

**THE BLACK BOOK OF LIMERICK: STUDIES ON
THE DIOCESE OF LIMERICK. INAUGURAL-
DISSERTATION ZUR ERLANGUNG DER
PHILOSOPHISCHEN DOKTORWURDE
VORGELEGT DER HOHEN
PHILOSOPHISCHEN FACULTAT DER ALBERT-
LUDWIGS-UNIVERSITÄT ZU FREIBURG I. BR.**

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JAKOB MACCAFFREY

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THE BLACK BOOK OF LIMERICK: STUDIES ON THE DIOCESE OF LIMERICK
BASED PRINCIPALLY UPON THE MANUSCRIPT KNOWN AS
"THE BLACK BOOK OF LIMERICK."

INAUGURAL-DISSERTATION

ZUR ERLANGUNG DER

PHILOSOPHISCHEN DOKTORWÜRDE

VORGELEGT DER HOHEN PHILOSOPHISCHEN FAKULTÄT DER

ALBERT-LUDWIGS-UNIVERSITÄT

ZU

FREIBURG I. BR.

VON

JAKOB MACCAFFREY

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BLACK BOOK OF LIMERICK.

CHAPTER I.

THE MANUSCRIPT KNOWN AS THE BLACK BOOK OF LIMERICK.

(a) *The History of the Manuscript.*

THE Manuscript¹ was preserved in the archives of the Diocese of Limerick from its compilation till the Reformation, and then it naturally passed into the hands of the Protestant Bishops of Limerick. We find it in the possession of Bishop Adams, who added the portion from p. 147 to the middle of page 152, dealing with the repairs done to the old Cathedral of St. Mary's, Limerick, between the years 1604 and 1621. During the Confederate War (1641-1652) Bishop Webb (1634-1641) was besieged in Limerick Castle by the Confederate forces, and on the capitulation of the Castle (1642) the Manuscript was taken possession of by the Irish soldiers. From that time we know nothing of its history till the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was given by a Protestant gentleman to Bishop Young (1796-1814), the then Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Limerick. Bishop Young added the note about the Church of Kilmurly (p. 152), as well as the Preface, dealing with the life of Bishop Adams, and the

¹ For the MS. Black Book of Limerick, *vide* Report of the Commission on Historical MSS., Vol. III., pp. 434-435 (1872); Reeve's "Notes on the Black Book of Lim.," MS. 1063, Library, Dublin University; "Survey of the Ancient Churches of Limerick," by T. J. Westropp, Dublin, 1905, pp. 340 sqq.; Lenehan's "History of Diocese of Limerick," 1866, p. 554 sqq.; Begley, "The Diocese of Limerick," 244 sqq. Copies of the MS. are in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, and in that of the Bishop of Limerick, while extracts from it are in the MS., No. 654, Trinity College, and in the Lansdowne MS., No. 418, British Museum. The Manuscript is cited under different names. Ware, in his *Bishops of Limerick*, cites it as the *Regestum Decani Limericensis*; while Bishop Adams refers to it as the "Bishop's Black Book," (MS. p. 147). Later writers generally refer to it as the "Black Book of Limerick." For the reasons given below (p. 5) it cannot be directly designated as either the Book of the Bishop or Dean of Limerick.

different names by which the Manuscript is referred to by Ware and Adams. Besides, many marginal notes are clearly from the same pen. It remained in the possession of the Catholic Bishops till Dr. Butler (1864-1886) lent it to Dr. Renchan, Vice-President, Maynooth College (1834-1845), who was then engaged on a history of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Irish Church, and on his death it passed, with his other manuscripts, to the Library of Maynooth College, though it still remains the property of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick.

(b) *Description of the Manuscript.*

Exclusive of the modern preface, the Manuscript consists of 152 pages. The pages are ten inches long by seven broad, and in the first portion of the work there are, as a general rule, twenty-nine lines to the page, while towards the end (from page 127-134), where the writing is smaller, and the lines more close, we find as many as thirty-three to the page. The writing is clear and distinct, and the contractions, such as are usually found in Latin documents of the period. The titles of the entries and the capital letters are rubricated, and in some cases the opening letters of the items are slightly ornamented.¹

The vellum used in the earlier portion of the volume (to p. 134) is remarkably beautiful, and differs very much in quality from the material employed towards the end. The Manuscript is in a good state of preservation, except that from page 134,² line 29, to end of page 135, together with portions of 136, 137, and 138, it has been blotted over with some chemical, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to decipher the text. On pp. 142 and 143 the writing has become in part illegible. Between the pages now marked 136 and 137 a leaf is evidently wanting, which contained the end of the Procuration, and the beginning of the Taxation table. According to the note added by Bishop Adams (old cover of MS.), the volume consisted of seventy-six folios in writing (*plena scriptis*), though to-day, even counting the covers, there

¹ *Vide* Reeve's Notes on Liber Niger MS. 1063, Trinity College, Dublin.

² The older portion of the MS. is free from this; it is only the later additions that are affected by it.

are only seventy-five. The explanation is that the folio containing the end of the Procuration Table and the beginning of the Taxation now lost, was in the Manuscript in his time.¹ Bishop Young noticed that this page was wanting, as is evident from his marginal note.

The text is written on both sides of the page, and in single column, except from page 135 to 141,² inclusive, when we find the double column entries. In the earlier portion of the work (pp. 1-134) we find that, as usual in manuscripts written before the fifteenth century, it was originally not paged, but numbered by folios. This numbering was done by the compiler, and in the Roman characters; and when, later on, these became slightly indistinct, the same was done in Arabic characters, as far as folio 35 inclusive. In addition to this, the whole manuscript was paged in ordinary Arabic characters, possibly by Bishop Adams.³

(c) *Divisions of the Manuscript.*

The MS. may be conveniently divided into two parts, the older portion of the work, and the main portion, ending with page 134, line 29, and the later additions of the Procuration, Taxation, and Rental Tables, etc., made in the time of Bishop O'Dea (1400-1426), Bishop John Mothell (1426), Bishop Adams, etc., and others. Besides, there is in the beginning a "Table of Contents," which was written by the compiler of the early part of the work. We have, thus, then, three main divisions—(1) the Table of Contents; (2) the Documents forming the substantial part of the Volume; (3) the Later Additions.

(1) *The Table of Contents.* The "Tabula Instrumentorum," as it is called, was evidently drawn up by the compiler of the work, and

¹ Bishop Adams made a transcript of the later portion of the work, which was becoming illegible. This is known as "The Little Black Book," and was preserved in the archives of the Protestant Bishop of Limerick till recently, but on applying to the Right Rev. Dr. Orpen, the editor has been informed that no trace of such a MS. can be found at present among the documents contained in the Diocesan Archives.

² Dealing with the Procuration and Taxation Tables, etc.

³ A great many notes on the margin of the pages of the MS. are, apparently, from the hands of Bishop Young, but some of them from an earlier hand, possibly that of Bishop Adams.