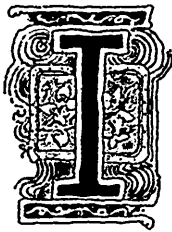


ADRIAN IV. AND IRELAND.



T has ever been a familiar cry of non-Catholic writers that the Catholic Church is inimical to the free examination of obscure historical questions wherein the truth, if fully ascertained,

might prove embarrassing ; and that consequently she places a barrier to all original research in such directions. No charge, however, could be more unfounded. The Church has nothing to fear from Truth, but everything to gain, and hence her defenders have never avoided such points of history. On the contrary, they have always invited their free and open discussion, and have moreover devoted themselves to the most laborious researches in order to aid in clearing away the mists that time has gathered about them. The question of Adrian IV. and Ireland is a case in point.

In regard to this much discussed question, Catholic writers may be classed in three distinct divisions, corresponding to the different stages through which the question itself has moved in its passage from obscurity to light. The first class act upon the defensive. They feel obliged to admit the authenticity of the Bull and the force of the arguments of their opponents. They content themselves, therefore, with merely defending the action of the Pontiff, pointing out that formerly, not only Ireland, but "all islands to which the Sun of Justice, Christ, has shone forth," were considered as the property of the Holy See, so that Adrian acted within the strict limits of his jurisdiction in thus exercising sovereign authority over a Christian island.

The writers of the second class likewise acknowledge the authenticity of the Bull, but they abandon the defensive tactics of their predecessors. They seize the very evidence produced by their opponents and skilfully employ it as a means to justify the conduct of Adrian, to exonerate him from any connivance with the schemes of Henry II. and to free him from any blame in regard to the evil consequences of the transaction. Their

argument is substantially as follows. From the terms employed both by Henry in his request, and by Adrian in the Bull, it is evident that it could have been neither in the intention of the Pope that Henry should invade Ireland and occupy it as a conquered land, nor in the intention of Henry to awaken any such suspicion in the mind of the Pontiff. On the contrary, Henry simulates a holy zeal for the glory of religion, protesting that his aim is merely "to enlarge the bounds of the Church, to restrain the progress of vices, to correct the manners of the people, and to increase the Christian religion." Adrian, on his part, makes no mention of any grant of possession or of absolute sovereignty ; for, be it borne in mind, there were two kinds of Sovereignty acknowledged in the Middle Ages : an absolute sovereignty that ruled the people and the land, and a sovereignty that claimed only the homage of the petty rulers and left them in the full enjoyment of their independence. The Bull grants to Henry but this latter nominal sovereignty, as is clear from the language therein attributed to the Holy Father, who "approved the enterprise as one prompted by the 'ardor of faith and love of religion' and declared his will that the people of Ireland should receive Henry with all honor and revere him as their lord." Here the Pope merely approves Henry's entry into Ireland as a sort of religious crusade, while he expresses his desire that the English monarch's right of lordship over the island should depend upon the free will and choice of the people. Evidently, then, Adrian must be considered to have been influenced by a laudable and sincere desire of furthering the cause of religion and of restoring peace and order among a people ever the most devoted in its allegiance to the Holy See. This is the position taken by our own D'Arcy McGee in his *History of Ireland*. "We must always bear in mind," he says, "the picture drawn of the Irish Church by the inspired orator of Clairvaux, when judging of the conduct of Pope Adrian IV., who in the year 1155, —the second of his pontificate—granted