III

MALACHY ORDAINED PRIEST—VICAR-GENERAL OF ARMAGH  
—REFORMER—VISIT TO MALCHUS AT LISMORE—DEATH  
AND APPARITIONS OF HIS SISTER—APPOINTED ABBOT OF  
BANGOR—FIRST MIRACLES

**M**ALACHY was ordained priest in his twenty-fifth year, which would be about 1119.

According to the canons then observed, he would have to wait five years longer before he could receive that sacred Order. Saint Bernard, rigorist as he was in such matters, excuses the anticipation in view of the ordaining prelate's zeal and the singular merit of the ordinand. But he would not have that which is allowable in saints to be made a precedent by such as are not saints. Very soon after the ordination, the primate, Archbishop Celsus, gave a further proof of his confidence in Malachy by appointing him his vicar-general. He charged him at the same time with the task of effecting a thorough reform, moral and disciplinary, throughout the archdiocese. Evidently he saw something in the young priest which inspired the hope that he would be able to accomplish what had proved too difficult for his own efforts. This explains St. Bernard's reference to the primate's zeal as justifying his contravention of the canons. There was, however, another reason for hurrying Malachy's ordination. In 1120, according to the Annals of Ulster and Innisfallen, Celsus



was to make his second visitation of Munster (the first took place in 1106) for the purpose of collecting the Patrick-Tribute<sup>1</sup> due to the primatial see. Naturally, he would wish to see the archdiocese in safe hands during his prolonged absence.

Malachy, who had shown reluctance when there was question of promoting him to Orders, accepted the rôle of reformer "with all alacrity, rejoicing as a giant to run his course." The archdiocese had in truth sore need of reform, which will not surprise us when we recall the fact that for two centuries it had been governed by lay intruders. There was much to be suppressed, much to be established, much to be revived. The young vicar's commission was identical with the prophet's: "to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant" (*Jer.* i, 10). And with the zeal of a prophet did he apply himself to his task. Against vice and superstition he declared merciless war, and never relaxed his efforts until he had delivered his people from their tyrannic sway. For the liturgical offices, rites, and customs, peculiar to the Irish Church he substituted the Roman, regulating everything in accordance with the sacred canons. For many years the canonical hours had ceased to be sung in the churches of Armagh, as also in other parts, in consequence chiefly of the Danish and civil wars. This also Malachy remedied, nor did he rest satisfied until he had the Roman office sung daily at the appointed

---

<sup>1</sup> The tribute was: seven cows, seven sheep, and a half ounce of silver from every cantred or district.

hours in every church of the archdiocese. The chant used, needless to say, was the Gregorian.

He found amongst the faithful a good deal of neglect with regard to the Sacrament of Penance. People confessed their sins rarely, if at all. But it must be remembered that there was no general law prescribing annual confession until the Fourth General Council of Lateran in 1215. The Sacrament of Confirmation had likewise fallen into disuse, because under Celsus's predecessors there was little opportunity of receiving it. All this, together with some irregularities connected with Matrimony, the zealous vicar put right.

Here we must remark that St. Bernard says nothing to justify the inference drawn by some that auricular confession was not practised in Ireland prior to the twelfth century. Such an inference is not only opposed to historical facts, but entirely unwarranted by the holy Doctor's language.

Archbishop Celsus, on his return to Armagh, must have been delighted at the almost miraculous transformation he found there. His confidence had not been misplaced. But Malachy, fearful lest anything in the least out of harmony with Roman usage had been or should yet be established by him, resolved to suspend his apostolic labour for a while, in order to devote himself to the study of liturgy and canon law. The primate and Ivor approved the design, and recommended him to the one man in Ireland best qualified to give him the knowledge he needed, none other than Malchus, bishop of the united dioceses of

Lismore and Waterford. This eminent prelate was now very old, but still as zealous as ever for the advancement of religion. So great and widespread was his reputation for wisdom and sanctity that people flocked to him for assistance or consolation not alone from every part of Ireland, but from Britain as well. Saint Bernard mentions two miracles wrought by him, saying they are but specimens of many similar.

Malachy, therefore, set out for Lismore, to which Malchus had transferred his see and which then ranked "amongst the noblest cities of the country." The time of this journey is difficult to determine, but the balance of probability is in favour of 1121. Needless to say, the holy bishop had a warm welcome for the young vicar, who was a man according to his own heart, full of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Our Saint must have felt very much at home in the beautiful city of St. Carthage with its twenty churches, cloistered amidst its wooded hills and skirted by the solemn Blackwater. It had a history hardly less glorious than his own Armagh, and memories almost as sacred. Here St. Cathaldus, Patron of far-distant Taranto, lived many years as student and professor; here, as coarbs of St. Carthage, flourished SS. Cuanna and Coleman; here the British poet-king, Aldfrid, took his place amongst the crowd of pilgrim-scholars; and here possibly it was that St. Stephen Harding, one of the founders of the Cistercian Order, studied the sacred sciences about fifty years before. A beautiful city in truth was

Lismore when Malachy first beheld it. Less than sixty years from that time, the torch of the vandal Normans reduced to ashes its churches and schools, and the glory of Lismore was extinguished for ever. The wooded hills remain, the grand river still moves slowly to the sea, mirroring in its dark depths bordering elms and changeful skies, but the saints are gone, the sanctuaries where they prayed are gone, and gone the ancient city. The present town, just like other modern towns, with its smart fashions, its dancing-halls and picture-palaces, has little to remind us of the sacred city of St. Carthage.

During Malachy's sojourn with Malchus he got news that the sister who sought so persistently to turn him aside from the way of perfection had been called to her account. It grieved him profoundly, for he was tenderly attached to her, although, to manifest how much he disapproved of her worldliness, he had made a vow never again to see her in this life.<sup>1</sup> What saddened him most was the thought

---

<sup>1</sup> Those familiar with the career of St. Bernard must notice the very remarkable parallelism between his life and the life of St. Malachy. Each came of noble stock, each had a pious father and a particularly pious mother, the latter in both cases taking charge of the children's education, the one worldly person in the family of each was an only sister, each is described as exceedingly attractive in person and manner and as surpassing his comrades in talents and virtue, each took scandal at the conduct of early teachers, each retired from the world followed by a number of friends, each for that reason was bitterly reproached by his worldly sister, each expressed disapproval of that sister's conduct by resolving to see her no more, each became an abbot, each became a papal legate, each resisted attempts to make him a bishop, each was a reformer and a peace-maker, each had a special interest in church music, each had a remarkable gift of oratory. Lastly, they died in the same house, were buried in the same church, and their remains are now enclosed in the same coffin.

of the heavy account she must have had to render of her wasted opportunities. Whilst she lived he had never ceased to pray for her conversion, and he must not forget her now when she was dead. So he began to offer Mass daily for the repose of her soul, continuing until he thought that her purgation must be completed. He then ceased. After some time he had a strange dream. He thought he heard a voice announcing to him that his sister stood outside in the courtyard and had not tasted food for thirty days. On awakening, he remembered that it was exactly thirty days since he last offered the Holy Sacrifice for her. Taking the dream as a message from the unseen world, he resumed the pious practice of giving her daily the benefit of his Mass. Not long after, he beheld her in a dream standing at the threshold of the church, but unable to enter. He noticed that she was dressed in black. Some time passed, Malachy never interrupting his Masses and prayers, and she appeared to him again. She seemed now to be within the church and endeavouring to approach the altar, but unable to do so; and she was dressed not in black as previously, but in grey. Another interval, and once more he beheld her, this time robed in spotless white, which indicated to him that, her faults being at last fully expiated, she had been admitted to the mansions of the Blessed.

In the year 1123 Oenghus Ua Gormain, lay abbot of Bangor and coarb of St. Comgall, died as a pilgrim at Lismore. This we find recorded in the Annals of Ulster. A maternal uncle of Malachy's, also a layman, was chosen as the new incumbent, in

accordance with the law of Tanistry. At the same time Malachy himself received letters from Celsus and Ivor summoning him home in all haste. On arriving in Armagh, he learned that his uncle was willing to renounce in his favour all rights to the lands of Bangor as well as to the titles of abbot and coarb. His ecclesiastical superiors urged him to accept the offer, for they desired to see the ancient abbey restored to the service of God. He consented to accept the site on which the buildings stood, but nothing more. The vast landed possessions of the monastery he insisted, much to the annoyance of his friends, on transferring to another.

Taking with him ten members of Ivor's community, he journeyed north-east to the new scene of his labours. It must have been late in 1123 or early in the year following. Magnificently situated on the southern shore of Belfast Lough, within sight of the Scottish headlands, Bangor seemed to have been eminently well-chosen as a home for saints and scholars. The original monastery was founded by St. Comgall about the year 559. Sometimes, we are told, it sheltered as many as three thousand monks, which, however, was nothing very unusual in the Golden Age.<sup>1</sup> During the Danish wars it suffered terribly on account of its exposed position : according to St. Bernard, the pirates slaughtered nine hundred

---

<sup>1</sup> When Keating says that Comgall governed forty thousand monks he must be understood as including the filiations with the mother-house. These filiations had become numerous at the close of his long administration of fifty years. But even so, Keating's figure is somewhat staggering.

religious in one raid. Amongst the most celebrated of its sons were the illustrious St. Columbanus, the apostle of the Franks and the Lombards, and his disciple St. Gall, the apostle of Switzerland, with whom must be associated the eminent theologian, poet and astronomer known as Dungal, for he, too, was Bangor-bred.

Bangor was in ruins when Malachy first beheld it. The buildings, however, had never been elaborate—simple wooden structures in the traditional Celtic style. Stone edifices, although occasionally to be met with, were not common in Ireland at that time. But if monasteries of this type were easy to demolish, they were likewise easy to replace.

It was whilst the building operations were in progress that Malachy wrought his first miracle. One day he was wielding an axe with all his might, when a workman put himself accidentally in the way, and, receiving the blow on the spine, fell to the ground as if dead. Those who witnessed the occurrence thought it impossible for him to have escaped mortal injury. But to the astonishment of all, the man stood up again unharmed. On examination, it was found that the blade had cut through his clothes and slightly marked without piercing the skin. All attributed his miraculous preservation to the power of Malachy's prayer. This was followed by another and still more striking prodigy. A young man of the neighbourhood, named Malchus, supposed to be dying, not alone refused to accept Malachy's spiritual ministrations, but threatened to take his life if he should dare enter his

dwelling. The Saint, unheeding the threat, went at once to the poor fellow's bedside and delivered him at the same time from sickness of body and soul. We shall have occasion to refer to this Malchus again.

The third miracle worked at Bangor also deserves mention. A cleric suffering from dysentery, and already brought to death's door, recovered his health instantaneously by taking some food which the Saint had blessed. Not ungrateful for the favour received, he joined the Bangor community, and became later on abbot of a monastery in Scotland—the last, adds St. Bernard, which Malachy founded. This enables us to identify it. For, as we shall see, Malachy founded his last monastery in the year 1148 at Green Lake, or Soulseat, as it is now called, in Wigtonshire. The abbot referred to still governed this establishment at the time when the Mellifluous Doctor was writing the biography of his friend.

As might be expected, his miracles won for Malachy far and wide the reputation of a saint, and brought crowds of postulants to the abbey. Amongst the first to beg admission was his uncle, the same who had so generously ceded to him the monastic estates. In fervour and regularity, if not in numbers, the new Bangor rivalled that of the Golden Age. What rule Malachy's monks observed, we nowhere find explicitly stated, but most probably it was that of St. Comgall. Malachy could scarcely be called the restorer of Bangor, unless with the monastery he also restored the observance of the original rule.



## CHAPTER IV

MALACHY APPOINTED BISHOP OF DOWN—STATE OF THE DIOCESE—REFORM—SECOND VISIT TO LISMORE—DRIVEN FROM BANGOR—FOUNDATION OF IVERAGH—DEATH OF CELSUS—PRIMATE

**M**ALACHY'S activity in Armagh proved that he possessed the apostolic gifts in an unusual degree. Nevertheless he always shrank from the external ministry, and never undertook it except at the command of authority. All his predilection was for the contemplative life. He therefore felt very happy at Bangor, which he loved as well for its beauty as for its peace and seclusion and sacred associations. And it was his hope to pass the remainder of his days within its hallowed precincts. But Providence had ordained otherwise.

It will be remembered that amongst the many dioceses united by Rathbreasail were those of Down and Connor, which occupied between them nearly all the oldtime Ulidia, or the modern counties of Antrim and Down. This important see had now become vacant, and the abbot of Bangor was chosen to fill it. He refused to undertake the responsibility. Even his superiors, Celsus and Ivor, had a hard and a long struggle before they could induce him to accept. And no wonder. For it was not merely a question of sacrificing the sweets of contemplation, of exchanging Mary's calm repose for Martha's multitudinous

activities, but of making himself responsible for the souls of the most demoralised and uncultured people in Ireland. In St. Bernard's vigorous language, he was asked to become the shepherd not of sheep but of wolves. No district in Ireland suffered so severely or so often from the ravages of the Danes as the ancient Ulidia, for it lay within easy striking distance of their fleets as they passed through the narrow North Channel—their customary route—into the Irish Sea. Left for long without clergy, churches, and schools by murderous raids constantly repeated, the poor people could hardly be expected to look like a model Christian community. Nor would it be reasonable to expect that the lay prelates who came afterwards would exert themselves to a remarkable degree in the interests of reform. Things were at their worst at the time of Malachy's election. The picture St. Bernard presents us of Down and Connor, as it then was, is ugly enough in all conscience: barbarous customs, loose morals, irregular marriages, neglect of the Sacraments, fewness of priests and even these few superfluous, no preaching or psalmody in the churches, no payment of tithes or first-fruits. For most of these indictments we have no excuse to offer except to remark that the antecedent history of the diocese might be fairly pleaded as an extenuating circumstance. But at least two of the charges admit of defence, or rather of explanation. We have already discussed the question of marriage. With regard to the payment of tithes or first-fruits, the law prescribing that had not yet, so it seems, been promulgated in Ireland. The obligation was first

imposed by the Synod of Kells in 1152.<sup>1</sup> The people, however, contributed otherwise and most generously towards the support of their clergy and the upkeep of their churches. And if the clergy remained poor, as undoubtedly they did, that was because the revenues of various kinds intended for them were sacrilegiously appropriated by lay usurpers. Thus the Patrick-Tribute, levied on the whole population, became for two centuries the spoil of the pseudo-primates; and as these robbed of its revenues the church of Armagh, so were the other churches robbed by the lay coarbs and erenachs.

It should be noted also that St. Bernard wrote from material supplied him for the most part by ardent admirers of Malachy, who, although scrupulously veracious, would nevertheless be inclined, naturally and almost inevitably, to accentuate the evils and obstacles their hero had to surmount—to prepare a stage, so to speak, or a background for the more striking display of his virtues. Such is the eulogist's art. On the other hand, the holy Doctor's description of the Ulidians will appear almost flattering when compared with his account of the Romans, of the students of Paris, or of the natives of Southern France, of all of whom he could speak from personal experience. The comparison will at least show that he has more than one ugly picture in his "rogues' gallery." Of the people of Rome, he says:

---

<sup>1</sup> The opinion adopted here is that of Lanigan, *Eccles. Hist.*, iv, 8. Other writers, however, such as Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*, II, pp. 505-7, Kelly's ed., maintain that the Irish people paid tithes and first-fruits long before 1152. The English historian Jocelyn of the twelfth century supports this view.

“Arrogance and pride have been the Romans’ characteristics in every age. They are a people who are strangers to peace and accustomed to tumult, ferocious and intractable even until now. Hateful alike to heaven and earth, they are ever at war amongst themselves. They are jealous of their neighbours and cruel towards strangers; they love none and are loved of none; they are as shameless in asking for themselves as they are pitiless in refusing others. Importunate beggars, they cannot rest until they have obtained what they desire; but as for gratitude, no benefits can awaken that feeling in their breasts. They are most generous in making promises, but most miserly in keeping them; most fulsome in flattery and most venomous in slander. The most malicious of traitors, they can nevertheless conceal their treachery under an assumption of ingenuous candour.” After describing in very vivid terms the conduct of the Parisian students, he concludes: “Would to God these things were not done! Would to God it were not my duty to denounce them! Would to God I found none to believe me, none to believe that the mind of man has ever been sullied with the mere thought of such wickedness!” Of Southern France he writes: “What do we behold? Churches without congregations, congregations without priests, priests without the reverence due to them, Christians without Christ. For the churches are regarded as synagogues, the sanctuary of the Lord is no longer deemed holy, the Sacraments have been robbed of their sacred character, and the feast days of their festive solemnities. Men are daily

dying in their sins, human souls are being everywhere hurried to judgment, before the awful tribunal of Christ, unreconciled by penance, unfortified with the holy Viaticum. And the life that comes from Christ is withheld with the grace of baptism from the children of Christian parents."

Finally it may be argued that, however bad may have been the actual condition of Ulidia, the thoroughness and rapidity with which it was reformed prove that the corruption could not have gone very deep.

Malachy consented under compulsion to undertake the government of Down and Connor, but he did not consent to leave Bangor. Like St. Martin of Tours, he would make the monastery his episcopal residence, and in becoming a bishop would remain still a monk. Not that he intended to shut himself up in the cloister, administering his diocese from the seclusion of his cell. Far from it. Seldom has been seen a more active apostolate than that upon which our Saint entered after his consecration by Celsus in 1124, when he had just passed his twenty-ninth birthday. Surrounded by a group of Bangor monks, he went about his extensive diocese, always on foot, "preaching the word in season, out of season, reproving, entreating, rebuking in all patience and doctrine" (II *Tim.* iv, 2). When the people would not come to the church to hear him, he sought them out in their homes, in the fields and market-places, stopped them on the highways and in the streets, approached them anywhere and everywhere; because he considered no place or time inopportune for re-

minding them of their duties to God. Not once or twice, but again and again he thus traversed the diocese with his faithful companions, visiting every town and hamlet, and suffering much, not alone from weariness, hunger and thirst, and the inclemency of the weather, but sometimes also from the poor sinners he was trying to save. Yes, not seldom they answered his charitable admonitions with insult and outrage. However, his sweetness and patience nearly always prevailed.

Knowing as he did that human efforts avail nothing without the concurrence of divine grace, he never ceased making intercession with God for his people. Often, as St. Bernard assures us, he spent whole nights offering up the fervent prayers of a contrite and broken heart for their conversion. As he trusted most firmly in the infallible promise of Truth, he continued thus knocking at the gate of mercy until at last it was opened. The fourth year of his episcopate saw the miracle of Armagh repeated in Down. Here is how the Abbot of Clairvaux describes the metamorphosis: "The hard hearts are softened and the rough manners refined; the provoking house has become docile and submissive to correction and discipline; barbarous laws are replaced with Roman, and canonical usages everywhere introduced; churches are rebuilt and priests ordained to serve them; the Sacraments begin again to be administered with due solemnity, the practice of confession has revived, the faithful frequent the house of God, marriages are solemnised, and everything so changed for the better, that what the Lord

said of the Gentiles of old may now be applied to the Ulidians: 'They that were not My people are now My people' (*Os.* ii, 24)." And the great Doctor testifies that, a quarter of a century later, at the time of his writing, the people of Down and Connor were still faithful to the lessons taught them by their holy Bishop.

In 1127 we find Malachy again in Lismore. He made this journey, presumably, with the same object as brought him to Munster the first time—that is, to seek instruction from Bishop Malchus. Saint Bernard has confounded these two visits, as appears from a comparison of his narrative with our native Annals; so that we cannot be sure whether Malachy's sister died before or after his episcopal consecration. On the present occasion Lismore sheltered another distinguished pilgrim, Cormac MacCarthy, king of Desmond. This monarch had just been expelled from his kingdom by his brother Donough, in alliance with Turlough O'Connor, the powerful king of Connacht. Taught by his misfortunes the instability of human greatness, he resolved to devote himself thenceforth to the service of God, and to live as a humble recluse in the practice of prayer and penance. Accordingly, he would accept no mark of honour, telling Malchus he wanted nothing but a little cell, with just sufficient nourishment to keep him alive. Indeed, the nourishment he took scarcely sufficed for that, for he never tasted anything but bread and water. The royal hermit became much attached to the young northern bishop, and chose him for his spiritual director.

After a few months the king of Thomond, Conor O'Brien, came to Lismore with an offer to reinstate Cormac. But that pious prince refused to leave his cell, where he had found more happiness than he had ever enjoyed upon the throne; and he persisted in his refusal until Malchus and Malachy assured him that it was God's will he should return to his people. O'Brien kept his promise. Assisted by Cormac's followers, he obliged the usurper to flee, and the kingdom of Desmond was restored to its legitimate ruler.

We cannot tell how long Malachy's second visit to Lismore lasted; but he had certainly returned to the North before the end of 1128. As we have already remarked, when not actually on missionary tours, he lived with the monks at Bangor; and he was amongst them not as one that is ministered unto, but as one that ministers (*Luke xxii, 27*), taking part in all their exercises and labours. Sometime in 1128, the army of a northern prince, generally supposed to have been Conor O'Loughlin, king of Kinel-Owen, swept over Ulidia, drove out the monks of Bangor, and levelled their monastery. The Abbot-Bishop had therefore to find another home for his beloved children. In his perplexity, he bethought himself of his Munster friend, King Cormac, and decided to throw himself upon the monarch's hospitality. So at the head of his community he set out once more for Munster. The good prince welcomed the weary travellers with every manifestation of joy. He gave them a site for a new monastery in the barony of Iveragh, Co. Kerry, the exact spot being, it is sup-



posed, Church Island in Lough Currane. Not only that, but he supplied them with flocks and herds for their own use, and with as much money as they required for the expenses of the foundation. He gave his personal service, too, working at the buildings with the religious, just like one of themselves : for he considered it a greater honour to be a disciple of Malachy than the ruler of a kingdom. As for Malachy himself, he seemed to have forgotten that he had ever been a bishop, so happy was he in the midst of his brethren. Although superior, he insisted on taking his turn with the rest in all the rotatory offices, such as cook, waiter and reader ; but in the matter of mortification he went far beyond what the rule prescribed, far beyond what he sanctioned in others.

He was not long settled in Iveragh when he had a dream that puzzled him much. A tall matron of venerable aspect seemed to approach him, and, when asked who she was, represented herself as the wife of Archbishop Celsus, handing him at the same time an episcopal crozier. After a few days he got the solution of the riddle, when messengers arrived at the monastery with the primate's pastoral staff, which, they said, Celsus had bequeathed him. For he recognised the crozier as the same that he had seen in his sleep. He then understood that the matron of his dream typified the archdiocese of Armagh.

The Protestant writer, Hanmer, taking the expression *Celsi uxorem* in its literal meaning, inferred therefrom (*Cicero pro domo sua*) that Arch-

bishop Celsus had been married.<sup>1</sup> But both the Annalists and St. Bernard make it abundantly clear that he lived and died a celibate.

The primate at this time lay grievously ill at Ardpatrick in Co. Limerick. His presence there is explained by the fact that the church of Ardpatrick was immediately subject to the primatial see.<sup>2</sup> Feeling that his end was approaching and desirous to put a stop to the usurpation of the primacy, he charged the members of his retinue to have Malachy appointed as his successor. He gave the same solemn charge, in the name and by the authority of St. Patrick, to King Cormac McCarthy of Desmond, King Conor O'Brien of Thomond, and other persons of influence in Church or State. At the same time he sent his pastoral staff to Malachy at Iveragh, as an indication of his will. He died on April 1st, 1129, in the fiftieth year of his age, and, at his own request, was brought to Lismore for burial. We find the following eulogy of this noble prelate in the *Annals of Ulster*: "Ceallach, successor of Patrick, son of purity and eminent bishop of the West of Europe, and the one head who was obeyed by Gaels and foreigners, laics and clerics, after ordaining bishops and priests and persons of every ecclesiastical grade, after the consecration of many churches and cemeteries, after bestowing treasures and wealth, after enjoining discipline and good conduct on everyone, after a life spent in celebrating Masses, in fasting and in prayer, after Holy Unction and extra-

---

<sup>1</sup> *Chronicle of Ireland*, p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. McCarthy's *Annals of Ulster*, p. 122, note.

ordinary penance, sent forth his spirit into the embrace of angels and archangels, in Ard-Patraic in Munster, on the Kalends of April, in the twenty-fourth year of his abbacy (episcopate) and the fiftieth of his age." A more authentic testimony to his merit and virtue has been the insertion of his name in the Roman Martyrology. Through a mistake on the part of Baronius, his festival is assigned to the sixth instead of the first of April.

The kinsmen of Celsus did not carry out his dying wish; for the very next day after his burial, that is, on April 5th, they elected in his room, according to law of Tanistry, one of their own number, named Muircertach, *anglice* Maurice, who was the son of Domnall, the predecessor and uncle of Archbishop Celsus. Doctor McCarthy (*Annals of Ulster*, 122), thought this election must have taken place in Lismore, the electors being the members of the primate's numerous retinue; he considered that the news of the vacancy could not possibly have reached Armagh in the space of four days. But surely a swift courier could have made the journey in that time; and the primate's companions, who wished to confine the succession to his family as heretofore and knew of Malachy's nomination, would be certain to dispatch such a courier the moment Celsus breathed his last. It seems unlikely that the latter was accompanied to Munster by such a number of his kinsmen as would suffice for an election.

The others whom Celsus enjoined to secure the succession of Malachy did all in their power to obey the command. But for three years our Saint con-

tinued firm in his refusal. His excuses were many : the difficulty of dislodging the intruder, powerfully supported as he was by the secular arm, the bloodshed that would almost inevitably result from the attempt, his prior obligations towards the diocese of Down and Connor, etc. At last the legate, Gilbert of Limerick, Bishop Malchus of Lismore and several other bishops, accompanied by the kings of Desmond and Thomond, went in a body to Iveragh, and obliged him to accept the primatial dignity under threat of excommunication. Poor Malachy could no longer resist. He was like a tempest-tossed ship that has no sooner entered a tranquil haven, secure from the winds and the waves, than she has again to go forth to battle with a still more terrible storm. " You are conducting me to my death," he cried. " Very well. I obey you in hopes of the martyr's crown, yet only on this condition : that if, according to your desire and expectation, my efforts prove successful, and God delivers His inheritance from the hands of those who have usurped it, and I am enabled to restore peace to the Church and dispose everything in order, I be then permitted to return to my first and best-beloved spouse, holy poverty, from whose embraces I am now torn, and to appoint in my place some other whom I shall find worthy." This condition was agreed to. The reference to poverty was quite worthy of the Little Poor Man of Assisi.

## CHAPTER V

MAURICE SUCCEEDED BY NIALL — CONSPIRATORS  
PUNISHED — MALACHY INSTALLED PRIMATE — THE  
STAFF OF JESUS AND THE BOOK OF ARMAGH CARRIED  
OFF AND RECOVERED — MALACHY RESIGNS AND  
APPOINTS GELASIUS AS HIS SUCCESSOR

**M**ALACHY had resisted so far as he dared his appointment as coarb of Patrick. But now that, in spite of his efforts, he found himself burdened with this responsibility, he would not be content with an empty title or a sinecure. He would be primate in fact as well as in name. So, taking sorrowful leave of his brethren at Iveragh, he hastened north and immediately assumed the government of the archdiocese. However, as he was unwilling to be the occasion of bloodshed, he would not enter the city of Armagh. Many of the clergy and people acknowledged him as their legitimate pastor; but the usurper also had numerous adherents even amongst the nobles, for he belonged to an illustrious house. This state of affairs continued two years, at the end of which time Maurice was carried off by a sudden death. According to St. Bernard, he died impenitent. The Four Masters tell us, on the contrary, that he breathed his last on September 17th, 1134, "after the victory of martyrdom and penance." Charity is truth, no doubt, but it does not necessarily follow that the more charitable

account of events is always the more truthful. In the present case, the Annalists' testimony cannot possibly be reconciled with well-known historical facts.

Although Maurice met his end without much warning, he still had time to designate his successor in the primatial see. The person of his choice bore the name of Niall. He was a brother to Celsus, the late primate, but differed from him widely in disposition and character. He had himself duly installed archbishop, and made it clear that he had no thought of yielding to his rival. But the friends of reform determined to take action at last. The moment seemed opportune. Niall, it is true, could count perhaps on the support of Conor O'Loughlin, the most powerful ruler in Ulster, but at this time—September, 1134—O'Loughlin would hardly dare interfere, for the allied kings of Munster, McCarthy and O'Brien, having fought their way through Connacht, were actually in the neighbourhood of Armagh, near enough to control the situation there.

A meeting was therefore held for the purpose of putting Malachy in possession of the metropolitan church. Malachy himself attended, of course, and with him several other bishops and a multitude of the laity. There was a king present also, as we learn from St. Bernard, who, unfortunately, does not give us the name. His language, however, implies that it must have been either the monarch to whose kingdom Armagh belonged, that is, Conor O'Loughlin, or else King Cormac of Desmond. If O'Loughlin, he must have suddenly changed sides—a thing not

at all usual—because he is believed to have favoured the schismatical party from the first. As for Cormac, he could easily have attended, as he was then with his army close by.

When the people had assembled in the open place appointed for the meeting, word came to Malachy that a great crowd of the schismatic's supporters were gathered on a neighbouring hill, ready to swoop down upon them with the purpose of murdering the monarch and himself. Afflicted at the thought of innocent blood being shed on his account, he implored Almighty God to frustrate the designs of the impious. Immediately a dark cloud enveloped the hill and a dreadful storm burst over it, with rolling of thunder and flashing of lightning. The most remarkable circumstance was that the tumult of the elements confined itself to the place occupied by the conspirators; in the surrounding districts everything remained calm and serene. As soon as the tempest subsided, the body of the ringleader, with those of three of his associates, was found charred and putrescent amongst the branches of a tree, where they had been blown by "the mighty rushing wind." Three more of the conspirators sustained such grievous injuries that they seemed to be in a dying condition. Such is St. Bernard's account. According to the *Annals of Innisfallen*, twelve men were killed by the lightning.

After that, the schismatics made no further effort to prevent Malachy's installation as metropolitan. The schism, however, had not yet come to an end. As the Primate's royal protector could not remain

long in Armagh, he took what he considered adequate precautions for the maintenance of peace in his absence. That is, he exacted from the most powerful of Niall's adherents a sworn promise to preserve order and in nowise to interfere with Malachy in the discharge of his functions. But no sooner had the king taken his departure than this person—St. Bernard calls him a prince—formed a design to murder the holy Archbishop. One evening when Malachy was presiding at the office of Vespers in the great church, messengers came to announce that the prince just referred to desired his presence at a certain place for the purpose of arranging terms of peace. When asked by the Primate's friends—who evidently suspected some treacherous design—why their master did not rather come to the church, which was the most proper place for carrying on peace negotiations, they answered that he feared the violence of the mob. Thereupon Malachy declared his readiness to go with them. And when his friends attempted to dissuade him, he, willing to expose his life in the interests of peace, made answer: "You must allow me, brethren, to walk in the footsteps of my Master, for to no purpose am I a Christian if I refuse to follow Christ. Perchance by thus humbling myself I shall soften the tyrant. In any case I shall conquer by rendering to him the submission which he should rather render to me, as the sheep to the shepherd and the layman to the bishop. You also, as I trust, will benefit by my example. What matters it if I lose my life? I am quite willing to suffer death if by doing so I shall edify my children. I



must not show myself a bishop—so the Prince of pastors warns me—by ‘lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock from the heart’ (I *Peter* v, 3), after the example of Him Who humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death. Who will grant me that I may become in the same manner a pattern to my children by shedding my blood in the cause of peace! At least you shall see whether your pastor has learned as he ought from Christ’s example to face death boldly for Christ’s sake.”

So he went, accompanied by three of his disciples.

Now, the prince and his companions had arranged to seize the Archbishop the moment he appeared, and dispatch him without delay. But when he came amongst them, they somehow forgot their murderous design, their savage enmity was suddenly changed into sincere veneration, and the time and place that were to witness the beginning of war witnessed instead the establishment of peace. The people, nevertheless, knowing that their venerated Pastor still had many secret foes always on the look-out for an opportunity to slay him, insisted on providing him with a body-guard. But for his own part, he put his trust, not in the arm of flesh, but in Divine Providence.

Deprived though he was of much of the support on which he had reason to count, Niall was too obstinate a man to surrender without a struggle. He fled from Armagh at Malachy’s entrance, but he did not go empty-handed. He took with him the two most precious possessions of the primatial see, the

Staff of Jesus (Bachall Isa) and the Book of Armagh (Canoin Phadruig). The former was a wooden crozier enshrined in a case of gold, richly studded with jewels. According to ancient tradition, St. Patrick received the staff from the hand of Christ Himself after his consecration as bishop. It was enshrined by St. Tassach, Patrick's artificer and soul-friend. Transferred from Armagh to Christ Church, Dublin, by the Norman invaders in 1180, it was publicly burned as a superstitious object by the common hangman in 1538, at the bidding of Browne, the Protestant archbishop. The Book of Armagh has fortunately survived the vicissitudes of centuries. It is a quarto volume of 221 vellum leaves, written in double columns. Its contents are varied. First we have incidents from the life of St. Patrick, then his *Confession*, followed by the New Testament, next comes a Life of St. Martin of Tours, and last a short litany. This celebrated manuscript, with its marvellous calligraphy, we owe to the scribe Feardomhnach, whose death is recorded by the Four Masters under the year 844. After many changes of hands, it is now the much-prized possession of Trinity College, Dublin.

The possession of these venerable relics secured to Niall the respect and allegiance of many, for the simple people had been taught to regard them as inseparable from the primatial dignity. In this way he soon made himself strong enough to recover his position in Armagh. The Four Masters postdate this event by at least one year when, under 1136, they make the laconic remark: "A change of abbots at

Ard-Macha: Niall, son of Aedh, in place of Maelmaedhog." Most likely it occurred during the winter of 1134, for, as the same Annalists tell us, Malachy then "made his visitation of Munster and obtained his full tribute," and his absence afforded an opportunity which Niall would have hardly missed. It is to be noted that St. Bernard makes no mention of either the schismatic's re-entrance into Armagh or Malachy's visitation of Munster.

In this eventful year, 1134, our Saint lost his old spiritual director, Ivor O'Hagan, who died in Rome, whither he had gone on pilgrimage. He is commemorated as a saint on August 13th—probably the date of his death. The year following, Malachy had to mourn the loss of another dear friend, Bishop Malchus of Waterford, "chief senior of the Irish who died at Lismore after the eighty-eighth year of his age." He, too, has been accorded the title of saint and his memory is venerated on August 10th. We may presume he had another visit from Malachy during the latter's tour of Munster at the close of 1134 or the beginning of the following year. The Four Masters, in the record of his death, give him the name *Maoiliosa Ua hAinmire*. As they make mention of another *hAinmire* in the very next sentence, it is possible there may be a mistake. However, the name was a common one in Ireland at the time.

Niall's victory at Armagh was of very short duration, for within a year he was again driven out. A further triumph for his rival was the recovery of the Staff of Jesus. Here is the record of this event

taken from the Four Masters under year 1135: "Maelmaedhog Ua Morgair, successor of Patrick, purchased the Bachall Isa and took it from its cave on the seventh day of the month of July." Evidently the schismatic himself or somebody to whose keeping he had entrusted the relic first concealed it in a cave and then restored it to Malachy. The Book of Armagh was restored about the same time. According to St. Bernard, Niall himself surrendered both relics.

The schism had now come to an end. The holy Primate no longer encountered open opposition. Yet he had his critics. One man in particular, high in favour with the nobility, lost no opportunity of besmirching his character, until, the measure of his iniquity being filled up, his tongue swelled and rotted in his mouth, and after seven days of awful agony he miserably expired. When Malachy was preaching in church on a certain occasion, a woman belonging to Niall's family interrupted the discourse, calling him a hypocrite and a robber, and taunting him with his baldness. This insult to His servant the Lord likewise visited with exemplary chastisement. The woman was struck with madness and soon expired. Saint Bernard tells us how a pestilence that was raging in Armagh ceased at once when the Primate, bearing holy relics, led the clergy and people in procession through the streets. And these, the same author adds, are but examples of the many signs and prodigies wherewith God glorified His faithful servant during his occupancy of the primatial see.

For three years Malachy held the position of primate of the Irish Church and coarb of Patrick in face of an opposition which, at first almost overwhelming, gradually yielded to the power of his holiness and the irresistible charm of his personality. The war period had now passed and order and peace were restored. But not only had our Saint established peace throughout the archdiocese and the whole province of Leath Chuinn: he had also established himself firmly and irremovably in the hearts of his people. Great, consequently, was their grief on learning his intention to leave them. With tears they besought him to stay, but he could not be prevailed upon to alter his purpose: he had accomplished the task imposed upon him, and therefore by the terms of agreement was entitled to withdraw. Nor did he forget to exercise the privilege of appointing his successor. Here there was need of the utmost circumspection, as by a mistaken choice he would forfeit all the fruits of victory. The man qualified to conserve and develop what had been begun in Armagh should not only be virtuous, zealous, learned, and wise, but above all he should be endowed with that delicate charity which will never "quench the smoking flax or break the bruised reed." Such a man he found in Gelasius—Gilla Macliag—the abbot of Derry and coarb of Columcille.

Having thus provided for the future of the metropolitan church, he left the city for good in 1137. According to the Four Masters, Malachy "resigned the successorship of Patrick for the sake of God" in 1136, and was succeeded by Niall. The date is

almost certainly wrong. But there is nothing improbable in the supposition that the schismatic made a final attempt to reinstate himself after Malachy's resignation. The Annalists further inform us that the year after he yielded place to Gelasius, and died in 1139 "after intense penance."

## CHAPTER VI

MALACHY RETURNS TO DOWN—DEATH OF CHRISTIAN—  
DEATH OF KING CORMAC—MALACHY CONTEMPLATES A  
JOURNEY TO ROME—OPPOSITION OF CLERGY AND PEOPLE  
—MEETING WITH SYCARUS AND ST. WALTHEOF—VISIT  
TO CLAIRVAUX — MEETING WITH POPE INNOCENT —  
PETITIONS—SECOND VISIT TO CLAIRVAUX—MIRACULOUS  
CURE OF PRINCE HENRY

**A**FTER Malachy's appointment to the primatial see, he had to make provision for the diocese that was widowed by his promotion. And this he did in a way that must have mystified many, and proved, if proof were needed, that profound humility is quite compatible with perfect independence of mind. He separated again the dioceses of Down and Connor, whose union had been decreed by the Synod of Rathbreasail. Doubtless he had learned from experience that what was practically the whole of Ulidia could not be properly governed by a single bishop. We may also presume that the consent of the legate, Bishop Gilbert, had been asked and obtained for so important a step. The holy Primate then appointed and consecrated a bishop for Connor, which was considered the better of the two dioceses, but Down he left vacant. His purpose in this became clear when, after resigning the primatial dignity, he returned to Down and resumed the administration of that see.

One of his first official acts on returning to Down was the establishment of a Priory of Canons Regular of St. Augustine. With regard to the situation of the establishment most authors place it in Downpatrick, but, as Dr. Lawlor points out, St. Bernard's narrative clearly implies that it occupied the site of Malachy's first monastery at Bangor.<sup>1</sup> Anyhow, the holy Bishop took up his abode in the priory, and began to live as a monk once more. However, he could not have here the same seclusion and solitude which he enjoyed so much at Iveragh. People kept crowding to him from all parts and from every rank of society, some for succour, corporeal or spiritual, others for instruction or advice. He was still primate in reality if not in name. He might, as he actually did, transfer to another the powers and insignia of the metropolitan see, but he could not so transfer the confidence and love of the faithful. Besides this source of distraction, there were the many public duties attaching to the episcopal office which the Bishop could not afford to neglect. But so far as his obligations permitted him, Malachy lived retired with his Canons.

On June 12th, 1138, his brother, Christian, died as bishop of Clogher. Of him St. Bernard writes: "He was a good man, full of grace and virtue. He, too, belonged to the episcopal order. In popular estimation he ranked only second to his brother, whom he perhaps equalled in zeal for justice and in sanctity of life." More fulsome is the Four Masters'

---

<sup>1</sup> *St. Malachy of Armagh*, pp. 63-4.



eulogy: "Gillachrist Ua Morgair, bishop of Clogher, a paragon in wisdom and piety, a brilliant lamp that enlightened the laity and clergy by preaching and good deeds (capital instance of the mixed metaphor), a faithful and diligent servant of the Church in general, died, and was interred in the church of SS. Peter and Paul at Ard-Macha."

In the same year the pious King Cormac McCarthy met his death at the hand of an assassin. The Four Masters chronicle the event as follows: "Cormac, son of Muireadhach, son of Carthach, king of Desmond and bishop of the kings of Ireland for bestowal of jewels and wealth upon the clergy and the churches, an improver of territories and churches, was killed in his own house by treachery."

That King Cormac is here called a bishop only in a metaphorical sense would seem to be plain enough from the context. True, the *Annals of Kilronan* give him the same title, but the record we find there resembles that of the Four Masters too closely to be regarded as independent testimony. Cormac was as zealous for the honour and advancement of religion as if he were a real bishop, or he stood as far above the other Irish kings as a bishop above his priests. And this title would suggest itself naturally enough to the Annalists with the thought of another of Cashel's great rulers, a namesake of McCarthy's too: King Cormac Macullinan (+903), who was both king and bishop. A further and convincing argument for the figurative interpretation is the fact that according to the *Annals of Tigernach* Cormac McCarthy was a married man. There can be no

longer any doubt that it is to Malachy's royal friend we owe Cormac's Chapel, one of the most magnificent examples of our ancient Irish art. It was built in 1127 and consecrated in 1134. As Malachy happened to be then in Munster he may well have been the consecrating prelate.

With regard to the other Irish monarch who befriended our Saint, King Conor O'Brien of Thomond, "the pillar of the valour and prowess of Leath Mogha," as the Four Masters describe him, it is distinctly pleasant to find a foreign historian<sup>1</sup> of great eminence testifying to his princely munificence towards the Church even in Continental countries. O'Brien was king of all Munster and the most powerful ruler in Ireland at the time of his death in 1142, "after the victory of penance."

Very soon after Malachy's return to Down, the thought occurred to him that many of his acts and institutions both as primate and as bishop might need to be confirmed by a higher authority; in short, that he was under obligation to render an account of his stewardship to the Vicar of Christ. The disastrous schism which from 1130 to 1138 divided the rest of Christendom into two warring factions seems to have produced not a single ripple in the Irish Church. Our Annalists do not even refer to it. There was universal peace now. Thanks to the superhuman efforts of St. Bernard, the whole world acknowledged Innocent II as legitimate pontiff. The time, therefore, was opportune for a pilgrimage to Rome. A

---

<sup>1</sup> Bellesheim. *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche in Irland*, Erster Band, S. 341.

second motive for undertaking this journey was the suspicion that both Celsus and the Synod of Rathbreasail had acted *ultra vires*, the former in elevating Cashel to metropolitan dignity in 1106, the latter in sanctioning this arrangement. He had another reason, too, for presenting himself before Innocent. His own and his friends' zealous and laborious efforts for the reform of the Irish Church had been fruitful beyond all anticipation. If conditions were still far from ideal, a good beginning had been made, and it needed only time with the blessing of God to bring the work to completion. The national Church now possessed its primate, its ecclesiastical provinces ruled by metropolitans of eminent virtue and learning, its regularly constituted dioceses. As for the evil institution of lay prelates, now that the head was freed from this plague, the cure of the whole body could be effected without difficulty. Yet there was something still wanting which Malachy thought it incumbent on him to supply. He knew that a metropolitan was not canonically instituted until he had received from the Pope the archiepiscopal pall. And this neither of the Irish metropolitans had as yet received. So he decided to journey himself to Rome in order to solicit this favour from the Holy Father.

The first intimation of his purpose aroused a veritable storm of opposition. His religious, his clergy, his faithful people all united in the determination to prevent him from leaving the diocese; for he had become utterly precious in their eyes, and in the tenderness of their solicitous affection they

feared that if they let him out of their sight they might never again see him. When he remained unmoved by their entreaties, they told him plainly that, if necessary, they would not hesitate to employ force to thwart his design. Such, indeed, was their intention, and they only desisted when he threatened them with the anger of God. They then suggested that the question should be decided by lot, but he sternly forbade it, rebuking them withal for being so superstitious. Notwithstanding his prohibition, however, the lots were cast. When the first throw resulted in Malachy's favour, they declared a single trial insufficient for a matter of such moment, and made a second and a third with the same result. Then at last they reluctantly allowed him to have his way.

Before starting on a journey which would mean a prolonged absence from Ireland, he thought it necessary to appoint a successor to his brother in the see of Clogher. Why this matter should have rested with him is not very easy to explain, for Clogher was not in any sense subject to the jurisdiction of Down. Saint Bernard tells us how the appointment was made. Summoning to his presence three of his disciples, that is, Canons Regular, he considered anxiously which of them was the most worthy, or rather the best qualified for the episcopal office. After closely scrutinising each he said to one, named Aidan O'Kelly: "Do you, Aidan, take this burden upon you." And when the brother addressed looked frightened and unhappy, the Bishop encouraged him with the words: "Fear not, my

son, for the Lord Himself has pointed you out to me. I have just seen on your finger the gold ring wherewith you are to be espoused." Thereupon O'Kelly gave his consent and received consecration from Malachy. He died in 1182, after an administration which fully justified his holy Superior's choice.

All preparations having been made, Malachy left Ireland in 1139 or perhaps early in 1140, as Dr. Lawlor supposes. He took with him as travelling companions five priests and a number of inferior clerics. As for the whole party there were only three horses — pack-animals, doubtless, — it must have been the intention to make the overland journey on foot! Saint Bernard does not indicate the itinerarium except in the most general way—he considered nothing deserving of notice beyond what was calculated to glorify his friend or to edify the reader. After landing somewhere—presumably at Cairngarroch—on the west coast of Scotland, the pilgrims travelled southward to York. There they met a saintly priest named Sycarus who, enlightened by the Spirit of God, recognised Malachy and pointed him out to the bystanders, exclaiming: "This is the man of whom it was said to me in vision: from Ireland shall come a holy bishop who can read the thoughts of the human mind." He also communicated to the Irish Prelate many secrets concerning the Bishop himself and his companions. Amongst other revelations, he announced that only very few of Malachy's friends would return with him to Ireland. This was understood as a prediction that several of them would die on the journey;

but it was verified in a happier way when our Saint left his disciples, some at Clairvaux and some others elsewhere, to be trained in the Cistercian Observance.

Whilst our travellers remained in York they were visited by St. Waltheof, then prior of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine at Kirkham. He was the stepson of King David I of Scotland and connected besides with some of the noblest houses of England : he entered the Cistercian Order later on, and died abbot of Melrose in 1159. Seeing how poorly provided with horses were Malachy and his companions, he offered them the only animal in his possession, with an apology for the meanness of the gift, because the horse was in truth a sorry nag, black both in colour and character and difficult to manage. "I accept the gift all the more readily on that account," the Saint replied, "for however poor it may be in itself it is enriched by the charity that offers it." Then turning to his disciples, he said : "Saddle this horse for me ; it just suits me and will serve me many a year." The conversions of black sheep was a common enough occurrence in Malachy's experience, but this was the first time he had occasion to rejoice over the conversion of a black horse. For the poor beast became almost immediately quite tractable and steady, and the interior transformation was accompanied and symbolised by a corresponding change in the exterior, inasmuch as from dark in colour it became perfectly white. Out of gratitude to the donor, Malachy continued to make use of this horse for nine years, that is, until the time of his death. The abbot of Clairvaux dwells so much upon

the animal as to give the impression that it must have been quite a pet of his.

Passing through Burgundy, Malachy must have recalled those other Bangor monks, SS. Columban, Gall, and companions, who six hundred years earlier had spent themselves here for the salvation of a thankless people. Perhaps he visited Luxeuil, founded by Columban, once the centre of religion and culture in the province, and still in a flourishing condition. We do not know. But his road led him near another famous abbey which he could by no means leave unvisited. This was Clairvaux, in the modern Department of Aube. It was then at the height of its glory, sheltering above seven hundred holy monks, and governed by that extraordinary man who, in the words of Balmez, "filled the world with his fame, upheaved it with his eloquence, swayed it with his influence." Bernard had been associated in one way or another with all the eminent characters of his age, by force of genius and sanctity he dominated Europe, popes and emperors were proud to call themselves his friends; nevertheless, he regarded his meeting with the humble Bishop from Ireland as a landmark in his life. "To me also," he writes, "it was given to meet Malachy on this journey. I found refreshment in his society and conversation, and delighted in his love as in all manner of riches. For sinner though I was, I found favour in his eyes, and from that time until his death he honoured me with his friendship. He had the goodness to turn out of his way in order to visit Clairvaux. When he saw the community the sight

filled him with emotion, and the religious, on their side, were not a little edified by his words and demeanour. He was much pleased with the place and its inhabitants. When at length he bade us farewell and resumed his journey, he bore us all enshrined in the very centre of his heart.”

Eastward into Switzerland the pilgrims pursued their weary way, the humble Malachy feeling as mortified and self-reproachful after parting from Bernard as the great St. Antony of old after visiting St. Paul. The passage of the Alps being accomplished, they arrived at the town of Ivrea, where the Saint restored to health a sick child, the son of a charitable burgher who had given them hospitality. It is hardly rash to presume that they visited St. Columban's celebrated monastery at Bobbio, which lay right on their road. The community, of course, was no longer distinctively Irish, but Bobbio could not forget its illustrious founder nor fail to welcome to its cloister another illustrious son of the Emerald Isle.

Pope Innocent II received the saintly Irish Bishop with extraordinary marks of honour. But before even mentioning the business that brought him from Ireland, Malachy with tears in his eyes besought the Pontiff to grant him a favour which he had much at heart: he asked to be allowed to resign his see and to spend the rest of his life at Clairvaux. His request was not granted.<sup>1</sup> Innocent knew what need the Irish

---

<sup>1</sup> It is not unlikely that Bernard was responsible for this refusal. Malachy may be supposed to have asked him for letters to Innocent seconding his various petitions. The Abbot would then recommend the Pontiff to grant everything except the per-



Church still had of his zeal and example, and, instead of accepting his resignation, appointed him legate for the whole of Ireland in place of Gilbert, who, on account of age and infirmities, had begged to be relieved of that office. He fully approved of the changes made in the external organisation of the Irish Church, especially the elevation of Cashel to the dignity of a metropolitan see; but when asked for the palls, he replied: "That is a petition which must be made with more solemnity. Go back to your native country, assemble a General Council of the bishops, clergy and nobles of the land, then by the common desire of that assembly let application be made for the palls through honourable envoys, and you shall have them."

Malachy and his friends remained a full month in Rome, visiting the holy places and edifying all by their religious demeanour. We may be sure the grave of Ivor O'Hagan would be amongst the first of the holy places visited, if only they could discover it. Malachy often conversed with the Pope about the state of religion in Ireland, and quite won the Holy Father's affection, as he won the affection of everybody with whom he had to do. When he was on the point of taking his departure, Innocent, as a mark of special esteem, placed his own mitre on the

---

mission to resign. This is exactly what the holy Doctor did when Peter the Venerable, Superior-General of the Cluniac Congregation of Benedictines, feeling called to an observance more in conformity with the letter and spirit of St. Benedict's Rule, decided to become a Cistercian, and besought him to obtain from Pope Eugenius the necessary permission. Bernard advised the Holy Father to refuse Peter nothing except leave to resign his office.

holy Bishop's head, and gave him besides the maniple and stole which he had been accustomed to use himself at the altar.

The Irish pilgrims visited Clairvaux again on the return journey. Malachy felt deeply disappointed at not being allowed to pass his remaining days in that hallowed spot. But if he might not remain at Clairvaux, perhaps he could bring Clairvaux with him to Ireland. Approaching Bernard, accompanied by four of his travelling companions, he said to him: "Let these, I beg of you, remain here for a while, that they may learn your manner of life and afterwards teach it to us. They shall be as a seed, and in that seed shall our whole nation be blessed." Christian O'Connarchy, the future bishop of Lismore and papal legate in Ireland, is the only one of the four whose name has come down to us. He was brother to the sinner Malchus, whom Malachy cured of spiritual and corporal ailments when he first went to Bangor. Malchus had himself become one of the Saint's favourite disciples.

As they were passing through Scotland on their way home, Malachy and his friends were summoned to the presence of King David. The monarch's only son, Henry, lay at the point of death, and the heart-broken father entreated the holy Bishop to pray for the sick youth. Malachy having blessed some water, sprinkled the patient therewith, then said to him: "Be of good cheer, son, you shall not die this time." Next day Henry was as well as ever. The king desired to detain Malachy at his castle, but the Saint was impatient to be home, and immediately resumed his journey.

We do not know the exact place where Malachy met King David, but St. Bernard's narrative seems to imply that it must have been in Wigtonshire, close to the village of Cruggleton. In this village a dumb girl over whom Malachy prayed miraculously acquired or recovered the power of speech. At Kirk Mochrum (called by St. Bernard St. Michael's Church), a dozen miles distant, he restored the use of reason to a poor demented woman, who was brought to him bound with cords because of her extreme violence. Thence he travelled to the port of Cairngarroch, Stonykirk, whence he intended to cross over to Bangor. Whilst waiting here for a ship, he and the few disciples that still remained with him constructed a little oratory of hurdles and surrounded it with a fence. An open space enclosed with the oratory he consecrated as a burial-ground. Numerous miracles wrought in this consecrated spot testified for years after to the efficacy of the holy Bishop's benediction.

## CHAPTER VII

SAINT BERNARD'S FIRST LETTER TO MALACHY—MALACHY AS PAPAL LEGATE — HIS POVERTY, HUMILITY AND GENERAL CHARACTER—MIRACLES AND PROPHECIES—FASTING AGAINST THE KING—TAMING THE SHREW

**M**ALACHY arrived in Bangor, after nearly twelve months' absence, about the close of the year 1140. The news of his arrival spread quickly far and wide, and brought immense crowds, made up of all ranks and conditions, to welcome him home. Almost immediately after his return he sent some more of his disciples for training to Clairvaux, and by them he sent a walking-stick, presumably an Irish blackthorn, for the special use of Abbot Bernard. They were also the bearers of a letter to the holy Doctor, which, with the rest of Malachy's correspondence, has been unhappily lost. But St. Bernard's answer enables us to divine the contents of his friend's communication. It runs as follows :

“ To his venerable lord and most blessed father, Malachy, by the grace of God archbishop of the Irish and legate of the Apostolic See, Brother Bernard, styled abbot of Clairvaux, sends greeting and prays that he may find favour with the Lord.

“ Amidst the many cares and anxieties of my heart, by the multitude whereof ‘ my soul is troubled exceedingly ’ (*Ps.* vi, 4), the brothers, come hither

