

A Record of Armagh 1861

Record of The City of Armagh from the earliest period to the present time

Edward Rogers

1861

The compiler of this treatise has selected from the writings of Camden, Bede, O'Flaherty, Ware, Archdall, Stuart, Reeves, and the Annals of the Four Masters, such information relative to the City of Armagh, as he trusts will prove interesting to the general reader.

To those who have not access to works of greater pretensions, this brochure may be acceptable, as it contains, in a condensed form, a faithful and impartial description of every thing of importance, tending to throw light upon the past and present History of a City which was once the seat of learning for the British Isles.

Ancient Names by which it was know.

INNUMERABLE difficulties attend the elucidation of the ancient topography of the City of Armagh ; little or no information relative to this subject is to be obtained from foreign, and not much from domestic writers. It is, however, believed to have been early inhabited. MacDermot, in the explanation to his Topographical and Historical Map of Ancient Ireland, states that Ardmacha, or Armagh, was in the earliest ages colonized by the *Nemdians*, who were Celto-Scythians. The Celts were descended from Gomer, and the Scythians from Magog, two sons of Japhet, son of Noah ; and both these people originally dwelt in the countries near the Euxine and Caspian Seas, on the borders of Europe and Asia.

Ardmacha, Ardmak, Armachana, or the hill of Macha, now Armagh, was so called either from Macha, Queen of Ireland, who had her residence at Emania A.M. 3603, or from Macha, wife of Nemedius, who was supposed to have been buried there more than a thousand years before the Christian era. The derivation of the word adopted by Ussher is Ardmach, the high place or field, which is perfectly descriptive of the ground on which the City stands. O'Donovan, however, states that no Irish scholar ever gave it that interpretation. Ptolemy, the great Egyptian geographer, who lived in the reign of Antoninus Pius, about the year of Christ 120, in writing of ancient Ireland of the first century, enumerates among its several illustrious cities, REBA and RIGIA, or REGIA, concerning which, great diversity of opinion has existed. In Ptolemy's Index, *Reba* is thus described, "*Citta d'Ibernia—Armachana*," and to *Regia* is prefixed, "*Arcdinath*," (Dublin). Ware, in his description of the places of Ancient Ireland, mentioned by Ptolemy, says of *Regia* : " Mercator takes this place to be Limerick, which cannot well be, in regard it is enumerated by Ptolemy among the Mediterranean cities." Camden, from its name and situation, thinks it is some place near Lough Ree. He then defines *Reba* to be "*Rheba*, situated on the river Barrow, in the County Kildare." In the III Vol. of the " Irish Academy Transactions," there is a valuable paper from Mr. Beaufort on this subject, in which he endeavours to explain some difficulties which appear in Ptolemy's geography of this kingdom. Speaking of REGIA, he says : " This city is supposed by Mercator to be Limerick, but by its latitude and longitude in Ptolemy's tables, it appears to be EAMANIA, or Eamhan, situated near Armagh, and at present called Rath-N'Eavan, or the Port of Navan, whose remains consist of a circular entrenchment of considerable extent." This view appears

to be the most correct, for *Emania*, according to the account given by the natives of ancient Ireland of the second century, is the same in geographical position as the *Regia* of Ptolemy. In one of the oldest maps of this kingdom, annexed to O'Connor's "Dissertations," entitled, "A Map of Ireland agreeably to the times of Ptolemy," *Rigia* is represented as *Emania*. This term, *Rigia*, as applied to Armagh by Gibbon and others, may probably have been given in compliment to the *Royal* founder, from whom the city is supposed to have derived its name; thus, *Regia civitas* or *sedes*. St. Fiech calls it the "seat of empire." Cambrensis styles Armagh, the "capital of Ireland." Bede calls it "Dearmach," *i.e.* a field of oaks, where St. Patrick built a very fine city; but he subjoins a romantic circumstance, *viz.*, "that the model of it was drawn for him by the angels." Cluverius, p. 112, calls it the "head of the kingdom," and adds, "after it, Dublin was second." Jocelyn, who wrote about the year 1182, in the 69th chapter of his life of St. Patrick, speaks of Dublin, in the time of that saint, as a small village—*pagus exiguus*.

"Near unto the river Kalin is Ardmagh, which (albeit it maketh a poor show) is the Archiepiscopal See and Metropolitan of the whole Island. Before St. Patrick had built there a fair city, for site, form, quantity, and compass, modelled out by the appointment and direction of angels, this place was called *Driumsalich*. The Irish tell much that it received the name of Queen Armacha; but the better opinions are, that it is the same which Bede calleth *Dearmach*, and out of the Scottish and Irish language interpreted) it 'the field of oaks.'"—(*Vita Pat. Mar. Scot.*)

The City of Armagh is the principal town in the County of the same name, and the Archiepiscopal See of the Primate of all Ireland. To point out the precise time when Armagh was first built would be a vain attempt, and not reasonably to be expected, especially if it be considered that few cities are laid out all at once. It is situated on the sloping sides of an ascent originally denominated *Druimsailech*, "the hill of sallows," changed to *Ard Sailech*, the height of sallows, and then to *Ard-Macha*, most probably *Eamhuin-Macha*, the palace of the Kings of Ulster, which stands in its vicinity. These sallows were evidently used in the construction of dwelling-houses for the original settlers.

Saint Patrick.

The chronology of St. Patrick's history is very uncertain, but the best authorities agree in fixing A.D. 458 as the year in which he founded the Cathedral, the site of which was given by Daire, the chieftain of the district, who resided on the summit of the hill where the Cathedral now stands, and was afterwards known by the name of Rath-Daire. In the year following he held at Armagh his first synod, the canons of which are still in existence. (*Wilkin's Con., Vol. I.*)

This Cathedral has been so often battered by invaders and so often repaired by the native Irish in the fashion of the age in which the new alterations took place, that we cannot make any use of it as evidence. It appears from the authority of the Tripartite Life of the founder, to have been an oblong structure 140 feet in length, and divided into nave and choir, according to the custom of the ancient churches.

The Irish had crypts to their stone churches, with insulated round towers. These crypts were not under, but upper crofts, situated in the roofs between the circular stone ceiling and the stone pediment roof, as the churches of Glendaloch and Cashel. On this account the roofs of the Irish churches were raised remarkably high, which gave them a different appearance from those of

the Saxons. The Irish do not appear to have built in lime and stone prior to the ninth century, from which period stone-roofed churches and round towers became common in this island. The ancient wooden churches and other edifices of the Irish, being easily destroyed by fire, were constantly exposed to the depredations of the Danes and other roving plunderers. There were no other means of saving the sacred relics, vestments, &c, of the churches, and the wealth of the inhabitants, than by hiding them in subterraneous caves. The method, therefore, of building churches entirely of stone, with upper crofts, was a great improvement, as it gave a place of security to the goods of the inhabitants as well as to the sacred utensils ; for the churches being entirely of stone, could not be easily burnt ; and the entrances into the upper crofts being only by narrow stairs, or by ladders through stone trap doors, they could not be plundered without pulling down the building, which in those desultory expeditions they had seldom time to effect. This subject has been rendered very interesting by the Irish antiquarian, W. Beauford, in his “ Origin of the Ancient Irish Churches.”

In the year 1145, Gelasius built an immense kiln or furnace for making lime to repair the edifices in Armagh—a proof that lime had long previously been used in their construction. This kiln appears to have been quadrangular, and was of the extraordinary dimension of 60 feet on every side. The ancient method of using this lime was to reduce it to a thin or semi-liquid mortar, with a portion of fine sand ; which being thus prepared, was poured into the internal joints of the walls. This process is designated *grouting*.

St. Patrick also laid out a largo city, beautiful in situation, drew to it inhabitants, and established there schools and seminaries of education. Not long after he resigned the primacy, and it is alleged, spent the remainder of his days in retirement and contemplation. He died on 17th March, in the 120th year of his age, in consequence of which that day has been observed for his commemoration in Ireland to the present time. He was buried in the Abbey of Saul, a church which he himself had founded at Downpatrick. The year of his death is uncertain, but according to most writers it was A.D. 493. Cambrensis gives the following inscription on his tomb:

“ In Down, three Saints one grave do fill,—
Bridget, Patrick, and Columbkil.”

In a description of the principal towns in Ireland, extracted from Holinshed’s Chronicle, we read that “ the town of Ardmagh is said to be enemie to rats, and if anie be brought hither, presentlie it dieth, which the inhabitants impute to the praier of St. Patrick.”

The credulous Jocelyn states, that sometime before his death, “ St. Patrick gathered together the several tribes of serpents and venomous creatures to a hill in Connaught, and drove them headlong into the Western Ocean, and that from hence hath proceeded that exemption which Ireland enjoys from all poisonous reptiles.”

’Twas on the top of this big hill
St. Patrick preached his sermon,
That drove the frogs into the bogs,
And bothered all the vermin.
The toads went pop, the frogs went plop,
Slap-dash into the water,
And the snakes committed suicide,
To save themselves from slaughter.

In the course of his missionary labours, St. Patrick determined to adopt the most effectual means for transmitting to posterity the doctrines which he had so sedulously taught. Under this impression he founded at Armagh

A School,

which in process of time became famous throughout Europe. The foundation of the School of Armagh is to be traced to a very remote period in the judgment of those who are the champions of Irish antiquity, while this seems to be little more than conjecture in the estimation of others ; but of its early existence there can be no question. Like every similar school of learning in Europe, even of more modern date, it was insignificant in its commencement, but we find, even so late as the end of the 12th century, though many changes had taken place, and a long night of darkness had intervened, that the last of the Irish Kings, an encourager of learning, augmented the income of the Superior of Armagh College, stipulating that this *studium generale* should be continued to be kept open for all students who should come to Armagh.

“ The College of Armagh,” writes Fitzgerald, vol. 1, p. 155, “ ranked for many centuries amongst the most celebrated seminaries in Europe, having at one time 7,000 students within its walls. Roderick O’Connor made a grant to its professors. Gildas, a disciple of St. Patrick, and the most ancient of the British historians, is said to have presided over it. The studies pursued in the Irish colleges were, theology, grammar, rhetoric, logic, music, geometry, astronomy and architecture.” In the “ Popular Encyclopædia,” published at Glasgow, we find that, “ in the middle ages Armagh was an extensive and populous city, and celebrated for its learning, having at one time 7,000 students at its college.” But in more modern times, or three or four centuries preceding the Reformation, all the Irish colleges had passed into comparative insignificance, with the exception of that of Armagh ; the high estimation in which that college was held, was attested by a synod of twenty-six Bishops, which Primate Gelasius convened at Clane (Diocese of Kildare), in 1162, when it was decreed, “ that no person, for the time to come, should be admitted as a public reader in Divinity, unless he had been a student fostered or adopted by Armagh.”

Charlemagne of France placed the University of Paris and that of Ticinum, *i.e.* Pavia (the two first formed establishments of the kind on the Continent of Europe), under the care of two Irishmen—Albin and Clement, as best qualified to preside over such institutions. Aigilbert, the first bishop of the Western Saxons, and afterwards Bishop of Paris, also Alfred King of Northumberland, were educated in Ireland, most probably at Armagh,

Thus we see that Armagh was a chief seat of literature and religion, a “ blazing star,” when most parts of the western world were involved in darkness and superstition. “ In the minds of the English it should excite sentiments of gratitude and affection for our country, for it was to this seminary of education that England was in a great degree indebted for the rudiments of learning which have ultimately exalted her to such a pitch of glory.”

“ Our Anglo-Saxons,” writes Camden, “ went in those times to Ireland as if to a fair, to purchase knowledge ; and we often find in our authors, that if a person were absent from his own country, it was generally said of him, by way of proverb, that he was sent to Ireland to receive his education. It even appears that our ancestors, the ancient Anglo-Saxons, had learned the use of characters in Ireland ; and from the Irish, our ancient English ancestors appear to have received their method of joining letters, and obviously made use of the same characters which the Irish now employ.”—P. 730. Bede, in his Church History, 13. III., C.27,

writes : “ There were in Ireland many nobles and gentry from among the English, who in the time of Finanus and Colmanus, who having withdrawn themselves thither, either for the sake of divine study, or to learn more chaste lives : all of them the Scots most freely admitted, and supplied them *gratis* with daily sustenance, with books and masters.” Macpherson says : “ In the 5th, 6th, and 7th centuries, religion flourished in Ireland to such a degree, that it was commonly styled the mother country of. saints, and reputed “ the kingdom of arts and sciences.” In the 8th century

A Culdean Monastery

was erected in Armagh. This establishment is mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters, and Ulster, A.D. 920, where it is recorded that Godfrey, King of the Danes in Dublin, plundered Armagh, but spared the church of the Culdees. Usher asserts that there were Culdees, *Cultores Dei*, in all the chief churches of Ulster, and that some of them continued at Armagh down to the 17th century. “ In our memory,” says that eminent scholar, “ were priests called Culdees, who celebrated divine service in the choir ; their president was styled Prior, and he acted as Precentor ; he had the most honourable seat at table, and every respect was paid him by the body.” The appointment of this officer, as we find from Archbishop Swaine’s registry, was vested in the whole body or college, and confirmed by the Archbishop of Armagh.

The Culdees, according to Bede and other authorities, lived by the labour of their own hands ; they were permitted to marry, but not to keep their wives in their own houses. They possessed many things in common, but other matters were divided at their decease, amongst their wives and children. In each Culdee college there were generally twelve brethren, one of whom was the Prior by election. By an inquisition taken in 1542, it appears that there were then within the precincts of the priory one great hall and a messuage built therein, and another great hall and messuage. In 1620 the Priory was forsaken, and the rents were then appropriated in erecting stalls in the cathedral.

About this time the city seems to have increased in size and population, as it contained, besides the cathedral, several other churches and religious establishments. The remains of some of these buildings were visible as late as 1819.

The Church or Abbey of SS. Peter and Paul.

The Annals of Ulster and of the Pour Masters record the *erection* of a *damhliag*, or stone church, called *Regles Poil agus Pedair*, or the Abbey Church of SS. Paul and Peter at the year 1126—a church, the original erection of which is erroneously ascribed by Ware, Stuart and others, to St. Patrick, and its consecration by the Archbishop Celsus. In modern times the site belongs to a Presbyterian place of worship. Some remains of the arches and walls may be seen in the rear of Mr. J. Davidson’s property, and in a yard belonging to Mr. George Robinson, Abbey street. (See A.D. 1557.) The sombre ruins of

The Franciscan Abbey,

in the Primate’s demesne (completed in 1266 by Primate O’Scanlan) even now attract the attention of the antiquary and tourist. The ruins of this ancient building of considerable magnitude, are covered with old ivy, having only the western archway and some fragments of high walls remaining, the solidity of which, together with their protected situation, will preserve them for some time from total decay. In this district the Irish apostle is said to have fixed his residence during the time he was occupied in building the city. The interior of this

abbey was used as a burying-place by the inhabitants and neighbouring districts, until the time of Primate Robinson. As far as can be ascertained, the last person interred there was "Terence Nugent," of Castledillon, who died in 1741. The cemetery originally lay to the south and east of the Friary, occupying the ground on which the garden now stands ; several skulls and human bones have been exhumed by the labourers. These premises, together with all their tenements and buildings in Armagh, were, in 1620, incorporated with the demesne lands of the See.

The public road from this cemetery to the city, marked in Rocque's Map as "Abbey-Lane," ran almost in a straight line to Lower Irish Street, and terminated on the premises held by the survivors of the late Robert Macan. Another road similarly marked ran northwards in a direct line through Mr. Boyd's premises in Dobbin-Street, terminating in a narrow street (Prentice's Lane), within 100 feet of Thomas-Street.

Near this Abbey, on the site of the gardener's house, stood the Marble Polishing Mill of Thomas Ogle. When Primate Robinson came to Armagh he was advised to remove this establishment, and drain "Parkamore Lake," which was behind the spot he had fixed on to build the palace, lest its exhalations should prove injurious to the air of his demesne. A little way to the west, near the ice house, is the locality known formerly as the "Gallows-hill."

The Bishop's Court.

In the townland of Mullinure, between the Asylum and Grange Church, is the site of the old Bishop's Court, once the residence of the Primates. Not a trace of the extensive ruins of this establishment now remains, nor have we any historical evidence of the period of its erection. The late John Corry, who wrote a valuable article on this subject, states that "it was erected early in the thirteenth century. The quantity of charcoal and ashes found in the building afford a reasonable ground for supposing that it was destroyed by fire ; and the latest coins found there being minted about 1371, it may safely be inferred that its destruction took place not long after that date." About thirty years ago the land on which it stood fell into the hands of Mr. Humphreys, and subsequently was held by the late Mr. H. Magill, both of whom demolished every vestige of the building, and used the materials for the repair of roads. A great number of very curious coins, leaden seals, and *fibulae* were found on the premises. The holy water stoup, discovered at the northern department, is in the possession of the widow of the late Henry Magill, but a trowel, together with several pieces of finely sculptured white sandstone have fortunately been procured from Mr. James Magill and presented to the Museum of the Armagh Natural History and Philosophical Society. Those who recollect the ruins affirm that it was an oblong building with occasional projections, occupying nearly an acre of ground, and measuring about 230 feet in length, with a court-yard in the interior. At the time specified the outer walls in some places were 15 feet high and 9 feet thick, and the apartments were large and well defined. A fuller description of this interesting spot will be found in the Appendix to Dr. Reeves' "Ancient Churches of Armagh," from the pen of the late John Corry, who is celebrated by that distinguished scholar as the "best antiquary whom Armagh has given birth to."

Ancient Topography

—The ancient topography of this city has been faithfully described by the above eminent authority on Irish Antiquities Dr. Reeves, who has had the rare opportunity of consulting the secret papers preserved in the muniment room of the Armagh Record office. The careful

study of these manuscripts has enabled that gentleman not only to trace out the sites, but to identify the remains of almost every ecclesiastical building mentioned by our early annalists.

“ Out of the ten recorded churches that existed here at the period of the English invasion, two only remain ; while of the rest the very site is in some mere matter of conjecture, and in others with difficulty determined. St. Patrick’s first Church in Armagh is now represented by the Bank of Ireland. The Provincial Bank comes close on St. Columba. St. Bride’s shares its honours with a paddock. St. Peter and St. Paul afford stabling and garden produce to a modern *rus in urbe*. St. Mary’s is lost in a dwelling-house, and the Culdee Society can only be traced by head rent and bones to a region in the city, whence their successors are content to derive income, where in these days of luxury and airy streets they would be very unwilling to make their abode.”

Dr. Reeves then states that in early times Armagh “ consisted of two main departments ; the Rath, which was the nucleus, and the Trians or Wards, which were three in number, and formed the outer belt of habitation. * * * The upper enclosure or entrenchment, commencing on the west, observed very much the course of Callan-street—the circle being continued across Abbey-street, a little below the Infirmary, and through the gardens round to Market street. The lower enclosure leaves still a trace where it crosses Abbey street at the Wesleyan Chapel. Within the upper ring all the edifices were ecclesiastical.

‘ 1. There was the Great Stone Church, probably occupying part of the site of the present Cathedral. In 1020 it was burned. In 1125 it was re-roofed and covered with shingles by Celsus. It served as the principal church until 1268, when Primate O’Sannail, he who founded the Franciscan Abbey, commenced the Great Church of Armagh. This building probably required a long period for completion ; but when finished, was enduring, and after repeated conflagrations, changes of masters, and re-edification, here it remains, the pride of the province and the glory of its noble restorer.

‘ 2. The Round Tower. Like other ancient churches of this character, the early Cathedral of Armagh seems to have had no steeple, but nigh at hand, probably about 40 feet from the N. W. angle, stood the Bell-tower. This round tower had a conical *cap*, as we learn from the Four Masters, who at 1121 state that ‘ a great wind storm happened in the December of this year which knocked off the cover of the Cloictech’ How long the tower survived the decapitation we know not.

‘ 3. Within the Rath was the Sabhal or Barn which was burnt in the conflagrations of 916 and 1020. Its site cannot be exactly determined, but it probably stood near the extremity of the north transept of the present Cathedral.

‘ 4. The next was ‘ the Stone Church of the Elections,’ which also suffered in the fires of 910 and 1020. It stood on the south side of the present Cathedral. Rocque marks the spot by a small oblong trace in the angle of the south transept and choir, and styles it ‘ the Parish Church.’

‘ 5. Forming part of the monastic group was the Library or ‘ House of Writing.’ This was the only building within the Rath which escaped the great fire of 1020. Though the Library escaped, the books were consumed in the houses of the students. Where shall we place this PSEUCHES IATREION ?

‘ 6. Within the Rath was also the Abbot’s residence, which was frequently burnt by lightning. The only guide we have to the site of the Abbot’s house is the distribution of the belt of ground which surrounds the Cathedral. The first mention of it is in the Annals of Ulster at 822, and in 1116 when it was burned with twenty-three houses. At this time it is probable that the Primate’s Armagh residence was transferred to the Bishop’s Court at Mullinure.

‘ 7. The kitchen, about 17 feet long, was consumed by the fire of 915.

‘ 8. Then there was the Prison.

‘ 9. Somewhere near the conventual buildings was a sacred grove or shrubbery.

‘ 10. The Cemetery probably occupied at first the space next the great church on the south. In after time it extended all round. Here it is probable the remains of Brian Boru were deposited in 1014.

‘ 11. The Culdees’ House was originally of considerable extent, for in 1462 the Primate had his Armagh residence in it, as we learn from Prene’s Registry.

‘ 12. The Hospice or Fort of Guests. It is doubtful whether this structure was inside the Rath, as there is no mention of it in the Annals. In all the conflagrations no mention is made of this spot.

‘ 13. The Rath had an entrance which is mentioned in the Annals at 1121, 1160, outside of which stood a cross. I think we may safely assign the situation of this to the top of Market-street, where is the eastern entrance of the Cathedral premises. In the 17th century this Rath or Fort resumed its primitive condition of a fortress. For, in 1561, according to the Four Masters, the Lord Deputy Sussex ‘ pitched his camp of numerous hosts at Armagh, and erected strong Rathes and impregnable ramparts around the Great Church of Armagh, in order that he might have warders continually guarding that place.’ Happily the crenelated walls are now gone, and in the absence of material defence, the Rath derives its present strength from the general consent that it contains the best ordered Church and the most efficient choir in the island ; and that if it be desired to witness the perfection of Choral Service, within the Rath of Armagh is the building where, *par excellence*, the wish may be gratified. Then as to the building which Rocque lays down on his Map on the north end of the Wind-mill to the west of the Cathedral, I have not found the slightest vestige of a notice. I must leave the question undetermined. Rocque marks the site of the Church which he calls ‘ the place where St. Bride’s Church stood,’ and fixes it 100 feet from the street where the Bank of Ireland now stands. Rocque is right to an extent in calling it St. Bride’s Church ; but he is altogether in error when he takes the temple Na Fearta, or Church of Wonders, to be on the Wind-mill Hill.’

Although the general suppression of religious houses, even considered in a political light only, was of a vast national benefit, yet it must be allowed that at the time they flourished, they were not entirely useless. Monasteries were even the repositories, as well as Seminaries, of learning ; many valuable books and national records, as well as private evidences have been preserved in their libraries, the only places wherein they could have been safely lodged in those turbulent, times : many of them which had escaped the ravages of the Danes, were destroyed with more than Gothic barbarity at their dissolution. Every Abbey had at least one person whose office it was to instruct youth ; and to the Monks, the Historians of this country

are chiefly indebted for the knowledge they possess of former national events. The arts of painting, music, and architecture were also successfully cultivated within their walls. These religious houses were likewise hospitals for the sick and poor, many of both being daily relieved by them : they also afforded lodging and entertainment to travellers at a time when there were no inns.

Emania, And The Red Branch Knights.

“ About two miles westwards of the city,” writes Dr. Stuart, “ near the Callan, at a place called the Navan Hill, stands Emania, and with it is associated the great and glorious achievements of the renowned Red Branch Knights of Ulster. There are accounts given of the great legislative assemblies held there in those early ages, and of magnificent entertainments by the Kings.” Colgan states that in his time (1647) “ there were extensive remains of Emania. The Irian Kings of the posterity of Ir, ruled over Ulster for a period of nearly seven centuries, viz., from about 850 years A.C. to A.D. 332, and had their chief residence at the palace of Emania. These monarchs established an order of warriors who were highly celebrated, and known by the name of Knights of the Red Branch.”

O’Flaherty (pp. 104, 105), who makes Emania as a canon for ascertaining the succession of the Monarchs of Ireland, says that Kimbaitus was the original founder of Emania, and that it was he who first fixed his residence there A.M. 3590.

“ Kimbaitus primo Maio moderaminis urbem,
Regibus Emaniam Condidit Ultoniæ.”

O’Connor on the same authority (p. 107) writes, that the sumptuous Palace of Emania, surrounded with ditches and ramparts, is one of the chief instances we can produce of architectural magnificence among the ancient Scots. It was built near Ardmacha, and makes a signal era in the history of the nation. The Palace itself was burnt down A.D. 332 (O’Connor p. 156), by the grandson of Carbry Lissecar, after it had stood for 684 years ; affording through that long period such examples of splendour, greatness, and economy as do honour not only to the Rudrician (Rex Rudricius, A.M. 3845), but the whole Milesian race.

A town-land close beside the Navan Hill is still denominated Crieve Row, which was the site of the residence of the Red Branch Knights. ‘ Around this hill, between the base and the summit, is a fosse and moate or earthen rampart, the whole comprising an area of about twelve acres. There are also to be found some circular mounds or forts ; so that these remains of earth-works of such an extent as to include twelve acres, demonstrate the greatness of the ancient Palace and fortresses of Emania. Dr. Stuart also states that in an adjoining place called Trea, there is an earthen rampart or mound still traditionally called “ the stable of the Kings.”

The Book of Armagh.

“ This manuscript,” writes the antiquary Lhuyd, “ is beyond all doubt of very great antiquity, whether it may have been written in part by the hand of St. Patrick himself, or whether it be, as appears to me more probable, the work of some later age.”

Mac Dermott, in his Annotations to the Annals of the Four Masters, says, “ that the Book of Armagh, a MS. of the 7th century, on vellum, in Irish and Latin, contains a Life of St.

Patrick, and his Confession, or a sketch of his life written by himself ; also a Life of St. Martin of Tours ; a copy of the Gospels, and other matters. This book is mentioned by Dr. Bernard in his Life of St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh ; it was, as a precious relic, preserved for ages in a silver shrine, which was lost ; and in modern times it was contained in a case of leather of elegant workmanship. This remarkable book was kept for many centuries in the family of Mac Moyre, near Armagh, who were specially appointed for its stewardship, but about the year 1680 it was taken to London by Florence Mac Moyre, who being in great poverty, sold it for £5 to a Mr. Brownlow." It is now in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. An account of the Book of Armagh is given by Ware, Ussher, and Dr. O'Connor, and copious extracts from it have been translated and published in that learned work, the " Irish Antiquarian Researches," by Sir Wm. Betham.

In the annals of history we read of no other town having suffered such a succession of misfortunes as the city of Armagh.

In 793 it was totally consumed by fire.

—830 it was in the possession of the Danes and Norwegians. Early in the 9th century the Danes established themselves in various parts of Ulster, and in 836, Turgesius at the head of a Danish force, pillaged and burnt the city of Armagh with the Cathedral and other sacred edifices, expelled the Bishop with all the students of the college, and burned every manuscript which the most minute search could discover. On six other occasions was the town laid waste by these same barbarians in the same century, and during the three following centuries Armagh was plundered thirteen times.

—839. Ardmacha, with its oratories and great church was burned by the Danes of Lough Neagh.

‘ During the reign of Nial Caille, writes Stuart, many battles were fought between the Irish and the Danes with various success. Nial finding himself sufficiently powerful to invade the territories conquered by the Danes in Ulster, advanced against Armagh, the head quarters of his savage enemies. The Danes, confident of success, met him, and the adverse hosts closed, spear to spear, man to man. The troops of Nial thirsting for vengeance, fought with a desperate valour which made them irresistible. The Danes were completely overthrown, and in the universal rout were slaughtered by the victorious Irish without mercy. Those who survived the battle fled towards the river Callan, probably to gain a temporary refuge in the Navan Fort. The river was swollen from a torrent of rain which had fallen and interrupted the march of the victorious army in their progress to Armagh.

‘ At the foot of Tullamore hill, which the river divides from Umgola, Nial halted his troops. At his command, one of his warriors endeavoured to pass the ford on horseback, but was instantly hurried from his steed by the impetuosity of the waters. Nial, who with strong emotions, saw him struggling for life, commanded his guards to make every effort for his preservation. In vain was the command obeyed ; terror fixed them to the spot immovable. The magnanimous King dashed forward with a generous resolution to save his friend or perish in the attempt. As he approached the bank of the river, the ground, undermined by the torrent, sank beneath his horse's feet, the monarch was precipitated into the flood, where death at once closed his career of victory and his life. His body was deposited in a grave dug in Tullamore, on the bank of the river where he had so prematurely perished. A simple mound of earth which tradition has from generation to generation denominated " Nial's Mound," lately marked the spot where the sovereign of Ireland lies in the silence of death.'

From this circumstance the stream bears the name of the Irish warrior who perished in its waters.

In 989 the town was plundered—the houses, church and steeple burnt, and Armagh at this time became the most melancholy spectacle in the kingdom.

— 1004, King Brian Boru with his army remained a whole week in Armagh, and on his departure left a collar of gold weighing 28 ounces, as alms, on the great altar of the Church.

At the battle of Clontarf, which took place on Good Friday, 23rd of April, 1014, this renowned Irish King fell, and by his will gave directions that his remains should be buried at Armagh, the Cathedral of which he had endowed with large donations of gold and cattle. On Easter Saturday, the day after the battle, the body was conveyed in solemn procession to Armagh where it arrived on the fourth day. The body was embalmed with great magnificence, and the remains, after lying in state for twelve successive nights, were then deposited in a stone coffin at the north side of the great altar of the Cathedral. The bodies of his two sons, together with the heads of his nephew, and the Prince of Desies, were buried at the same time in the south side of the Cathedral.

1020. The Irish ecclesiastical Bell of St. Patrick was plundered from Armagh by a body of marauders from County Down. This *Clog-an-uidheachta* is at present in the library of Dr. Todd, Trinity College, Dublin. The history of this curious relic, accompanied by four tinted lithographic engravings of the bell and its shrine, was written by Dr. Reeves, and published by M. Ward, of Belfast, who presented a copy, handsomely bound, to the Public Library, Armagh.

1074. Armagh was burned with all its churches and bells, both Rath and Trians (*i.e.* both enclosure and external buildings, liberties or streets beyond the Rath.)

At this time Armagh consisted of the Balk and *three* Trians, the latter term being applied generally in the same way as *quarters* with us. The Rath comprised the enclosure on the hill crowned by the present Cathedral. Of the other parts—the first was called the *Trian Mor*, or principal part ; the second—the *Trian Masson* or *Massan* third ; and the last, the *Trian Saxon* or English third, from the number of English students resident in it.

1121. Two streets of the Trian Masain burnt, from the door of the Rath to the cross of Bridget ; and a great storm prevailed, which knocked off the cap of the bell-tower of Armagh.

1125. We find that Celsus tiled the roof of the Great Duleek or Stone Church which had been in part uncovered for the space of 130 years.

1165. Armagh was in part consumed by fire, and in 1167 it was wasted by an immense conflagration which raged on the one side from the cross of St. Columba in Abbey-street to that of St. Eugene or Owen, and from thence to the cross at Port Rath. The intermediate buildings and Churches, except that dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, were totally consumed by fire.

1166. Armagh burned in two streets, from the cross of Columkille to the cross of Bishop Eoghan, and from the cross of Bishop Eoghan, in the second street, to the cross at the door of the Rath, and all the Rath with its temples, except the Abbey Church of Peter and Paul, and a

few of the houses, and a street to the west of the Rath, from the cross of Sechnall to the cross of Brigid.

1172. A Synod was held at Armagh by Gelasius and the Irish Clergy. The subject of their deliberation was to inquire into the cause of the arrival of so many strangers into their country to invade it, and they concluded that it was their “ practice of purchasing Englishmen and making them slaves,” subjected them to divine vengeance.

1178. Wm. Fitz-Adhelm, Chief Governor of Ireland, removed a relic from Armagh called “ the Staff of Jesus,” and deposited it in Christ’s Church, Dublin. This was the Crozier of St. Patrick, which was ornamented with jewels and precious stones, and preserved with all veneration at Armagh. In 1538, the gems and golden ornaments being removed, it was publicly burnt, together with many other relics, in High-street, Dublin, by order of Archbishop Brown.

Ancient Crosses.

It appears that there were in the middle of the twelfth century four stone Crosses in Armagh, a fifth was brought by Bishop Prene from Raphoe in 1439, when he was appointed to the Primacy. This is supposed to be the Cross which stood in Market-street, and which now lies prostrate in the Cathedral yard. Dr. Reeves rather thinks it was an altar cross. Besides these there were two crosses in the Cathedral burying-ground, one at the north and the other at the south side of the church. A fragment of one of these crosses, called “ St. Patrick’s Chair,” is buried beneath the spot where it formerly stood near the grand entrance at the west end of the Cathedral.

These crosses probably were boundaries and limits of certain jurisdictions, but where they stood, writes Dr. Reeves, it is impossible to say.

1264. Primate O’Sconnail introduced the Friars Minor into Armagh and built for them a Church (in the Primate’s demesne), around which, some time after, he caused a deep and broad trench to be sunk.

1268. The Great Church of Armagh was commenced by Primate O’Sconnail. Ware says that “ he repaired and much beautified the Cathedral of St. Patrick at Armagh.” According to this the Great Church or *Tempall Mor*, is the same as the Duleek, mentioned 1125, which with the other churches at Armagh was destroyed in 1189, and had perhaps continued in a ruinous state until Primate O’Sconnail set about re-building it.

1347. The celebrated Fitz-Ralph, commonly called *Armachanus*, became Primate of Armagh. Besides being the author of many learned works, he wrote the “ Defensorium curatorum contra eos qui privilegiatos sedicunt,” the *oldest* if not the most valuable book in the Armagh Library. It was printed at Paris, 20th Oct., 1461.

1465. To assimilate the customs, dress and manners of the English and Irish people, Parliament enacted that every Irishman should be dressed after the manner of the English, and should shave their beard above the mouth and take an English name, derived either from an art or science, trade or colour. Hence have we Smiths, Taylors, Carpenters, Butlers, Cooks, White, Black, Green, Scarlet, Grey, Brown, Field, Street, Lane, Wall, Stone, &c, &c.

1480. Octavian de Palatio, a Florentine, was made Archbishop of Armagh, and seeing there the barbarous manners of the common people, their diet and nakedness, he is said to have exclaimed—

Armagh is notorious
For being vainglorious.
The men void of manners ; their spouses
Go naked : they eat
Raw flesh for their meat,
And poverty dwells in their houses.

Moryson, part iii., p. 104, after quoting these vulgar lines, proceeds to write of Armagh, and gives a general description of the Irish customs in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, from which the following is an extract :

“ These wild Irish never set any candles upon tables since indeed they have none, but set their meate upon a bundle of grasse, and use the same grasse for napkins to wipe their hands. To give light to tho house they place a great caundle, made of reedes and butter, upon the floore. And in like sort the chiefe men in their houses make fiers in the middest of the roomes, the smoake whereof goeth out at a hole in the top thereof. They sleep under the canopy of heaven or in a poore house of clay, or in a cabin made of the boughes of trees and covered with turffe, for such are the dwellings of the very Lords among them. And in such places they make a fier in the middest of the roome, and round about it they sleep upon the ground without straw or other thing under them, lying all in a circle about the fier, with their feete towards it. And their bodies being naked, they cover their heads and shoulders with their mantells, which they first make very wet, steeping them in water of purpose, for they finde that when their bodies have once warmed the wet mantells, the sinoko of them keeps their bodies in temperate heate all the night following.”

Strabo, who wrote his Geography about A.D. 19, speaks thus of the manners of the Irish at that early period :

“ I have nothing certain to say about Ireland, unless that the inhabitants are ruder than those of Britain ; they feed on human flesh and devour very much food, and think it right to eat the bodies of their dead parents,” *et pejora dicit*.

In 1557 an Inquisition was held at Armagh, whereby we find that James O'Donnely, the last Prior, surrendered the Abbey, being then in possession of the site thereof ; at which time there was a large church, some stone chambers, a dormitory with cellars beneath it, an hall, a stone house, a great court, a cemetry, garden and orchard. This Abbey and all the possessions thereunto belonging were granted in 1612 to Sir Toby Caulfeild at the rent of £5 Irish per annum.

The Condition of Armagh in 1566

is thus described by Camden : “ In our memory the Church and City of Armagh were so foully defaced by the rebel Shane O'Neal that they lost all their ancient beauty and glory, and nothing remaineth at this time but a few small wattled cottages.”

1614. The Cathedral which had been destroyed by Shane O'Neal was restored by Primate Hampton ; the walls with their windows reconstructed, the aisles re-roofed and the steeple rebuilt. He also recast the great bell and repaired the old Episcopal House, to which he added sundry new buildings. In 1689, King James II., on his way to Charlemont, stayed some days at Armagh, and resided in a house (an inn) in Abbey-street, lately occupied by a blacksmith named Magill ; and in the year following, 1690, Duke Schomberg took possession of Armagh and occupied the same quarters. In 1792 we find that the place was almost in ruins. Part of the materials were used in building a Presbyterian Church, erected on the site of the old Abbey, from which the street derives its name. Since then the grounds contiguous were known as the " Gravel Walks," where John Wesley was won't to preach. The premises were subsequently tenanted by Richardson, Magill, and Dobbin. On this interesting site now stands the " Protestant Hall and Reading Room."

25th January, 1690. Story in his History of the Wars of Ireland, p. 12, writes : " Stores of bread, cheese, shoes and other necessarirs were appointed at several places, especially at Armagh, the metropolis of the whole island."

Tradition has it that the line of march used by King James and Duke Schomberg on their way to Charlemont was over a bridle road or " desert lane" running between the Fever Hospital and the Blind Asylum.

1721. Primate Lindsey presented to the Vicars Choral a second organ for divine service, and a peal of six fine-toned bells for the Cathedral. On the day of their arrival it is said that an execution took place on Gallows-hill. The appointed hour arrived, and the crowd was in eager expectation for the appearance of the unfortunate victim, when intelligence came that the bells were on the Dublin road within a short distance of the city. In a moment the vast multitude dispersed, leaving the sheriff, *posse comitatus* and finisher of the law alone to discharge their painful duty. The horses were unyoked from the waggons and Tririnate Lindsey's merry hells were towed in triumph to their final resting place.

1726. Primate Boulter built four houses on Vicars'-hill for the reception of clergymen's widows, from a fund which by his will he appropriated to that purpose. These he endowed with £50 per annum. This locality was originally denominated " Pound Hill," from an enclosure which stood at the south-west corner leading to Kalin-street.

On 29th September, 1759, the Sovereign of the City, accompanied by several of the Burgesses, formally opened two new streets which they denominated Thomas-street and Ogle-street, which has proved of more essential service to the city than any other improvement which had been effected in the 18th century.

These streets were so called from the first and second name of " Thomas Ogle," who was Sovereign of the City in 1751. Notwithstanding this formal inauguration, Rocque's Map of 1700, as well as Livingstone's Survey of the City in 1707, ignore the existence of Ogle-street, and both assign the same name to the two distinct streets. Dr. Reeves in the Map which accompanies his " Ancient Churches of Armagh," has unhappily fallen into the same error.

To the munificence of nearly all the Archbishops, Armagh owes much, but her great benefactor and restorer was Richard Robinson who succeeded to the Primacy in 1765. Immediately after his promotion he repaired the Cathedral, and presented to the Vicars Choral a fine-toned organ incased in black oak exquisitely carved, bearing the arms of the donor. The

houses in Armagh about this time, with very few ceptions, were cottages covered with straw. The citizens were obliged to go to the neighbouring village of Richhill to purchase groceries and decent clothing, and it is said that letters were transmitted through that village for the people of Armagh.

Nineteen years before Primate Robinson's arrival, the city of Armagh is thus described in Salmon's Gazetteer, "once a considerable city, now reduced to a small village."

A record of the City of Armagh from the earliest period to the present time (1861)

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