

in the county of Meath; in 1629; and having been educated up to the age of sixteen by his kinsman, Dr. Patrick Plunket, who successively ruled the dioceses of Armagh and Meath, he formed one of a small band of youths who accompanied the Rev. Father Scrampo, the Oratorian back to Rome after having fulfilled his mission in Ireland, whither he had been sent by Pope Innocent the X. There he pursued and completed his studies; and afterwards he became the agent of the Irish Clergy at the Roman Court. Having been appointed to the See of Armagh, he was consecrated Archbishop at Ghent on the 30th of November, 1669, and he arrived in Ireland about the middle of the following March. He at once commenced his pastoral labors, which were rendered much more arduous on account of the evil days in which his lot was cast, and he devoted himself to provide for the necessities, not only of his own diocese and province, but for the spiritual welfare of Ireland generally. During the eleven years of his episcopate, his zeal was conspicuous in reforming abuse in establishing seminaries and schools, and in administering the Sacraments; and in illustration of the unselfishness of his devotion to the flock committed to his care, tradition still points out the spot that witnessed the following scene. As he was being conducted across the country by a guard of soldiers on his way to prison, he met on this road a company of light-hearted young men and girls, in holiday attire on their way to a "pattern, or village-fest; and obtaining leave from his guard to stop and speak to them, he exhorted them so earnestly that they resolved to abandon their intended dangerous pleasure, and at once returned to their home.

Having being brought to London in the depth of a most rigid winter, and having suffered much on the journey, being of a very delicate constitution, he was cast into Newgate prison, where for six months he had to share the treatment endured by those who were accused of the worst crimes. And yet we read that, in addition to the sufferings of his prison, he added many voluntary penances; and especially a rigorous fast on bread and water three times each week. At his trial he was refused a few days' respite to enable him to bring over witnesses and documents from Ireland, which would have proved that the accusations brought against him were false; and the same impious judge—Lord Chief Justice Pemberton—after passing the sentence of death upon his victim, refused his request to be allowed to have the spiritual aid of a Catholic priest. "You will have," he replied, "a minister of the Church of England;" but the Archbishop answered, "I am obliged for your good intentions; but such a favor would be wholly useless to me." A Protestant chronicle of that time says that the Earl of Essex

being convinced of his innocence, applied to Charles II. for a pardon, as he had clearly been condemned on false evidence; but when the King in a great passion refused to grant it, he concluded by saying to the King, "His blood be upon your head, and not upon mine." The sentence of death did not frighten him; on the contrary, he marvelled that he felt no fear of death; and in a letter he wrote from his prison cell to a relative, he says:—"But how am I, a poor creature, so stout, seeing that my Redeemer began to fear, to be weary and sad, and that drops of His blood ran down to the ground? I have considered that Christ, by His fears and passions, merited for me to be without fear." Nay, so resigned was he to die the death of a Christian martyr, that not only did he exclaim, "Deo gratias," as soon as the judge delivered the sentence, but on the testimony of a Protestant historian, the keeper of Newgate said that, when he told his prisoner he was to prepare for his execution, "he received his message with all quietness of mind and went to the sledge, as unconcerned as if he had been going to a wedding." And a Catholic eye witness of his death records, that "on the scaffold, by the singular composure of soul and actions, he seemed like an angel descended from Paradise, who was joyously arrived at the moment of once more returning thither." He was the last of those glorious Confessors of the Faith, who, bound down to a hurdle, were thus dragged to Tyburn to undergo their iniquitous sentence of being "hung drawn and quartered." That he might have escaped death, even after his condemnation, he himself asserts in the document he drew up just before his execution, a copy of which is still in the archives of the Propaganda at Rome. Therein he says: "I assure you that a great peer sent me notice that he would save my life, if I would accuse others." This treacherous offer he disdained—indeed, there was no one to be accused.

On the scaffold, with an heroic courage, he addressed the crowd of spectators for nearly an hour, disproving the false charges of conspiracy which the three apostate priests and some wicked laymen had sworn against him, confessing the Faith, and pardoning his murderers; and then kneeling down prayed fervently, and recommended himself to God through the merits of Christ and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and all the Angels and Saints; and as he was repenting the words, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," the cart was drawn away, and he hung suspended between heaven and earth, "a spectacle to angels and to men." Before he was dead he was cut down; and the inhuman process of dismemberment took place; the bowels being taken out and thrown into a fire which was kindled for that purpose, and the head severed