

—a name which seemed to have a certain influence over him, by recalling to his mind the Christian courage and perseverance of the Great Patron Saint—a name which, however, he did not require to bespeak his love for, and fidelity to, the Irish race and creed: for whoever heard him speak of his native country, or preach the panegyric of the Apostle of Ireland, needed no more to know his feelings of undying attachment to that people, and the emotions he would experience in alluding to the old land of Erin—in fine, a name which he merited to bear, and which, like St. Patrick, he bore, by leading a life of sanctity, and by maintaining the union of the heart with God.

His parents (Joseph Phelan and Catharine Brennan) destined him from his infancy to serve in the holy ministry, and they left nothing undone that their wishes might be realized, he on his part making his life, even at that early period, correspond with those holy wishes. As “truly religious parents” they watched carefully over him, and continued to instruct him in the Christian doctrine, until he arrived at the age when he could be sent to school. He remained studying at a good English school until he came to the age of fifteen years, and made such proficiency and promised so much for the future, by his past good conduct and application, that the teacher became interested in his favor, so as to urge his father to send young Patrick to study Latin. This must have pleased him very much, as it tended to promote his views, for he seems to have always had an ardent desire to serve God in the Holy Ministry. We learn that whilst his associates amused themselves, as youths are accustomed to do, his delight was to be in church, both before and after Mass, on Sundays and Holydays, instructing the children in their Catechism, and reading some pious book for their edification. By this means he seems to have stored up that fund of knowledge, and acquired in after life the facility of conveying such to his hearers—so much so, that he excelled in religious lectures. Almighty God, by reason of his corresponding with His grace, gifted him with that rare talent of seizing the attention and affecting the hearts of his audience, even when he treated of the most simple subjects. His zeal even then showed itself, and he displayed such wisdom in his tender years, that he was respected in a particular manner by all who knew him. Many of the congregation delighted to remain listening to him read for the children, and he on his part felt happy in passing the Sundays and Holydays in this manner—serving God, and contributing his mite towards the salvation of his neighbor. This good conduct rendered him dear to the entire Parish, and, as I shall show hereafter, their appreciation of his worth displayed itself on the occasion of his departing for America.

I might seem to have exaggerated concerning the merits of the young Phelan, but anything I could say would not equal the following character, given him by his own Parish Priest. It seems appropriate to insert it here, as it relates not only to his childhood but also to his boyhood. The Rev. Edward Walsh, Parish Priest of Ballyagget, having occasion, the first day of May, 1821, to write to the Rev.

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