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DOMINICANS OF TRIM, 1683-1710

HUGH FENNING, O.P.

IN THE PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES of the Irish Dominicans at Tallaght, Co. Dublin, there is a slim folio volume entitled *Liber Provinciae*, a register of Dominican personnel in Ireland during the years 1683-1710. It is a manuscript copy of notes made out by the Provincials on their annual visitation of the various convents. Despite its great usefulness and importance it still remains unpublished. The present article attempts to illustrate in the case of Trim, how much light this source can throw on local religious history during a period of great interest closed by the general exile of all the regular clergy in 1698.

The convent of Trim, founded in 1263 and suppressed in 1540, was revived in the 17th century about the year 1630. During the confederate war it, presumably, lapsed again, to be once more restored before 1664. From documents dated 1671* it appears that the community were resident in that year, not in Trim, but in Kilcock, so that when our register begins we have no way of knowing just where the Dominicans of Trim lived. The years covered by the register, so far as Trim is concerned, are 1683-89, and 1693-96. We will publish here the annual list of the community, a short biographical dictionary of the personnel (incorporating other data, particularly from O Heyne**), and brief notes on the fate of the exiled priests and their eventual return.

By way of general background, political and religious, it may be as well to say that the years under survey here are those which saw the star of James II rise and fall. He came to the throne in 1685 as a Catholic king, prepared to give full freedom to the Church. All over Ireland he was welcomed as the great liberator. Catholic ceremonial revived in public life. The friars appeared once more in their habits and began to receive novices, a sure indication that common life, common table, and choral office were restored. The black and white of the Dominican habit was seen once more in the narrow streets of Trim and in the surrounding countryside. But from 1689 James had to fight William of Orange for his throne, and that fight was fought and lost in Ireland by 1691, disrupting whatever measure of peace and toleration the Catholics had obtained. The Treaty of Limerick guaranteed their freedom of worship, but it was obvious by 1695 that the terms of that treaty would not be honoured. In 1698 a general exile of all regular clergy and those exercising episcopal jurisdiction was proclaimed. The penalty for those who remained or returned was, in practice, imprisonment until death or transportation.

These general trends find exact parallel in the register entries relating to Trim. From 1683 to 1689 the community grows in strength from four to seven or eight. Two or three novices are received. Then comes a three-year gap in the account, corresponding to the military upheaval of 1689-91. In Trim, the friars were directly in the path of the Williamite armies. One at least of the friars went with the Irish forces as chaplain, not only to Limerick, but to France. By 1693 the novices are no longer in evidence; the times are too unsettled for that. The lay brother, too, is gone. And the community holds its own with six priests until our record stops, ominously, in 1696.

* Published by W. P. Burke in "Irish Priests in Penal Times," Waterford, 1914.
** An Irish Dominican historian who wrote in 1706, "Epilogus Chronologicus, etc.," Louvain. 2nd edition Ambrose Coleman, O.P., Dundalk, 1902

LIBER PROVINCIAE: THE PRIORY OF TRIM

- 21st June, 1683: Thomas Nangle, prior. Dominic Carolan. Andrew Reilly. William Higgin (laybrother).
 Peter Gogarty instituted sub-prior, 26th June, 1683. Stephen Proctor sent to study in the province of Toulouse, 28th June, 1683. Thomas Nangle instituted prior 1684.
- 19th June, 1684: Thomas Nangle, prior. Peter Gogarty, sub-prior. Dominic Carolan. Andrew Reilly. William Higgin (laybrother). Thomas Nangle instituted prior, 17th March, 1684, and accepted on same day.
- 21st June, 1685: Thomas Nangle, prior. Peter Gogarty, sub-prior. Dominic Carolan. Andrew Reilly. Patrick Gosby, novice. William Plunkett, novice. James Russhell, novice. William Higgin, laybrother.
 Thomas Nangle had permission to receive novices in this convent this year. 24th June, 1685, Dominic Carolan appointed sub-prior of this convent.
- 14th June, 1686: Thomas Nangle, prior. Dominic Carolan, sub-prior. Peter Gogarty. Andrew Reilly. Patrick Caby. Dominic Plunkett, professed cleric. James Russhell, professed cleric. William Higgin, laybrother.
 24th June, 1686, Dominic Plunkett and James Russhell sent to study in the province of Bethica (Spain).
- 24th May, 1687: Thomas Nangle, prior. Dominic Carolan, sub-prior. Eugene Coigly. Peter Gogarty. Andrew Reilly. Patrick Caby. William Higgin, laybrother.
 25th May, 1687, Peter Gogarty instituted sub-prior; Dominic Carolan was absolved of that office. On the same day Eugene Coigly was instituted visitator of Gola.* 26th May, Eugene Coigly assigned to the convent of Derry.
- 12th June, 1688: Peter Gogarty, sub-prior. Thomas Nangle. Dominic Carolan. Andrew Reilly. Patrick Caby. William Higgins, laybrother.
 24th Aug., 1688, John Dillon given permission to receive novices in this convent.
- 5th July, 1689: John Dillion, prior. Eugene Cogly. Thomas Nangle. Andrew Reilly. Dominic Carolan. Patrick McCabe. Peter Dillon, professed cleric. William Higgins, laybrother.
 5th July, Peter Dillon assigned to Mullingar. 9th July, permission given to Peter Dillon to receive all holy Orders, minor and major.
- 1693: Thomas Nangle, prior. Bernard Cullen, sub-prior. Peter Gogarty. Andrew Reilly. Patrick Caby. Peter Nangle. Dominic Plunkett.
 16th July, 1695 (*sic*), Thomas Nangle instituted prior.
- 1694: Thomas Nangle, prior. Bernard Cullen, sub-prior. Peter Gogarty. Andrew Reilly. Patrick Caby. Peter Nangle. Dominic Plunkett.
- 1695: Thomas Nangle, prior. Bernard Cullen, sub-prior. Peter Gogarty. Patrick McCabe. Andrew Reilly. Peter Nangle.
- 1696: Thomas Nangle, prior. Bernard Cullen, sub-prior. Peter Gogarty. Patrick McCabe. Andrew Reilly. Peter Nangle.

* "Visitator" means one deputed to conduct canonical visitation of convents. In this case the Provincial could not visit Gola, near Enniskillen, personally, and appointed a capable priest to do it for him.

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY:

(incorporating two priests who stayed some months in Trim, listed elsewhere in the Register, and those recorded by O Heyne as living members of the community in 1706):

Caby (McCabe), Patrick: A member of the Trim community 1686-96, though perhaps stationed elsewhere during the three-year gap in our record, 1689-93. That he returned after the exile is proved by the fact that in 1738 he was able to testify in a questing dispute which parishes belonged to the priory of Dublin, and which to that of Trim.

Carolan, Dominic: A member of the community 1683-89. Sub-prior, 1685-87.

Cassin, John: In Trim for a while in 1685, en route from Waterford to Aghaboe.

Coigly (Quigley) Eugene: A son of the Coleraine priory, eulogised by the historian O Heyne in 1706: "... studied with remarkable success in Spain, and returning home, preached with such profound learning and eloquence that the Lord Primate (Dr. Maguire, O.P.) ... writes to me that in all Ireland he never heard a preacher equal to him. He was many times prior (*i.e.* of Coleraine), received several good young men to the habit and profession, and was as exact an observer of the rule as could be in that afflicted land." Dr. Maguire, the Primate, was in fact professed in the hands of Fr. Quigley. In 1655 Fr. Quigley petitioned Propaganda for special faculties to look after the spiritual welfare of the exiled Irish in Barbadoes, but does not appear to have ever gone there. Bl. Oliver Plunkett referred to him in 1671 as "one of the best preachers in the kingdom," and in 1673 records: "I have not yet heard of the arrest of any except a certain Fr. Eugene Quigley of the Order of St. Dominic, prior of Trim, ... in Mullingar." He was again prior of Trim in 1678, and a member of the community in 1687 and 1689.

Cullen (also Cullin), Bernard: Sub-prior of Trim, 1693-96.

Dillon, James: O Heyne records his presence at Rome in 1706, inferring that he was still engaged in his formal studies. If so he can hardly be the James Dillon of Trim who died in 1743 at the age of 84 and is commemorated on the group-tombstone in Killyon churchyard near Donore, Co. Meath. Was ordained in Rome in 1703, and in 1710 held office as sub-prior and master of novices at San Clemente, the Irish Dominican convent in Rome. The name raises great problems of identification which it would be better not to attempt here. A novice of the same name was received in Lovain in 1701, and there was a professor in the same house 1716-24, also named James Dillon, not to mention Fr. James Christopher Dillon, prior of Dublin in the 1720's.

Dillon, John: The Register tells us only that he was prior of Trim in 1688-89, having previously (1687) taught philosophy and theology in Mullingar. O Heyne's account is more detailed: "... on the subjugation of the kingdom (1691), he embarked with the army which he served for seven years as a devoted chaplain. Being afterwards made first regent* at Louvain, he taught theology there for almost three years, and being then (1700) made master and prior, devoted his time for the next three

years to the adornment of the church and the finishing of the cloister. Afterwards for two years he had to work hard for his bread in France; returning to Louvain, he remained there for a short time and is now teaching in the abbey of the White Canons of Hainault, near Valenciennes (1706)." Two entries in the Corporation books of Trim, quoted by Dean Butler, suggest that Fr. John Dillon was *persona grata* to the civic authorities.. On Nov. 8th, 1689, he was sworn a freeman of the Corporation. And on May 14th, 1690, he signed the Corporation books as "prior Trimmensis." From O'Heyne we may infer that Fr. Dillon joined the Irish forces two months later at the battle of the Boyne, falling back with them towards the Shannon and Limerick. After twenty years in exile he returned in 1710 to Ireland, where he died in 1716.

* The first regent is in complete control of professors, students, and courses, in Dominican houses of study, such as Louvain then was.

Dillon, Peter: Received as a novice in Mullingar in 1685. He pursued his studies in that convent (1686-88) and in Trim (1688-89). Was ordained in Ireland, left for Rome in 1689, and became novice-master in Louvain (1701) where he died before 1706.

Donnell, Ambrose Mc: Assigned to Trim from Newtownards in 1690.

Gogarty, Peter: In every year of which we have record (except 1689) this Father was a member of the Trim community and frequently its sub-prior. A fine silver chalice now on loan from the parish of Tullamore to the Maynooth museum bears his name, and provides the first clue to the return of the Dominicans to Trim after the exile of 1698. The inscription reads: *Ora pro anima Frs. Petri Gogarty prioris Trimmenses, qui me fieri fecit, 1713.*" Curiously, the panels on the base of this chalice picture Franciscan saints. But the name of Fr. Gogarty, the use of the title "prior," and the known identity of the Franciscan guardian of Trim in that year, James le Strange, decide the provenance of the chalice beyond reasonable question. How it came to Tullamore is unknown.

Higgen (also Higgin, Higgins), William: The sole laybrother of the community from 1683 to 1689. He does not reappear in the records in 1693.

Gosby, Patrick: Received as a novice in 1685 but did not persevere.

Lynam, James: Described by O'Heyne in 1706 as "studying at present in Louvain." He succeeded in returning to Ireland in 1708. Captured in Dublin on arrival, but escaped in the same year and went to Madrid, anxious to return by another way. In October, 1709, he had been in Madrid for four months.

McCabe: (See *Caby*).

McDonnell: (See *Donnell*).

Nangle, Peter: A member of the Mullingar community in 1683, elected prior there in that year until 1686. He remained as sub-prior (1688-89), and followed the Irish army to Limerick in 1691, being assigned for the time being to the Dominican priory in that city. For the years 1693-96 he appears as a simple member of the Trim community. O'Heyne, writing in 1706, volunteers the information that he "studied at Louvain, was very meek and pious, and died in Ireland (presumably before 1698)."

Nangle, Thomas: The Register notes him as prior for two periods, 1683-87 and 1693-96. But we know from other sources that he had been prior from 1680. In that year he signed a document redeeming two silver chalices, two silver patens and two silver cruets, belonging to the convent of Trim, pledged by Fr. Quigley, the previous prior, for the sum of £2. In 1686 he was in dispute with his bishop for performing marriages and absolving from heresy in the diocese of Meath without proper faculties. O'Heyne says of him "lived a pious life . . . Being exiled, he went to Italy, where he died in the Lord." Propaganda archives tell us that in 1699 he appealed for permission and the means to return to Ireland. He describes himself as a preacher general* who for twenty years had preached the gospel.

Nugent, Dominic: According to O'Heyne, a priest of this name, belonging to the Trim community, was working in Ireland in 1706. Two novices of this name occur in the Register. One entered in Drogheda in 1684 and was sent to Spain; the other entered in Longford in 1685 and was also sent to study in Spain. Unfortunately, neither of these can be identified with the Dominic Nugent who registered as P.P. of Dysart, near Mullingar, in 1704, who was aged 64 at that time and had been ordained in Mainz, Germany, in 1674. Whoever or wherever the Dominic Nugent, O.P., of Trim was in 1706, he provides the only known link in the community's life between 1698 and 1713.

Plunkett, Dominic: William Plunkett, probably a native of Trim, entered there as a novice in 1685, receiving the religious name of Dominic. He was sent in the following year to pursue his studies in Spain (Bethica). His name appears again in the community in 1693-94, and in Dublin for 1696. There is some reason for believing that the William Plunkett who registered as P.P. of Palmerstown, Dublin, in 1704, was this same priest. He is described in the 1704 registration list as living in Cook St., aged 36, and ordained in Saragossa (N.E. Spain) in 1691.

Proctor, Stephen: Assigned to Trim in 1683 and sent in the same year to study at Toulouse.

Quigley: (See *Coigly*).

Reilly, Andrew: A member of the Trim community in every entry, 1683-89, 1693-96.

Russhell, James: Received in 1685 as a novice at Trim and sent in the following year to Spain (Bethica) with Dominic William Plunkett.

Weldon, Gerald: Studied at St. Sixtus in Rome; was prior there, 1694-97; and finally died in June, 1728, in the community of Irish Dominicans after a resident in Rome of forty-seven years.

* A preacher general is one who, apart from having other privileges, may preach outside the defined limits of his own convent. There was only one such preacher in every convent.

THE RETURN:

By 1704-06 the friars had begun to return; but as was to be expected, they neither advertised their arrival nor kept a record of it. Hence we take up the threads of our story from scattered and incomplete sources. As seems to have been the case with *Dominic Nugent* and *Dominic William Plunkett*, some of the Dominicans of Trim may have avoided exile. Of those who did in fact leave Ireland, we know that *Thomas Nangle* tried to return from Italy (1699) but failed, that *John Dillon* was back by 1710, that *Peter Gogarty* as prior had a chalice made for Trim convent in 1713, and that *Patrick McCabe* was returned by 1738 at least. Of the younger post-exilic generation, *James Lynam* tried unsuccessfully to enter the country in 1708. And to conclude the roll-of-honour, *Vincent Cusack* (who died at Donore in 1737 aged 72) and *James Dillon* (who likewise died at Donore in 1743 aged 84) were most likely among the first few Dominicans to gather at Donore, near Killyon, to restore their common life and ministry.

FRIARSTOWN "HOUSE OF REFUGE"

REV. DR. W. MORAN

AT THE southern end of Lough Ennell there is a townland called Friarstown, so called from a house, the site of which is marked on the 6-inch O.S. map (sheet 32) as "The Friary." From what is left of this house, it is clear that it bore little resemblance to the friaries of either medieval times or of our own times. A casual visitor, if he did not notice the absence of stabling or out-houses, would probably conclude that it had once housed the owner of the fields around it. In fact, it was one of the "houses of refuge" erected in various parts of the country in the reign of Queen Anne, when times were difficult for priests, and particularly for friars. This particular house of refuge has certain remarkable features, that help us to realise just how difficult was the life and work of the friars at the time. Before I describe it further, I think it would be well to sketch the historical background to it.

The triumph of William of Orange in the campaign of 1690, and the departure for the Continent of most of the Irish soldiers, who surrendered at Limerick, left Catholic Ireland defenceless under the domination of a Protestant ascendancy. The king's advisers now set about devising, at their leisure, a code of laws calculated to achieve two objects: (1) the prevention of any future Irish rebellion against the Crown; and (2) the extermination of the Catholic religion in Ireland.¹ The penal code they elaborated was clever, ruthless, and about as well designed as it could possibly be for the purpose of enslaving a people, robbing them of their religion and their culture; and reducing them to a condition of permanent ignorance and impoverishment. The individual enactments mentioned below, and the facts connected with them, are nearly all quoted from Cogan's *Diocese of Meath*. I have endeavoured however, to deduce from the facts the probable plan in the minds of the legislators, and thus account for the various stages in a campaign that began in 1697, but did not reach its full development until 1709.

Convinced by experience that the main body of Irish Catholics could not be induced by threats or promises to conform to the king's religion, the legislators decided to try another plan. They would extinguish the Catholic priesthood in Ireland, and close all Catholic schools. They believed that the people, deprived of priests, and deprived of any opportunity of receiving a Catholic education, would soon become easy victims for the protestant proselytisers. To keep both the clergy and laity in the dark about the full extent of their plan, they did not put the whole plan into operation at once, but brought it into operation in instalments. The instalment system also had certain practical advantages, as will be seen presently.

In 1697 a decree was issued, requiring all members of religious orders and all bishops vicars-general and other secular clergy exercising Papal jurisdiction, to leave the country before 1st May, 1698. Those who failed to do so would be arrested and transported. The laity were forbidden under dire penalties to harbour any of those who disobeyed the expulsion order.