

**A SHORT VIEW OF THE STATE OF
IRELAND, WRITTEN IN
1605; ANECDOTA BODLEIANA:
GLEANINGS FROM BODLEIAN
MSS. I**

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SIR JOHN HARRINGTON & W. DUNN MACRAY

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Anecdota Bodleiana :

GLEANINGS FROM BODLEIAN MSS.

I.

been well for both Church and State in Ireland had his enlarged and temperate views (resembling Bacon's) been held by others in place and power there, and his capability for understanding the Irish, and his friendly dealing with their prejudices, displaced the want of sympathy and intelligence which too generally marked the temper of the rulers.

Although no name is attached to our manuscript, the occurrence in it of the Latin lines addressed to James I (here assigned to the year 1603) which occur also in the *Nuga Antiquæ*, is sufficient demonstration of the authorship, and of itself dispenses with any need of the further internal corroborations which might easily be pointed out. But there is a copy preserved in a volume of miscellaneous papers among the MSS. at Eaton Hall, Cheshire, which bears the author's name, as well as dates of time and place¹. And the original letter which accompanied the memorial when sent to Cecil exists among the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House, Herts². Of this the Editor is enabled, by permission of the Marquis of Salisbury and through the kindness of R. T. Gunton, Esq., the Librarian, to subjoin a copy.

“Right honorable my very good Lord.

“Your Lordship hath been pleased in tymes past to reed some discources of myne and to geve them better allow-

¹ *Third Report of the Commission on Historical MSS.*, 1872, p. 212.

² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

ance then men of meaner judgment. Now I am bold to entreat your Lordship with the lyke favorable approbacion to reed this short relacion (for yt ys to long for a lettre) contayning my humble and zelows offer for his Majesties sarvyce in Ierland.

When your Lordship hath read yt, I make but one request more, and that in a word ys but this, that what successe soever yt shall please God to send to yt, my offer may have, as yt deserves, an honorable and favorable interpretation.

So I humbly take leave, from Kellston, 20 April, 1605.

Your Lordships at comawndment,

JOHN HARYNGTON."

Addressed: "To the right honorable his very good Lord the Lord Viscownt Cramborne at the Cowrt."

Harington made his application while as yet he only knew of the 'languishing sickness' of the Chancellor, Archbishop Loftus; but the decease of Loftus had already occurred on the 5th of the same month. His successor, Thomas Jones, Bishop of Meath, was appointed to both his offices of Archbishop of Dublin and Lord High Chancellor by Privy Seal of 14 Oct. and Letters Patent of 8 Nov.

Among the many historical allusions with which this Memorial is enriched, that which is of most interest is the mention (p. 10) of the case of the supposed far-more-than-centenarian Countess of Desmond. The earliest notice

hitherto known is found in Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*, published in 1614, but written during Sir Walter's imprisonment and before 1612, where he says that he saw her in 1589 and that she lived many years afterwards. Into the much-argued controversy as to her real age the editor will not enter; he will only remark that while her alleged longevity is here reduced from the reaching to 140 years to the being 'above 120,' it is nevertheless referred to as if, being a well-known fact, the case did not require demonstration. At the same time, however, with just the same passing allusion as to a thing notorious, the more than 140 years usually assigned to the Countess of Desmond are here transferred to an anonymous individual of the other sex, of whose case no mention whatever has hitherto been found elsewhere, and fresh elements for dispute are consequently imported into this *quæstio vexata*!

Readers who are acquainted with Spenser's *View of the State of Ireland* will find in the two writers several passages that are mutually illustrative although written with differing tone and spirit; *e. g.* they agree in asserting that the Irish wars were prolonged by military commanders for their own interest, in noticing the horrors of the famine in Munster, and in taxing the Clergy sent from England with ignorance and utter unfitness¹; while we

¹ See also Sir John Davys' letters to Cecil in 1606; *Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland, 1603-6*, pp. 143, 476, and *Preface to Calendar of 1606-8*, pp. lv, lvi.

learn from Harrington that he and Sir Arthur Savage were amongst those who in 1599 proposed that the King of Scotland should be invited to undertake the subjugation of Ireland, a proposal which Spenser mentions and utterly and warmly condemns.

From other autobiographical memoranda of a private character we learn that Harrington wrote a Commentary on the sixth book of the *Æneid* for the use of Prince Henry, and that after 1603 he had suffered imprisonment, apparently through some dispute with relatives regarding money-matters, to which he here makes only indistinct allusions, and which is not found mentioned elsewhere.

The MS. from which the text is printed exists in the Rawlinson collection in the Bodleian Library, and is numbered B. 162. It is written in a neat and formal secretary's hand, and may have been the copy actually transmitted either to Cecil, the Secretary of State, or to Blount, the ex-Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, to whom it was addressed as being the two Ministers whom the King was most likely to consult. Another, and an anonymous, tract on the Commonwealth of Scotland is bound with it, and the following letter from Rawlinson's friend, Edw. Umfreville, is inserted, which relates to both tracts, but which speaks too slightly of the one now printed.

"DEAR SIR,

"THE Letter to my Lords Devon and Cramborne I take to be wrote by one Harrington, who in his Letter informs

you he is a Knight and a layman, requesting to be made a Priest and a Bishop in order to succeed to the Chancellorship of Ireland, which he makes suit for—'tis only a copy; nor have I any opinion of the writer as he shews too great an enthusiastic fondness for his own qualifications.

As to the *Scottish Common-Wealth* the Title gives the account, and I believe [it] was collected to forward the Union propos'd in the reign of James 1st; it is a very pretty thing and *quoad me* ought to be given to the Press, as a pi[e]ce of use in this present season.

I am yours *donec*

E. UMFREVILLE.

℄. 4. 5. 1748."

TO DR. RAWLINSON.

The Editor issues this little *brochure* tentatively as the first of a contemplated short series of publications from MSS. in the Bodleian Library. From the many things there existing which deserve to be printed but which are too small to compose volumes, it is proposed to print a few miscellaneous selections in the present pamphlet-form. They will be uniform in type and appearance, but each tract will be complete in itself. Beyond scrupulous care in reproduction of texts, the Editor proposes to add only such brief introductions as may seem really necessary, with indexes, and a few notes where these may appear requisite or desirable.