

Historian of the Diocese of Ossory

DEATH OF THE VERY REV. CANON OARRIGAN, D.D., P.P., DURROW.

We deeply regret to announce (says the *Kilkenny People* for December 20) that the Very Rev. William Canon Carrigan, D.D., P.P., M.R.I.A., died on Friday, December 12, from pneumonia contracted at the beginning of the same week. His death is not only a loss to the Catholic Church in Ireland, of which he was a distinguished ornament, but it creates a gap that cannot be filled in the attenuated ranks of the students of Irish archaeology on which he was perhaps the greatest living authority.

His *Magnum Opus*, the *History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory*, will make his memory immortal. His great learning, his inexhaustible capacity for research into, and elucidation of, the evidences of Ireland's ancient pre-eminence in church architecture and in everything relating to the history of religious development in our country have shed lustre on his name and adorned our national annals.

The publication of his *History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory*, was the fruition of 21 years of untiring and wisely directed energy. He never spent a holiday but in archaeological research work either among historic ruins in the diocese and elsewhere or in the study of manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy and the Record Office. He possessed many valuable copies of manuscripts destroyed in the Four Courts when that beautiful public building was laid in ruins. Those best qualified to judge recognised in him one of the most eminent authorities, if not indeed the greatest authority, on Irish archaeology.

Mr. S. Lloyd in his preface to *Post Seanachas*, refers to Canon Carrigan in the following terms:—

"In compiling this *Post Seanachas* I got considerable assistance from Rev. W. Carrigan, Durrow. This learned priest is the last word as an authority on Irish place names. Not only does he possess a complete, accurate, and scholarly knowledge of the districts of Ossory and Leix but he has in addition a thorough acquaintance with the place names mentioned in ancient manuscripts and texts. I may say indeed that in this important branch of Gaelic study he is the only worthy successor of John O'Donovan. If it were not for his invaluable assistance we would have but very scant knowledge of the topography of Leix and Ossory."

He had a marvellous memory for anything connected with this branch of study.

Some short time since the Archaeological Society of Trinity asked him if he could locate Cill Corbain, the ancient burial place of the Kings of Leinster. Not alone was he able to furnish the desired information stating that Cill Corbain was now the old burial ground at Naas known as Cill Nais, but he actually from memory was able to refer them to a particular poem in a certain manuscript in the Academy (giving the number) in which Cill Corbain was mentioned as being identical with Cill Nais.

It is only right in any memoir of this very distinguished Ossory priest to give promi-

ence to the fact that in writing, and preparing for publication, his great history Canon Carrigan received the most sympathetic help and encouragement from, and was given every facility for pursuing his devoted and learned labors by the venerable Bishop of the Diocese, the Most Rev. Dr. Brownrigg, to whom Canon Carrigan, for his enthusiastic approval and never failing support, was under a debt of gratitude which he felt he could never adequately repay.

Canon Carrigan was a native of Ballyfoyle, Co. Kilkenny, where he was born 64 years ago. He was educated at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny, and at Maynooth. He was ordained in February, 1884, and was Professor in St. Kieran's for about a year. He was afterwards curate successively at Templeorum, Rathdowney, Conahy, Ballyragget, and Durrow, and was appointed to pastoral charge of Durrow in 1909 in succession to the late Canon Shortall.

A frequent and learned contributor to the Irish Press over the signature "K." has written the following touching appreciation of Canon Carrigan which was published in Wednesday's *Irish Times*:—

There has just passed away, to the sorrow of all that knew him, a good man and a great antiquary. The Very Reverend William Canon Carrigan, D.D., died last Friday evening, after a few days' illness, at Durrow, where he had lived for more than twenty-seven years, first as curate and afterwards as parish priest. He said Mass on Monday, a holy day, but on the next day pneumonia began.

As so often happens in Ireland, although quite well, he went lately to see all his kinsfolk and old friends in the County Kilkenny, and on the very day week before his death he marked the spot where he wished to be buried. The poor of his parish will miss him, to whom his hand was ever open: "He hadn't what would bury him left," it was said. His curates, past and present, are in grief for him, who was always sincere and kindly and cheerful.

He would spare no pains in giving information asked about antiquarian and genealogical matters, copying lengthy documents, and all done so kindly and willingly. He was sixty-four.

"I would give a good deal," he wrote a couple of years ago, "for a glimpse of the congregation I used to see at my native chapel of Ballyfoyle (between Castlacomer and Kilkenny) fifty-five years ago—the old men all dressed up in the Irish style, even to the riding coat, and the married women in their picturesque hooded cloaks; and almost all of them Irish speakers. Many changes have occurred since then, some for the better, no doubt, but the old homeliness and simplicity have been to a great extent lost."

Thirty-two years ago, when Father Carrigan was curate of Conahy, there were still some good old Irish speakers there who could give the old names of townlands and families for miles around. He took copious notes from

them and from many Irish speakers all through the County Kilkenny. These notes are of great value and should be carefully preserved.

"Alas and alas," he wrote, "that the Public Record Office should now be no more, with its millions of records? I feel its loss intensely, having spent my vacations for the last thirty-seven years there. And now to find that all the precious documents are gone for ever! I copied much Laoighis and Kilkenny matter there, and in return I mean to leave all my MSS. to the new Record Office in case the authorities will think them of any value.

He copied a good many extracts from the old Register Book of Durrow Parish, which was afterwards burnt in the Record Office, and he noted the curious fact that there was not a single will of the old Cullenagh family of Barrington—Sir Jonah's family—in the Record Office.

Canon Carrigan was a member of the Royal Irish Academy, the Royal Society of Antiquaries and the Kildare Archaeological Society. His *History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory*, will be a lasting memorial to him. More than a quarter of a century ago a doctor who is now long dead spoke of him as being "most estimable in every relation of life." The time that could be spared from his duties were given to his beloved books. None could be readier for the call hence than he, and none could be more missed here; for of him it may truly be said, "We shall not look upon his like again."

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