

Written for CATHOLIC RECORDS. CATHOLICS OF SCOTLAND.

BY THE REV. ANSELMO M'DONNELL DAVSON, LL. D., F. R. S.

By October, 1790, Bishop Geddes and Mr. Robertson had fairly begun to print the New Testament. The Greek and Vulgate versions, three English Catholic translations, King James; and the Italian version of Martini, which had been commended by the Pope, were all before them. They were so sparing in making alterations that in the whole gospel of St. Matthew, which they had gone through, they had not changed the meaning of one word. Some expressions, indeed, they had changed. Bishop Challoner had done the same in every one of his three editions. It does not appear that the work of revising was continued; nor are we informed as to the amount of work that was done. Nothing practical was accomplished, apparently, till the year 1796, when Bishop Hay, in concurrence with others, bargained with John Moir, a printer at Edinburgh, for an edition of 3,000 copies of the Old Testament in four volumes. The total expense, including paper and binding, was £740. Bishop Gibson subscribed for upwards of 1,000 copies in sheets, Bishop Douglas for 600 Mr. Thomas Eyre at Crookhall, for 100 and Coghlan, the bookseller, 100. Moir printed a like edition of the New Testament at £197. The two English bibles cost 1,350 copies, Mr. Eyre 100 and Coghlan 100. The selling price of the Old Testament bound, was 12s.; that of the New, to non-subscribers, three shillings. The work was undertaken and paid for by subscription. Half of the price was to be paid on delivery of the second volume. By this means alone money was obtained for printing the remaining volumes. Payments to workmen and for paper required to be made regularly. Neither the bishop nor Mr. Moir had capital to advance for that purpose. The former, nevertheless, was under the necessity of advancing upwards of £300 in order to complete the work. The bishop remained in Edinburgh for a greater part of the summer, superintending the press.

Early this year the exiled Count D'Artois came to Edinburgh. He was most hospitably received; and apartments were fitted up for him in the palace of Holyrood. It was his intention to remain there, until it should be possible for him to return to France, as heir to the Crown. Bishop Hay was introduced to him by his chaplain and was graciously received. The Bank of Scotland making a call on its shareholders, at this time, it became necessary that Bishop Hay should pay to the bank as much as £1500. This would oblige him, he said, to live at least six years, with the greatest economy. Bishop Geddes had great doubts as to the expediency of lodging so much money in the bank to one name. It was a subject, he thought, for deliberation and advice, on account of the umbrage it might give to some ill-inclined persons, that Bishop Hay should have so large a sum of money in the bank, both on account of the inconvenience of transferring so much property in case of the bishop's death and of the temptation it presented to his relations in the event of any informality or error in his possession. Inquiry, even in such a matter would be disagreeable.

As soon, accordingly, as Bishop Hay consented to the North after attending to the printing of the scriptures, the two bishops executed a trust deed of all their properties in favor of Bishop Chisholm, of some of the clergy and two lay gentlemen whom they empowered in the event of their decease without a successor to hold in trust all the monies standing in their names, for the interests of the mission.

When the slow dial gave a pause to care, Up springs at every step to claim a tear, Some little friendship formed and cherished here, And not the lightest leaf but trembling fern, With golden visions and romantic dreams." Sir John Hippisley, who was now residing at Warfield Grove, Berks, took a warm interest in the new seminary. As much aid was required in establishing it, and the bishops contemplated applying to the Government, Sir John advised that they should address Mr. Dundas and through him, the Duke of Portland. The worthy Baronet himself also undertook to recommend the matter to Government, and for this purpose desired to have a statement of the least possible expense that would be required to commence the seminary. The assistance of the English Catholics might also be requested.

It was now admitted that a long lease, feasible to a purchase of property, so little could the Catholics, as yet, rely on the better feeling towards them that had come to prevail in the country. It was, in deed, a disadvantage that there were but few Catholics in the neighborhood of Aquortles. But such disadvantage was counterbalanced by the fortunate circumstance that the Protestant population of Aberdeen shire were more friendly to Catholics than that of any other part of the country. The agent at Rome did all in his power to interest in the cause of the new seminary the Cardinals Gerilli, Albani and Antonelli. They favored it with their approbation; but, in the uncertain state of affairs in Italy, they did nothing more.

In February, 1797, the French were once more at the gates of Rome. There was the greatest consternation in the city. It behoved the Scotch agent to provide for the safety of the students. Acting under the directions of the Cardinal Protector, he secured the ready money and church plate of the college and made arrangements for the departure of the few students there and of fifteen English students whom their agent had left to do as they best could. He was much assisted by Mr. Graves, an English merchant at Rome. Passports and everything else that was required, being procured, the party left Rome for Civita Vecchia on the 15th February. Mr. Sloane, a Scotch merchant there, was all attention to them. The day before their departure eleven Cardinals fled from Rome. The Pope's horse was in his coach, and he was himself dressed for flight, when a British officer, Colonel Duncan, arrived at the Vatican from Florence, and gave information to the effect that the danger was not so imminent. The Holy Father shed tears when he found that it was not necessary to leave his capital so suddenly. In the course of a fortnight the British students came back to their colleges. The agent was not, as yet, however, without apprehension; but he gave way to impatience.

The annual meeting was held this year at Gileston near Huntly. Bishops Hay and Chisholm met there in the month of August, the administrators of the mission funds. It was an important meeting. Bishop Hay theretofore adopted measures that effectually put a stop to the reports injurious to his character as an honest manager of mission affairs, which were still at that time the last meeting of administrators which was held three years previously. Regarding the partial appropriation of a legacy to a special purpose, his opponents had accused him of acting without the advice or concurrence of the administrators, and of endeavoring to force them, in an overbearing manner, to do as seemed to him fit in the matter. The second question concerned an extraordinary supply voted for division among the clergy. The bishop had been accused of arbitrarily excluding some of them from the benefit of this supply, contrary to the known intentions of the administrators. In order to meet these accusations the bishop laid before the meeting a detailed statement of all that occurred at the former meeting and extracted therefrom a number of queries to which he requested categorical replies. This request was complied with; and the replies, completely clearing the bishop of all that had been alleged against him, were written down by Mr. John Field, clerk to the meeting, and signed by all the administrators present. Thus were the ill-logged and unfounded misrepresentations of Mr. Farquharson and a few others who thought themselves aggrieved by the bishop, completely, publicly, and finally refuted. At the same meeting Bishop Hay resigned the office of procurator, Mr. Charles Maxwell succeeding. Mr. Maxwell, in consequence, removed from his mission at Huntly to Edinburgh. The income of the mission was much reduced by the complete failure of its funds in France and a great falling off in the remittances that usually came from Rome. Four hundred and nineteen pounds yearly, was all that could be relied on while the expenditure for wages, that is the allowance to the priests alone, amounted to more than £550. The guardians of the fund, therefore, were under the painful necessity of issuing a circular letter informing their brethren why they were compelled to reduce the quotas to £15 for the large towns and £10 for country missions.

Hitherto the Catholic laity had not considered it a duty to contribute towards the support of their pastors. They were now addressed on the subject in a document signed by the bishops and appended to the letter which conveyed to the clergy the unwelcome tidings that their miserable salaries must be reduced. The people were shown that there is high authority for requiring that they should contribute towards the maintenance of their clergy. They were told, moreover, that unless they made an effort in this direction, all pastoral ministrations must necessarily cease. The usual letters to Rome were signed later by Bishop Geddes at Aberdeen. In the same letter he had already renewed their request for a candidate in the Lowland District (a request which, as has already been shown, was complied with), and informed the Cardinals that it was the intention of the bishop of the Highland District to establish ere long, at home, a seminary, similar to that which had been already so successfully begun by his brother Bishop of the Lowlands. It was also intimated that Bishop Geddes had nearly lost his speech, that his appetite was gone, and that, from time to time, he was attacked with such violent internal pain as to make it difficult to believe that he could live an hour. His patience, meanwhile, was most exemplary. The meeting once over, a new matter, on which the reader will be glad to have the opinion of the bishops, came up for consideration. It was quite natural that Bishop Chisholm should be applied to for information on the subject of second sight which was more prevalent in the Highlands than in any other part of Scotland. The agent at Rome, Mr. McPherson, requested of him answers to certain queries, and with such answers the bishop readily supplied him. In a letter of 19th August, 1797, Bishop Chisholm wrote:

"1st. It is my own private opinion that such a thing has existed, and does now exist, though less frequently than in former times. Many are fully convinced of the real existence of the 'second sight'; but, many likewise, look upon it as a chimerical. But you will observe that many are incredulous in matters of greater consequence, and many know nothing about the matter, and many are ashamed to acknowledge a thing that is held as the belief of the second sight is not fashionable.

"2d. There are treatises written on the second sight.

"3d. Some families are more famous for the second sight than others; such is the family of McDonald of Morar, though it cannot be said to be confined to any particular family exclusively.

"4th. The nature of it is generally a short and sometimes imperfect representation of what is to happen, does happen, or has happened at a distance beyond the reach of natural knowledge.

"5th. Such as are affected with the second sight, see faintly, happily and unhappily events, but more frequently, events of a black and melancholy complexion. They see them before the event takes place, while it takes place, and after it has happened, but at such a distance that it would be impossible to know it so soon in a natural way."

TO BE CONTINUED.

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