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THE BRITISH ACADEMY

On the

Colophons and Marginalia

of

Irish Scribes

By the

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ON THE COLOPHONS AND MARGINALIA OF IRISH SCRIBES

BY THE REV. CHARLES PLUMMER

FELLOW OF THE ACADEMY

Communicated, January 20, 1926.

I SUPPOSE that every one who has travelled in Ireland has been struck by the way in which an Irishman will discuss his most intimate private affairs with any casual stranger whom he may happen to meet.

Now the relief which the modern Irishman finds in this kind of conversation, the medieval and later Irish scribe found by writing on the margins of his MS., or embodying in his colophons the expression of his feelings and opinions, and the record of his experiences.

He will give his own name and that of the place where he is writing.¹ In more than one instance he mentions his own age;² not infrequently the year, month, and even day on which he wrote; and these particulars are worth noting, for they enable us to date other MSS. by the same scribe;³ he gives the times at which he began and finished his work.⁴

He often records the name of his employer, sometimes in loyal and

¹ Below, pp. 6-8.

² *Orait do Maelbrigte qui scripsit hunc librum in xx^o viii^o anno aetatis suae, R. C. viii. 358, from Harl. 1802 f. 127^b; another instance is given below, p. 31.*

³ Thus in O'Grady, *Catalogue*, p. 177 is a colophon by a scribe and translator, Cormac Mac Donlevy, dated 1459; undated colophons by the same scribe, *ib.* p. 257; and Mackinnon, *Catalogue*, p. 38.

⁴ *An cethramad la do mi Febra do tindsguin me an lebar so, . . . 7 a cinn da la deg 'na diaid sin do crichnaiged lium, i. e. the 4th day of February I began this book, and twelve days later it was finished by me, Abbott and Gwynn, Catalogue, p. 316; cf. infra, pp. 9 note 3, 11 note 5. Sometimes the dating is by the periods of chiefs, and leading persons, BB. Introduction, p. I^a.*

2 PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

laudatory terms,¹ sometimes in terms very much the reverse,² which must have been rather embarrassing to the owner of the MS., 'the man of the book', as he is called in Irish.

He bewails the length, the hardness, the scanty remuneration of his task;³ he complains very frequently, and excuses himself on the ground of the badness of his writing materials⁴ (and these notes are often interesting, as showing the nature of the materials used), or of the age and illegibility of his exemplar.⁵

He not seldom mentions the title of the MS. which he is copying, and the name of its possessor. And these notes are most valuable; for they often enable us to reconstruct to a considerable extent the contents of MSS. which have perished, and to trace the course of literary tradition.⁶

He records in vigorous language of approval or disapproval his opinion on the subject-matter of what he is writing, and of the character and actions of the personages in the story.⁷

He scribbles on the margin tags of verse⁸ or moral maxims which have struck his fancy.⁹

He pricks his finger, and a drop of blood stains the MS. He writes against the stain; 'blood from the finger of Melaghlin'.¹⁰

¹ *Infra*, pp. 7, 8, 24.

² *Infra*, pp. 4, 23.

³ *Infra*, p. 23.

⁴ *Infra*, pp. 12, 13, 15. Though one scribe expressly denies that this is given as an excuse: as *olc mo trelam, 7 ni do gabail mo leth-sceoil*, i. e. my implements are bad, and this is not for making my excuse, O'Grady, *Catalogue*, p. 132. Another scribe, Brian mac Dermot, lays the blame of his bad writing on Nicolas O'Sheridan, *Annals of Loch Ce*, ii. 182.

⁵ *Infra*, pp. 18, 19.

⁶ *Infra*, pp. 16-18.

⁷ *Infra*, pp. 20-2.

⁸ I will give one specimen which the scribe probably composed himself with reference to the hardness of his work and his faith in its permanence: *Uch a lám, | Ar' scribis do memrum bán! | Béra in memrum fa buaidh, | Is bethair si ad benn lom cuail cnám*, i. e. Alas O hand, how much white vellum hast thou written! Thou wilt make famous the vellum, while thou thyself wilt be the bare top of a faggot of bones, *Z. C. P.* ii. 225, from *H.* 3. 18. p. 478.

⁹ Here is one (in verse) from *Laud Misc.* 610 f. 116 v^o; *Na ling, na ling an fód for atái; | Gairit bia fair, fada bia fai*, i. e. Trample not, trample not the sod on which you stand; a short time will you be on it, a long time will you be under it. This reminds me of the saying of a driver who once drove me from Killybegs to Carrick in Donegal: Ye're right to get about and enjoy yourself while ye're alive; *ye'll be long enough dead*; cf. Gwynn and Purton, *Monastery of Tallaght*, p. 119.

¹⁰ *Fuil meoir Mailechlainn*, *Rawl. B.* 487 f. 27 r^o; *fuil an Firdorcha do scrib in le[bar so]*, *ib.* f. 38 r^o; *fuil meoir Mailechlain I Cianain so*, *King's Inns MSS.*, No. 13 f. 5 v^o; probably identical with the first-named scribe.

Another scribe does the like, and bestows 'a curse on the woman who caused it'.¹

He notes the little incidents of daily life;² his cat has gone astray;³ the robin is singing gloriously,⁴ but though its red breast is beautiful he is all alone.⁵

He constantly mentions the fasts and feasts on which he happens to be writing, or which are approaching, or just past, and invokes the saint whose festival it may be.⁶ He notes the 'occurrences' of the ecclesiastical calendar: 'two noble Fridays on one day, to wit, the Friday of the feast of Mary (the Annunciation), and the Friday of the Passion, and this is a great wonder to some of the learned'.⁷ He remarks on the coincidence that he should be copying a homily for Palm Sunday on the Monday in Holy Week.⁸

He records passing events of public interest; and these, if dated, are of some importance; for, being absolutely contemporary, they enable us to control the statements of more formal writers.⁹

Conversely, our knowledge of general history often enables us to fix the date of undated entries of this kind.¹⁰

¹ Fuil meoir Seaain mic Torna so, . . . mallacht ar ingin Sdiamna fodera. Misi Seaan, H. 2. 7, cols. 32-3.

² *Infra*, pp. 27-8.

³ Ata in catt gel ac dul for foendel uam, L. Br. p. 164; cf. *ib.* p. 159. There is another reference to a straying cat, H. 3. 18, p. 267^b (C. 546), and see next note.

⁴ L. Br. p. 248: ata ingnad and dino in spideog o[c] canad rind, 7 ar catt hic teithed uainn, i. e. wondrous is the robin there singing to us, and our cat has escaped from us.

⁵ Ata in spideog derg uli, 7 atu sa am oenur, *ib.* p. 73; another complaint of loneliness, Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 277. This note of self-pity is characteristic of the utterances of many of our scribes.

⁶ Anocht aidche feil Cotrina, 7 ara greis dam fein, i. e. the eve of the feast of St. Catherine to-night, and under her grace am I, H. 3. 18, p. 237^b (C. 441); the eve of the Annunciation to-night, and I pray her (the B. V. M.) to help my case, and far from my home am I, Abbott and Gwynn, Catalogue, p. 214; *infra*, pp. 15, 23, 27.

⁷ L. U. 37^b; another scribe, Tadg ua Rigbardan notes the 'occurrence' of the Annunciation and Easter Eve, H. 2. 12, No. 3; cf. BB. Introduction, p. 1^o: a Dhia 7 a Trinoid 7 a saingte (sancte) Lindean, o tarrla sib ar aen la, 7 bar cumachta le chele, co furtaighi sib 7 co foirthi . . . fer in lebair sea, i. e. O God and O Trinity and O St. Linden, since ye have fallen on one day, with your power united, aid and help the man (i. e. owner) of this book. I know nothing of St. Linden (if the reading be right), but the festival must have been one which could 'occur' with Trinity Sunday, i. e. it must fall not earlier than May 17, and not later than June 20.

⁸ L. Br. p. 42; cf. *ib.* p. 28; where the scribe is writing the Life of St. Patrick on St. Patrick's Eve.

⁹ *Infra*, pp. 24, 25, 29.

¹⁰ *Infra*, p. 9.

4 PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

Again, he tells of his own circumstances; he is hungry,¹ he is sleepy,² and (terribly cramping influence to a writer) he is bitterly cold.³

The state of the weather is often noted; it is wet,⁴ it is snowing,⁵ there is a cruel wind,⁶ Lough Rea has been very stormy.⁷

He dwells on his own ailments: 'I am sick this day that he has left us.'⁸ 'The phlegm is upon me like a mighty river, and my breathing is laboured.'⁹ 'Alas, my chest, O holy Virgin,' exclaims one of the glossers of St. Gallen Priscian.¹⁰

He pours out his own feelings, often in very pathetic terms; his anxiety and longing for absent friends, his grief for the death of relations.¹¹

¹ Asum triamuin gan seire [h]odie, i. e. I am sad without food to-day, Book of Fenagh, p. 151; is fada lium ata Emunn amuich 'sa sic, 7 me ac fuirech ris gan mo diner do chaithim, i. e. Edmund (Butler) seems a long time out in the frost, and I waiting for him without eating my dinner, Laud Misc. 610 f. 58 v^o; cf. O'Grady, Catalogue, pp. 133, 146. It is to be feared, however, that these pathetic colophons degenerated at last into 'common form'. In two different MSS., by two different scribes, I find the identical complaint that they are writing 'gan tennta buird no binnse', i. e. without support of board or lodging (lit. bench), Additional 31872, f. 163^b (O'Grady, Cat. p. 34); King's Inns, No. 19, p. 1083. The latter passage was sent me by Miss Joynt. Both are from eighteenth-century MSS.

² Ataim ag tuitim 'mo cho[d][ad], Ann. Ult. iii. 450.

³ Mar uar dam; i. e. I am very cold, St. Gallen Priscian, p. 114 (Thesaurus, II. xx); fiche oidche ondiu co luan cásc, is am fuar toirsech and, cen tene, cen tugaid, i. e. twenty nights from to-day till Easter Monday, and I am cold and weary, without fire or covering, L. Br. p. 33; cf. O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 132; Abbott and Gwynn, Catalogue, pp. 125, 138. Cuthbert, abbot of Wearmouth, excuses himself to Lullus, Archbishop of Mainz, for not sending him some copies of Bede's works which he had asked for, because the intense cold had stopped the hand of the scribe, Jaffé, Monumenta Moguntina, p. 301.

⁴ Marta fuar fiuch a Muscraige Tire, i. e. a cold wet March in Muskerry, L. Br. p. 119; aine roim nodlaic aniug, 7 as trom ferthain 'san uair so a tosach aidchi, i. e. it is the Friday before Christmas to-day, and it is pouring heavily now at the beginning of night, Laud Misc. 610 f. 116 v^o, col. 1; ro ba flesc arair, i. e. it was wet last night, Vita Trip. p. xxix, from Rawl. B. 512 f. 89. (Stokes needlessly alters *flesc*; it is Cormac's: *flesc*.i. *fiuchud*, Corm.² No. 582).

⁵ Ata in snechta oc siliud isin cetlo don mis marta, i. luan, i. e. the snow is falling the first day of March, Monday, L. Br. p. 17; snechta fuar for lar indiu, in mairt ria caisc, i. e. cold snow on the ground to-day, the Tuesday before Easter, ib. p. 120.

⁶ L. Br. p. 235.

⁷ L. Br. p. 8.

⁸ Is am othrach aniugh d'fagaib se sinn, Laud 610 f. 116 v^o.

⁹ Is abh cumasach ata in raoma orumsa .i. arfithis m'anala, Egerton 88 f. 26 (27)^a (C. 2338).

¹⁰ p. 211^a (Thesaurus, II. xxii).

¹¹ Infra, pp. 24-6.

And then he gives utterance to his religious aspirations; sometimes, no doubt, in expressions more or less conventional, but often in terms of the most heartfelt and moving piety.¹ He invokes the aid of God and the Saints on his work.² He asks for the prayers of his readers for his own soul, and for the souls of his employer, and others that are dear to him;³ and surely he must be a stern Protestant who would refuse the petition. He commends himself to the protection of God and of the Saints,⁴ and rests in perfect trust on the divine mercy, although the plague is raging all around him.⁵

Before I proceed to give illustrations of these and other points, there are one or two things to be noted.

Although the colophons are of course the work of the original scribe, the marginalia may or may not be due to him. Often they are later, sometimes a good deal later, notes of subsequent readers or of subsequent scribes, who have commented on, corrected, and restored the work of their predecessors.

Again, MSS. in the Irish language, even when their contents are ecclesiastical in character, are by no means, as a rule, the work of monastic scriptoria.⁶ There were in Ireland hereditary castes or families of lawyers or brehons, doctors, historians, ollavs. There were schools of law, of poetry, and so forth. It was in these schools, and in these learned families, that many of these MSS. were written and preserved.

From the marginalia in Egerton 88, a law MS. of the school and family of the O'Davorens, we can see that a good deal of chaff went on among the young scribes,⁷ and one or two of the remarks are best

¹ *Infra*, pp. 28-32.

² Co foire Muire 7 Patraic mo lam, i. e. may Mary and Patrick help my hand, Rawl. B. 487 f. 35 v^o (this is by the original scribe); a De moir, foir mo lam, i. e. O great God, help my hand, ib. f. 36 r^o (this is by a later scribe). A Dhia dén grása ar m'anum, 7 tabhuir bisech litrech orm, i. e. O God, be gracious to my soul, and grant me a better handwriting, O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 281, from Eg. 159 f. 2.

³ *Infra*, pp. 9, 12, 16, 24, 28-32.

⁴ *Infra*, pp. 26-7, 30-1.

⁵ *Infra*, p. 31.

⁶ There are, of course, exceptions; thus the Merugud Uilix, or Wanderings of Ulysses, was written: i Mainistir Chilli Cormaic, in the Monastery of Kilcormic or Frankfort (King's Co.), see Meyer's ed. p. v; cf. *infra* p. 7, note 6.

⁷ O'Grady, Catalogue, pp. 129, 140. For other references to a school of law, cf. ib. pp. 126, 133, 146; and the following: Misi Domnall a dtigh na scoile dam .i. a mBaile Orlaith aniu, i. e. I am Donall, in the school-house am I, at Baile Orlaith to-day, Eg. 88 f. 26 (27)^b C. 2338 (Baile Orlaith is not in Hogan; there is a Ballyorley in Wexford, bar. Gorey, but this place is probably in Galway, v. *infra*); 'sa Pairc dam a fochair Seaain I D[uibh da boireann], 7 ane do chuiris doras garrdha re Dunmoir fo comair na scoile, i. e. at Park I am in

left in the obscurity of the language in which they are written. One of these pieces of chaff I will cite, because O'Grady in his Catalogue has missed the point of it: 'There's for you, Donall, for the loan of the Psalter, and I fear you will never have any claim against me for a fine for excessive use.'¹ This is written, as I have said, in a legal MS., and there was in Irish law a fine for excessive or unfair use of a loan or pledge; and the scribe's meaning is that he had not made much use of the Psalter which his friend Donall had lent him.

These marginalia are often very crabbed and contracted, and almost impossible to read. Sometimes they are written in a sort of cipher, or in ogham. The late Mr. Standish O'Grady spent an enormous amount of labour in the attempt to decipher the marginalia of some of the Irish MSS. in the British Museum, by no means always with complete success.

Lastly, it must not be supposed that I have myself examined all the MSS. from which I quote. I have examined a considerable number of them; but some of my extracts are taken from catalogues or other printed sources,² and some from facsimiles. On the other hand,

the company of John O'Davoren, and yesterday I put up a garden-gate opposite the school towards Dunmore, H. 3, 18, p. 265^b (C. 500). Mr. E. J. Gwynn points out to me that the places mentioned here are Park Castle and Dunmore in Co. Galway, and that both places are mentioned in the marginalia of Eg. 88, v. O'Grady's Catalogue, pp. 114, 128-9, 140. Donall O'Davoren's Glossary was written, as the opening words show, at Park, which Hogan places in Co. Clare. Another member of the family, Murtough O'Davoren, is mentioned on the margin of Eg. 88, f. 53 (54), v. O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 126. But the most interesting notice of a law school is this: Feil Eóin Baupstaist hinocht, 7 scél truag againd innte .i. Cluain Lethan, ard-chathair feinechais Erend ica hinnrud tria imarbus Aeda [mic] Amlaib, i.e. the festival of John the Baptist to-night, and sorrowful tidings we have on it, that Cluain Lethan the chief seat of the legal science of Ireland has been raided through the sin of Hugh MacAuliffe, L. Br. p. 206. The scribe of another note, *ib.* p. 42, was actually writing at Cluain Lethan in Muscraige Tire. The latter is a district roughly corresponding with the baronies of Ormond in Co. Tipperary. Cluain Lethan (the broad mead) is not in Hogan. There is a Cloonlahan in Galway; but there might easily be many places of the name.

¹ O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 129. O'Grady translates 'fiach forera foimelta', i.e. fine for excessive use, by 'claim for extra charges in respect of food'.

² Where a quotation is taken direct from a MS., a reference to the MS. alone is given; where it is taken from some secondary authority, a reference to that authority is given in brackets after the reference to the MS. In the case of some legal MSS. the quotations are taken from the transcripts made by John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry for the Brehon Law Commissioners. These are distinguished by the initials O'D. and C., followed by the number of the page of the transcript. The volumes transcribed by O'Donovan and O'Curry respectively are pagged continuously, O'D. 1-2491, C. 1-2906.

COLOPHONS AND MARGINALIA OF IRISH SCRIBES 7

I have sometimes given a reference to a printed authority, as being the more accessible, although I may have examined the MS. itself.

Of colophons where the name of the scribe only is mentioned the following may serve as examples: 'I am Eugene O'Shiell the scabby who wrote this.'¹ The same scribe wrote part of *Laud Misc. 615*, as is shown by a similar entry on p. 129.² He also wrote the Franciscan copy of Manus O'Donell's *Life of St. Columba*, where the colophon expands into an elaborate panegyric on his patron Niall og O'Neill, 'the head of the prosperity of poetry and science, and a sage of learning', &c.³ The O'Shiells were one of the learned families of Ireland.⁴ Eugene's patron, Niall O'Neill the younger, figures in the *Annals of the Four Masters* from 1511 to 1536, which gives us his approximate date.

Occasionally, though rarely, the scribe gives his name, not at the end, but at the beginning of the piece which he is writing: 'In the name of God. Here follows the Testament of Morann. Gillapatrik Mac Egan.'⁵ The Mac Egans were another of the learned families of Ireland, the scribes and owners of the famous *Lebar Brecc* (Speckled Book) or *Book of Duniry*. 119

In one or two instances a scribe does not give his name, but a description: 'I am a pupil of the Church of Kilsaran.'⁶ Sometimes

¹ Misi Eogan Carrach O Siagail do graibh sin, Kilbride MS. No. 25 (Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 89).

² Misi Eogan Carrach do scrib O Siugail. Similar simple entries are frequent; e.g. Mesi an Gillo Riabach, Harl. 5280, f. 46^a (Z. C. P. iii. 226); Meisi Mailechlainn ro graithph sin, Rawl. B. 512 f. 2^b.

³ Misi Eoghan Carrach O Siaghail ro scrib an beatha so C. c. do Niall og . . . Y Neill .i. cend sochair na heigsi 7 na healadna, 7 saoi eagnaide, 7c., Franciscan MS. A. 8. (I cannot translate the latter part of the entry.) A like flattering address from Maelechlainn Mac an Lega to Donough O'Brien is found in the Paris MS. (*Rev. Celt.* xi. 401). This colophon is undated; but the same scribe wrote a medical MS. (and his name, Son of the Leech, shows that he belonged to a family of hereditary physicians), No. 15 in the Library of the King's Inns, Dublin, the colophon of which, f. 76 v^o, is dated 1512.

⁴ In the house of Niall, another member of this family, part of Rawl. B. 513 was written by Ballach mac Parthalain, f. 2.

⁵ Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 185.

⁶ Mesi an felmac on Cill dianadh leath-nomen (leth-ainm) an sechtmad soerlaithi na sechtmaini. Tuiced Sencan sin, i. e. I am a pupil of the Church of which the nickname is the seventh noble day of the week; let Sencan understand this, Harl. 5280, f. 74^b (Z. C. P. iii. 226). These last words show that a riddle is intended. One of the Kilsarans is probably meant; the pronunciation of Cell Sathairnd (Saturday's Church) and Cell Sarain (Saran's Church) would be nearly the same. For a somewhat similar entry in H. 4, 22, see Abbott and Gwynn's Catalogue, p. 213.



only the date is given;¹ sometimes only the place of writing.² Occasionally a change of scribe is indicated: 'The line of my tutor at the beginning of this page. May God be gracious to the soul of Maelisa';³ and one scribe will criticize very frankly the work of his colleague: 'It is easy to know Gabriel's part here, whatever be the reason.'⁴

In one case at least the scribe seems to have been sorry when his task came to an end, for after his name, Edmund M^cLoughlin, he adds the words: 'Goodbye, little book.'⁵ Another scribe addresses his book in a melancholy mood: 'That is sad, O little book.'⁶

Some other instances in which the employer's name is joined with that of the scribe may be given. Michael O'Clery describes one of the MSS. from which he copied as 'the book which Seary O'Mulconry [another literary family] wrote for Rose, daughter of Hugh the Black O'Donnell, wife of Niall og O'Neill at Baile an tsencaislen, beside Sliab Truim⁷ in 1536'.⁸

This is very interesting, because we have already met with the husband of this lady as the patron of Eugene O'Shiell.⁹

¹ e.g. Liber Flauus Fergusiorum, I. ii, f. 4^c. In one case the date is indicated only by the golden number and the dominical letter; in luan roim Nodlaic, 7 3 in nuimhir oir ann, 7 C in liter domnach, Eg. 1781, f. 49^b.

² So frequently in L. Br.; cf. Book of Fenagh, pp. 171, 195.

³ Harl. 1802 (R. C. viii. 354).

⁴ Abbott and Gwynn's Catalogue, p. 127, from H. 3, 17; cf. ib. p. 314.

⁵ Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 222; literally, 'a blessing (go) with thee, little book'.

⁶ Truag sin a lebruin, Rawl. B. 505 f. 118 v^o. This is the beginning of a pathetic little verse, which is found in full on the margin of another MS., H. 1, 13, f. 1: Is truag sin, a lebrain bric báin, | Tiucfed lá, is ba fír, | Go nderfed nech os cenn do chlair: | Nach mairenn an lam do srib, i. e. Sad is that, little variegated white book; a day will come in truth, when some one over thy page will say: The hand that wrote it is no more. 472

⁷ Bessie Bell Mount, bar. Strabane, Co. Tyrone.

⁸ Asan leabur no sscríobh Siograidh úa Maelconaire do Roisi ingin Aodha Duibh . . . i Domnaill, ben Neill óicc . . . i Neill i mBaile ann tSencaislein do lettaoibh Sleibhe Tuaim. Aois Crist . . . 1536; Brussels MS. No. 4190, f. 263 v^o. In one case the scribe makes a condition that the MS. shall not be alienated without his consent: Seaan O Cianan ro sgríob an leabar sa d' Agham O Cianan fa coingell gan esan da tabairt da neoch ele gan cet da Seaan, i. e. John O'Keenan wrote this book for Adam O'K. on condition that he shall not give it to any one else without the consent of John, Rawl. B. 506 f. 10^b; printed Z. C. P. xii. 358, where another instance is given in a note.

⁹ Above, p. 7. A similar tribute to another literary lady is found at the end of the story of Cath Finntragha in Rawl. B. 487, f. 11^a: 'arna scribad d' Finnlaeoch O Cathasaigh do Saidb ingin Taidg hi Maille, sai mna ar gais 7 ar einech 7 gennaigeacht, *et reliqua*, i. e. written by F. O'Casey for Sadb, daughter of Teague O'Malley, a paragon of a woman for wisdom, hospitality, and chastity, &c.

COLOPHONS AND MARGINALIA OF IRISH SCRIBES 9

Again in the Book of Lecan: 'Adam O'Cuirnin wrote this for Gilla-isu Mac Firbis, the Ollav (learned man) of Hy Fiachrach¹ in 1418'; and in the same MS.: 'Murrough the swarthy O'Candlish wrote this for his dear tutor, to wit for Mac Firbis, and our blessing with it to boot.'² A similar entry by the same scribe further on in the MS. is dated: the autumn that Mac Donough was killed.³ The Mac Firbises were another learned family, and one of the last of them⁴ assisted Sir James Ware in his Irish researches. Here we see their pupils copying MSS. for them.

The same family are connected with part of another famous MS., the so-called Yellow Book of Lecan, and one of the same pupils appears among its scribes; while in each of the two MSS. are interesting notes, showing how these great MSS. were regarded as heirlooms in the families to which they belonged: 'A prayer for Mac Firbis who wrote this book as an heirloom for his family that shall come after him for ever.'⁵

¹ f. 30^d: Adam O'Cuirnin do srib do Gilla isu Mac Firbisigh .i. d'ollamh O Fiachrach, A.D. mccccxviii.

² Murchad Riabach O'Cuindlis do srib so da aide dilis .i. do Mac Firbisig, 7 ar mbennacht les da thuilledh, f. 102^d. Another allusion to a 'dear tutor', a Mac Egan, in BB. Introduction, pp. 1-2.

³ Murchad Riabach O'Cuindlis qui scripsit da aide, in Laigsech (of Leix), bodesin .i. do Mac Firbisig, in foghmar do marbad mac Donnchaid, f. 107 r^o, col. 3. (The slayings of several members of this family will be found in the index to the Four Masters, so that we cannot use this entry to fix the date.) Another instance of dating a MS. by the death of a leading man will be found in King's Inns MS., No. 12, f. 37^b: Malachias O Cianain do sribh an lebur sa; an foghmar roim O Raigill[igh] dhech .i. Seaan mac Toirrdelbaigh, ro tinnscnadh he, 7 an samradh iardain ro crichnaighedh he, . . . mccccxcii, i.e. M. O'Keenan wrote this book; the autumn before John son of Turlough O'Reilly died it was begun, and in the following autumn it was finished, 1492. The scribe eloquently laments the death of this young chief, which is entered by the Four Masters under 1491. The following is an interesting colophon from Rawl. B. 486, f. 75^d: Macraith Mac a Gabhand na scel do sribh in lebar so do Gilla Ruadain hua Mic Ain .i. da companach fein .i. do comarba Lothra 7 Ruadain, i.e. Magrath Macgowan of the stories (i.e. the historian) wrote this for his comrade Gilla Ruadain (I cannot identify the surname), i.e. the coarb of Lorrha and of Ruadan. The names of other members of this learned family of Macgowan, hereditary historians, will be found in the Index of the Four Masters. One of them, Thomas, who died in 1425, bears the same sobriquet as the writer of this colophon, Macgowan of the stories. For other colophons which mention the name of the employer see Rev. Celt. xi. 393; Z. C. P. iii. 226; Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 25.

⁴ Duaid Mac Firbis, 1585-1670.

⁵ Orait do Mac Firbisigh do srib in lebar sa ina set oi[gh]ri da fhine do ticfa ina diaid co brath, 7 re lind Ruaidri i Dubda do scribad he, B. Lecan, f. 41^b ad calc. Orait do Gilla Issa Mac Firbisig do srib in lebar sa do fen, 7 da fine ina diaid, Y. B. L. 190^b 52; cf. ib. 160^b 50; 163^b 49.

Another note, which points the same way, is the entry in the *Book of Ballymote* that when that MS. was sold by Mac Donough to Hugh O'Neill for seven score milch kine, it was done 'with the unanimous consent of Mac Donough's children and relatives',¹ as if it had been a transfer of land.

A further proof of the importance attached to MSS. is the fact that they were sometimes given as ransom for important prisoners, and recovered at the point of the sword. The following statement occurs in *Laud Misc.* 610 f. 110 v^o: 'The Psalter of Edmund son of Richard Butler, to whom this Psalter belonged till the defeat inflicted on him and the Earl of Ormond by Thomas Earl of Desmond at Pilltown [Co. Kilkenny, in 1462], when this book and the *Book of Carrick* were exacted as a ransom for Mac Richard. And it was he who had these books written for himself, until the Earl of Desmond exacted them; . . . and English and Scotch and the Dal Caiss were on the side of the Earl of Ormond there.'² The *Four Masters* give this battle under 1462; but they do not mention the site, nor the Earl's Scotch auxiliaries; they state, however, that it was against the Earl's wishes that his relative, Edmund Butler, took part in the battle.

A well-known entry in the *Lebar na hUidre* (*Book of the Dun Cow*) tells how that MS. and another called *Lebar Gerr* (*Short Book*) were forcibly recovered by Hugh Roe O'Neill from the Connaught men, after having been given as ransom for two prisoners more than a century before. And this recovery was deemed of sufficient importance to be recorded in the *Annals of the Four Masters*.³

¹ Co ced da cloinn 7 da brathrib co haentadach, BB. 333^a; *brathrib* means relatives; if brothers in the strict sense were intended, we should probably have *derb-brathrib*. An entry in *Eg.* 89 f. 192 v^o shows that that MS. was purchased by Gerald, Earl of Kildare, in 1500 for one score of kine. There were at that time in the MS. twenty-two quaternions, O'Grady, *Catalogue*, pp. 220-1.

² *Saltair mic Ruisderd Buitiler .i. Emainn Buitiler in tsaltair seo, no go tuca[d] maidm Baile in fPuill air iarla Urmuman 7 air Mac Ruisderd la iarla Desmuman .i. Tomas; 7 do bained in lebur so 7 lebur na Carruigi as fuasglad mic Ruisderd, 7 isse in mac R. sin do chuir na lebra sin da scribad do fen, no gur bain Tomas iarla Desmuman amach iad; . . . 7 Saxanae 7 Albanaidh 7 Dal Gaiss maille fri iarla Uramuman ann; cf. F. M. iv. 1020; *Book of Rights*, p. xxix; *Proc. R. I. A.* 8vo, ii. 338-9. The MS. is not, of course, a psalter in the ordinary sense of the word. It is so called because some of its contents were copied from the lost 'Psalter of Cashel'.*

³ Sub anno 1470; the note is in L. U. 37^b; cf. *Introduction*, pp. x, xi. We know of more than one MS. called 'the Short Book'. Of one called the *Short Book of Ua Buadachain I* I have given some account in *Miscellanea Hagiographica Hibernica*, p. 189. From it the four principal copies of the *Life of Finnchua of Brigown* are mediately or immediately derived. The colophon of the Franciscan

Important memoranda were sometimes inserted on the margins or blank spaces of MSS.¹

The following is interesting as showing that other Irish Franciscans besides Colgan and the O'Clerys were engaged in the seventeenth century on the work of preserving the ecclesiastical antiquities of their country: 'Here's to thee, O Father Provincial, and my blessing to boot; this is all we could find of Lives of Irish Saints for copying; . . . I am Donall Dinneen who wrote them in the house of the Friars at Cork for Francis O'Mahony, Provincial of the Friars Minor in Ireland, Sept. 18th, 1627.'²

A direct address to the employer, instead of merely mentioning his name in the colophon, is not infrequent, especially in Law MSS.³ The following from a non-legal MS. shows a pleasing zeal on the part of the scribe: 'Here's to thee, Tuathal, from Ferfessa mac Conchabair, and could I command better diligence than this, you should have it from me.'⁴

Occasionally the scribe mentions the time spent on a particular piece of work: 'William Mac-an-Legha wrote this history in two summer days, 1473.'⁵ He takes credit to himself for the goodness and rapidity of his work: 'Better that, if you can, Master Hugh,'

copy, which is the fullest, says that 'the brother Ua Buadachain copied it from the book of Monasterboice into his own short book, to wit the short book of Ua Buadachain'. The expression '*his own* short book' suggests that the exemplar was also known as 'the Short Book of Monasterboice'. If so, it would be an interesting case of the title of a MS. descending to a copy. Moreover, in this case the exemplar may be the MS. mentioned L. U. 39^a 19-21 as 'the Short Book which was in Monasterboice, which the student (mac léigind) thievishly carried off across the sea, which was never subsequently discovered'. O'Buadachain's copy *may* be the MS. recovered in 1470. Another Lebar Gerr is that of the O'Cuirins, burnt in 1416 in Inis Mor of Lough Gill, Four Masters, sub anno. We find mention of a Long Book of Leighlinn, Lebar fata Lethglindi, Laws, v. 472, 24.

¹ e.g. Laud Misc. 610 f. 14^d, a covenant between Edmund Butler, Earl of Ormond, and a person called 'in drithlennach', literally, the sparky one.

² R. I. A. Stowe MSS. No. 9 (A. 4. 1), pp. 277-8: Agsin duit, a Athair provincial, 7 mo bennacht rena gcois an meid as mo fuaramar rena sgríobadh do beathaidhibh na naom nEirennach; . . . Misi Domnall ó Duinnin do sgríobh iadsin a tteach na mbrathar a gCorcaigh do Proinfeis o Mathgamna, do provincial na mbrathar mionurach a nEirinn, . . . Sept. 18, 1627. On this MS. see Bethada Naem nÉirenn, pp. xii-xiv; and on Francis O'Mahony, Misc. Hag. Hib., p. 157.

³ See O'Grady's Catalogue, pp. 109 f. for several examples.

⁴ Harl. 5280 f. 58^b (Z. C. P. iii. 226); so, R. I. A. Reeves 42. f. 45^b: Agsin duit a Eoin oig o Dabhi hUi Ghe (?).

⁵ Paris MS. f. 7 r^o (R. C. xi. 391). For other instances, p. 1 supra; p. 28 infra.

exclaims one of the scribes of Egerton 88.¹ 'That column was not written very slowly,' remarks the scribe or glosser of the St. Gallen Priscian.² Another characterizes his work as a triumph of penmanship.³

But the writer often pathetically admits his shortcomings: 'A blessing on the soul of every reader who shall bestow a blessing on the soul of the writer, though neither his hand nor his script deserves it, to wit, Rory Boy Macmahon, at Kilmear, 1553.'⁴ 'I am the man of the bad script who wrote this, . . . to wit, John Macdonnell, and far from my home am I to-day.'⁵ In one case the confession is put into the mouth of the book itself: 'I am the book of Gillandrias the dark, and not good is the script that I have.'⁶

Various excuses are given for these shortcomings, in one case excessive haste,⁷ in another want of practice.⁸ But the excuse most frequently alleged is the badness of the writing materials and implements, and of the conditions under which the work has had to be done. 'A curse on thee, O pen,' exclaims one scribe;⁹ another interpolates a like remark in the vernacular in the middle of a Latin sentence: 'Alybertus dixit, oculus as olc an penn,' and the pen is bad.¹⁰ 'I am not to blame,' says a third, 'but Saordalach, for spoiling the pen.'¹¹

The scribe or glosser of the St. Gallen Priscian has remarks of this kind: 'the vellum is defective and the writing'; 'new vellum and bad ink to say nothing else'; 'the ink is thin'.¹² The scribe of

¹ f. 12 (13)^b, O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 111; or it may possibly mean: complete that if you can; there is a similar phrase on p. 110.

² Ni aermall ro scribad in letraim so, p. 195^b (Thesaurus, II. xxi); tri tuimthea gléso in letraim didenach, i. e. three pen-dips did that last column, Gwynn, Liber Ardmachanus, p. 151.

³ Buaid pein, Y. B. L. 222^b, lower margin.

⁴ Bennacht ar gach nech da leigfes so doberas bennacht aran anmain do sgrib é, ce nar thuill a lam no a liter sin .i. Rugraide buide Magmhathgamhna ag Cill Mhaog, re linn Pilip mic Muiris a nAlmain, 1553, H. 2. 7, p. 250.

⁵ Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 6; cf. ib. p. 62.

⁶ Ib. p. 57.

⁷ Ib. p. 117; cf. O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 33 ad calc.

⁸ Messe Tornae, 7 ni fetur ca fad o do scriubus oenlini roime sin, i. e. I am Torna, and I don't know how long it is since I wrote a single line, R. I. A. Betham MSS. 145, p. 57 (Meyer's Voyage of Bran, p. viii).

⁹ Mo mallacht ort a phinn, Franciscan copy of Accallam na Senorach (Arch. f. Celt. Lexicographie, i. 317); so, mo mallacht arm membrum, i. e. my curse on my vellum, R. I. A. Stowe MS. 32 (C. 3. 2) f. 1. v^o.

¹⁰ O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 250; cf. ib. pp. 120 (where pen, ink, and vellum share the blame), 131.

¹¹ Ib. p. 135; cf. ib. p. 137.

¹² For the originals of all these, v. Thesaurus, II. xxi, xxii.

MS. Reeves 42 in the Royal Irish Academy complains: 'Cithruad Magfindgail wrote the above without chalk, without pumice, and with bad implements.'¹ Another scribe of the same MS. makes the same complaint of bad implements, want of chalk and pumice.² The chalk was used for whitening the vellum,³ the pumice for smoothing it.⁴ The scribe of Rawl. B. 506 remarks: 'there is chalk all over this leaf.'⁵ 'I am dreadfully worried to-day about my writing', says another poor scribe, 'owing to the badness of my ink, and the extreme badness of my vellum. I can scarcely write a letter on it.'⁶ Once more a rather pathetic entry: 'A prayer here for the students, and this is a difficult little story; and let me not be blamed for the script, for the ink is bad, and the vellum defective, and the day is dark.'⁷ So another scribe complains of the badness of the candle-light.⁸ 'We are ruined', says another, 'by the badness of the vellum, and of the nuts,'⁹ which latter I take to mean the galls used

¹ p. 25^b; cf. ib. pp. 31, 86^a, where there is a long colophon with the date 1513. This scribe had been very much married, for he asks for the reader's prayers for his 'wretched soul', and those of his wives, especially the last.

² Le droch-aidhme, can cailc, can cubar, ib. p. 125. The Irish word *cubar* means literally froth or foam, and its application to a writing material for a long time puzzled me. The brilliant and certain suggestion that it means pumice, is due to Professor J. L. Myres, who points out that in folk-speech pumice, from its peculiar properties, is regarded as petrified sea-foam, being called e.g. in modern Greek ἀφρόπετρα (foam-stone) or simply ἀφρός (foam). A quotation in the New English Dictionary guided me to the following passage of Isidore, Etym. xvi. 3: Pumex uocatur eo quod spumae densitate concretus fiat; i. e. he derives *pumex* from s-pum-a; but the etymology was probably suggested by popular tradition.

³ Cf. the expression: cailc-lebar, literally, chalk-book, Laws, i. 34.

⁴ Liber pumice mundus, Hor. Ep. i. 20, 1-2; Catull. i. 1-2; libellum . . . pumice expolitur; ib. xx (xxii): membrana . . . pumice omnia aequata.

⁵ Ata cailc arin duillechan sa uili, f. 17^d.

⁶ Is mor mo chessacht fein aniu ar mo scriben le holcus mo duib, 7 le ro-olcus mo memrain, 7 is mor m'anacbaing liter do chuir air sis, H. 2, 7, p. 133. A Dé nime ass olc sgribthar an lebar so hUa Mathgamna; Fithel do graif le droch-aidhme, i. e. O God of heaven, 'tis badly this book of O'Mahony is written. Fithel inscribed (this) with bad implements, Rawl. B. 486, f. 43 v^o. (This MS. was No. 1566 in the Chandos sale, and was purchased by Rawlinson for the magnificent sum of one shilling.) The quality of the paper supplied is also criticized; is olc garb in paper, i. e. the paper is bad and rough, Franciscan MS. of Cath Catharda, f. 110 r^o (Stokes's Edition, p. 364); ni me is cintach, acht in dub tana 7 in paipér sgrista, i. e. I am not to blame, but the thin ink and torn paper, E. 4. 1 (Abbott and Gwynn, Catalogue, p. 312).

⁷ R. I. A. C. 1, 2, f. 38 (Ériu, ii. 224).

⁸ Is olc solus na coinnle, Cath Catharda, u. s. p. 304.

⁹ Do mill olcus na enu 7 in membruim inn. Misi Connla 7 a nIb Cairin dam, H. 3, 18, p. 388^b (C. 859).

14 PROCEEDINGS OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

for making ink. One scribe even invokes the Virgin's help: 'O Mary, aid the ink.'¹

Again there are complaints that a leaf has been excised, that a child has soiled a page,² that boys have spilt the ink;³ that his employer takes very little interest in the book;⁴ while a hearty curse is bestowed on the women folk for disarranging books, and muddling up ink and colours together.⁵

And so the Irish scribes are continually making trial of their pen, their ink, and other implements on the margins of their MSS. The principal scribe of Lebar na hUidre has twice written on the margin: 'probatio pennae Maelmuiri';⁶ and the Irish equivalent 'promad pind' occurs not infrequently.⁷ 'Trial of the pen-instrument of Cairbre Corrach.'⁸ 'To see whether my ink will run.'⁹ 'Trial of the ink.'¹⁰ In two instances the scribe apostrophizes his pen: 'How is that, O pen?'¹¹ 'How is that, O pen? and methinks 'tis good.'¹²

The scribal notes give evidence of the use of colour for capitals, or 'head letters' as the Irish call them; for the MSS. with which I am dealing are not in any real sense illuminated. 'It is the eve of Sunday to-night, and I have finished putting the colour on the whole of this book. And there is a great battle in Connaught, and it is a fortnight from now to Lammas. Mac Firbis himself.'¹³ This is in the Book of Lecan, and it shows that the colour work was done by Mac Firbis himself, whereas parts of the MS. were written, as we have seen, by his pupils. In Laud Misc. 610 the scribe writes: 'May God forgive Edmund the putting colour on this book on the eve of

¹ A Muire foir in dub, L. Br. p. 17.

² Eg. 1782, ff. 86^b, 120^b (Z. C. P. iv. 31-2).

³ Book of Fenagh, p. 307.

⁴ As fada tussu gan cuairt do dhénam 'gud lebor, i. e. you are a long time without visiting your book, H. 5, 6, p. 76 (Abbott and Gwynn, Catalogue, p. 233).

⁵ O'Grady, Catalogue, pp. 122-3.

⁶ L. U. 55^b, 70^a.

⁷ L. Br. pp. 60, 76, 226; Laud Misc. 610 ff. 33 r^o, 89^b. A variant occurs H. 3, 17 c. 120: promad uois [= bois] dam, i. e. trial of my hand. For another variant see next note.

⁸ R. I. A. Liber Flauus Fergusiorum, I. ii. f. 10^c: Fechain glesa pind andso o Chairbre Chorrach; cf. Fechain glesa pind andso, H. 2, 7, c. 158; fechain glesa Sidraigh, Laud Misc. 610 f. 18 v^o.

⁹ L. Br. 117^b.

¹⁰ Laud Misc. 610 f. 3 r^o.

¹¹ Cinnus sin a pheind? Annals of Loch Cé, ii. 199.

¹² Cinnus sin a peinn, 7 dar lim is maith, BB. 314^b.

¹³ Anocht aidchi domnaig 7 tairnig dath do chur arin lebar sa uili, 7 is mor cocad Condacht. Coecais on aidchi nocht co Lugnasad. Mac Firbisig fesin, f. 162 v^o.

Sunday.’¹ The scribe’s sabbatarianism² was shocked at what Mac Firbis did without scruple. Many of the colophons and notes in this MS., including the note in question, are in purple ink.

We also find in the same MS. evidence of the restoring and re-touching of MSS. where the writing had become faint or abraded: ‘A prayer here for Seary . . . O’Mulconry who is restoring this book for Maurice, son of Thomas, that is for the Earl of Desmond,³ and he is at Askeaton to-day at the beginning of Midsummer, after reducing the whole of the south of Ireland both English and Irish.’⁴ Further on in the same MS., on a page which has been heavily restored, is the remark: ‘I never liked the re-writing of these letters, and I don’t like it now.’⁵ Perhaps a note on the following page explains the unsatisfactory character of the work: ‘Not good are the implements of restoration which I have. I am Torna og, son of Torna, and at the Curragh I am, the eve of St. Brigit.’⁶ In a copy of Cormac’s Glossary, two scribes seem to have been engaged on the work of restoration.⁷

Where the pieces copied are translations from the Latin, the colophons sometimes preserve the names of the translators: ‘This is how Donough O’Coffey turned these Latin verses into Gaelic; . . . I am Cormac junior.’⁸ ‘William Magawny translated this book

¹ Cur lobad [= logad] Dia d’Emunn beth a[c] cur datha ’sa lebur so aidchi domnaidh, f. 116 r^o: cf. ib. f. 72^d: cor loga Dia duin anocht aidchi domnaig. Whether the Edmund in question is Edmund Butler the original owner of the MS. I cannot say: cf. infra, p. 23, note 3.

² On the sabbatarianism of the Irish see Vitae SS. Hib. p. cxxiii. According to Irish ecclesiastical law, Sunday extended from vespers on Saturday to tierce on Monday, see the Cain Domnaig (Law of Sunday) Ériu ii. 194. Hence a scribe gives as a reason for stopping: ‘Sunday’s vespers have overtaken us’, esparta domnaig ’ar mbreith forn, Vita Trip. p. xix.

³ He became Earl in 1487; this entry therefore was made some time after the MS. had passed from the Butlers into the possession of the Earls of Desmond.

⁴ Oraid andso do Sighraidh mac Seain . . . ua Maoilconaire fil ag lesugad an libhair so do Muiris mac Tomáis .i. iarla Desmuman, 7 sé a nEas Geibhtine anú im thaiti na belltaine tar éis deiscirt Erenn da riarugad iter Gall 7 Goeidil, f. 4 v^o.

⁵ Dob olc roim in athscribad na liter tuas, 7 is olc anuis, f. 24^d.

⁶ Ni maith an chulaid athnuaigthi so agam. Misi Torna og mac Torna. Isin Cuiriuich (?) . . . dam, oidchi feil Brigde, f. 25 r^o. There is a very interesting note in L. U. 37^b, though this refers only to the grateful restoration of the name of the principal scribe, Maeltuire; cf. Dr. Best in Ériu vi. 162. At St. Hubert in the Ardennes we find ‘Gislebertum . . . in scribendis et renouandis libris studiosum’, Pertz viii. 570-3.

⁷ R. I. A. Hodges and Smith, No. 224, p. 8 (Stokes’s Three Irish Glossaries, p. vi).

⁸ Ag sim mar dochuir Donnchad O Cobthaig na roinn laidne sin a nGáoiidil ar Loch Derg. No[v]. 1584. Misi Cormac og, Rawl. B. 505 f. 89 v^o.

into Gaelic and Donall O'Connell took it down, . . . 1443.'¹ 'John O'Connor translated this into Gaelic, and let the reader give a blessing.'² 'Here ends the book of Walter on the doses of medicines. Cormac Mac Donlevy turned the substance of it into Gaelic for Dermot O'Lyne, and may it be profitable to him and his children, . . . 1459.'³ 'William Magawney put this book into Gaelic when he himself was being treated for a sword wound, and Donall O'Connell took it down in Gaelic from him; and a blessing on his soul. Finit. Amen.'⁴

Some of the most interesting of the notes, as I have already hinted, are those in which the scribes indicate the sources from which they took the pieces which they copied, and one instance has been given above.⁵ Sometimes these notes come at the head of the piece. 'This is an extract from the Yellow Book of Slane.'⁶ 'From the Yellow Book of Ferns this was copied.'⁷ 'This is an extract from

¹ Uilliam Mhaguibhne do cuir in leabar sa a nGaeidheilg, 7 Domnall O Conaill do geabh . . . mccccxl3 [sic], Paris MS. f. 72 v^o (R. C. xi. 399).

² Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 86.

³ Harl. 546 f. 11^b, O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 177; from a note in Arundel 333 (ib. p. 257) it appears that Cormac Mac Donlevy was a bachelor in physic.

⁴ William Mag Duibhne docuir an leabar so a nGaidhilg, 7 e fen a notras cneithe claidibh, 7 Domnall O Conaill do gabh uadha e a nGaidhilg; 7 bennacht ara anmain. Finit. Amen. Eg. 1781 f. 75^c (the same translator and scribe as in note 1 above). The phrase *do gabh* means 'took down from dictation'; other instances of its use in Mackinnon, Catalogue, pp. 22, 75. Conversely *dobiur* is used of the person dictating; mo dáid Uilliam do bhi aga thabhairt dam, i.e. my dad William dictated it to me, Eg. 159 f. 61 (O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 282). A slightly different phrase: Seaan ua Concubair do cuir an becan sa a nGaedhilg, 7 Donnchadh ua Maelconuiri do sgríbh, Liber Flauus Fergusiorum (Gwynn, in Proc. R. I. A. xxvi. C. 2, p. 24, apparently the same translator as in note 2 above). The two phrases are combined in Phillips MS. 9194 f. 5^b: Nicol og mac aba Cunga docuir in Betha sa Fechin as Laidin a nGaideilg, 7 hua Dubthaig do gab 7 do sgríbh, . . . 1329, i.e. Nicholas junior, son of the abbot of Cong, translated this Life of Fechin from Latin into Gaelic, and O'Duffy took it down and wrote it (R. C. xii. 338). The following is interesting as it relates to the Augustine Magradin, Canon of Saints' Island in Lough Ree, the continuator of Tighernach, of whom I have spoken, Vitae SS. Hib. pp. xxi f. It is the colophon to a Life of St. John the Evangelist, and occurs in the Liber Flauus Ferg. I. iv. f. 1^c: 7 is e Uidhisdin Magraighin, Cananach o Oilen na Naemh do tharraing o Laidin gu Gaeghilg an betha sa Eoin brunni, 7 tabrad gach leighfes hi bennacht for anmain an cananaidh sin. Finid. Amen, i.e. It was Augustine Magradin, Canon, &c. who turned this Life of John of the breast from Latin into Gaelic; and let every one who reads it give a blessing to the soul of the said Canon. Finit. Amen.

⁵ Note 3, pp. 10-11.

⁶ L. U. 43^a.

⁷ A lebur buide Ferna do scribad, Laud Misc. 610 f. 84^d.

the Book of Drumsnat.’¹ ‘This is an extract from the Book of the Prebend of Cong.’² In another note this same book is cited together with the Psalter of Cashel and Book of Rahen.³ This last is cited in one other place in the same MS.,⁴ and nowhere else, as far as I know. The Psalter of Cashel on the other hand is frequently cited, not only in this MS. (Laud Misc. 610), but in others also.⁵

In one interesting case the scribe indicates that he is passing from one authority to another: ‘That (i. e. the foregoing matter) is an extract from the Book of Glendalough, what follows is from the Book of Nuachongbail.’⁶

There is a very interesting note at the beginning of a copy of the Latin Gospels in an Irish hand of the eleventh century contained in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The note refers to a diagram like a chess-board which is entitled ‘Alea Euangelii’, and is intended to illustrate the respective peculiarities of the four Evan-

¹ Slicht libair Dromma Snechta inso, L.U. 99^a, 128^a; cited also BB. 21^b 22, 40^a, 15, 34. The Cin Dromma Snechta, probably the same MS., is cited L.L. 190^c, 27; BB. 27^a 41. From this were taken the two copies of Da Choca’s poem in Rawl. B. 512 f. 52^b and Eg. 88 f. 14^b (printed by Meyer, *Hibernica Minora*, pp. 46-7). Keating uses both names, L. D. S. i. 140; C. D. S. i. 190, 226; ii. 6; but I suspect that his references are taken at second hand from BB. Other instances are these: Slicht sein-liubair Caillin andso, i. e. An extract from the old Book of St. Caillin, Rawl. B. 514 ff. 62^b, 63^a, 65^b; Slicht sen-liubair I Scingiu o Ardcarne andso, i. e. an extract from the old book of O’Sgingin of Ardcarne, ib. f. 67^b; Ar slicht sen-libuir Duibdaleithi .i. comarpa Patraic, i. e. copied from the old book of Dubdalethe, co-arb of Patrick, Rawl. B. 512 f. 101^a. Three co-arbs of Patrick bore this name; probably the latest is meant, who died 1064.

² Slicht lehair in prepain Cunga inso, Laud 610 f. 10 v^o; cf. ib. f. 14^a, Finit do slicht lehair in prebbain Cunga (this piece is the Passion of the Image of Christ).

³ f. 58 v^o; the scribe says that he has put together what he could find ‘a Saltair Caissil 7 . . . a lebur Rathain 7 a lebur in prepain’. The word *prepain* has been translated ‘shred’, as if from *prepán*, a shred or patch, though what ‘the shred of Cong’ may be is not explained. I believe it to be merely the Latin *praebendu*.

⁴ f. 9^a.

⁵ Laud 610 ff. 42 v^o, 73^c, 93 v^o, 116 v^o, 117 v^o; Rawl. B. 486 f. 56^d; 487 ff. 68 v^o, 69 r^o; 502 ff. 51^a, 82^c, 84^c; Book of Lecan, f. 72 r^o, col. 2, f. 122 v^o, col. 1. It, or a copy of it, belonged at one time to Gerald, Earl of Kildare, O’Grady, *Catalogue*, p. 154. Cf. also O’Donovan’s *Introduction to the Book of Rights*. The Saltair Cormaic, Laud 610 f. 84^c is probably another name for the same MS., though in *Irische Texte*, iii. 199, the Saltair Cormaic seems to be identified with the mythical Psalter of Tara. See on the other side, Keating, i. 6, 78, 90, 186; ii. 56, 108, 230.

⁶ Slicht libair Glinni da lach sin; slicht liubair na Fuachongbala andso bodesta, Book of Lecan, f. 51 r^o, col. 4; see *Misc. Hagiog. Hib.* p. 226. For another instance of a scribe indicating that he is passing to another source, cf. *Bethada Naem nÉrenn*, i. 78 note 3.

gelists. The note is as follows: 'Incipit alea euangelii quam Dubinsi episcopus Bennchorensis detulit a rege Anglorum, id est a domu Adalstani, regis A., depicta a quodam Francone et a Romano Sapiente, id est Israel.'¹ Dubinsi, Bishop of Bangor in Ireland, died in 951 according to the Four Masters, and Athelstan died in 940; so the dates fit well enough.

More often the source of the copy is indicated in the colophon. The colophons of Michael O'Clery, who, with John Colgan and other Franciscans, did so much to save some remnants of Irish antiquities and learning from the storms of the seventeenth century, writes very elaborate colophons of this kind. They are far too long and too numerous to be cited here;² but by tabulating them it would be possible to construct an itinerary of his movements, and a diary of his work for many months.

Sometimes the scribes content themselves with saying that they collected their materials 'from many books'.³ Often they complain bitterly of the badness of their exemplar. Thus writes one of them: 'Let the reader understand that this is the true sense of this obscure (literally, blind) page on the outside of the book, which I have written here for fear it should become yet more obscure';⁴ and Michael O'Clery complains more than once that what he had to copy was dark and illegible.⁵

Perhaps it is to something of this kind that a scribe alludes who declares 'the old Book of Fenagh has tired me'.⁶

The scribes often notice defects and lacunae in the texts which they copy. 'We cannot find anything more of the Naem-shencus'⁷ (History of the Saints); on the other hand, on a folio in the same MS. which is shorter than the rest, the scribe writes: 'No one need doubt but that this little leaf belongs to the big book.'⁸ 'I am sorry that

¹ MS. C.C.C. Oxon. No. 122, f. 5 v^o.

² Some of them may be seen in the Introduction to Stokes's edition of the Martyrology of Gorman (H. B. S.), and some in Bethada, u. s. i. 22, 43, 95, 124, 130, 154, 182, 289 f., 311, 316.

³ L. L. p. 313; cf. the interesting and well-known note in L. U. 37^b about Maelmuire, the principal scribe of that MS., 'who wrote this book from various books'. There is a sort of 'omnibus' colophon in L. U. 39^a. On the scribes of L. U. see Dr. Best's masterly article in *Ériu* vi. 161 ff.

⁴ Annals of Loch Cé, i. 6.

⁵ Sein-leabar cian-aosta dorcha, Br. 5100 f. 238 r^o; as sein-leabraib dubha doileghtha, Br. 2324 f. 218 v^o; sein-leabar dorcha memruim, ib. f. 257; cf. O'Grady, Catalogue, pp. 139, 147.

⁶ Book of Fenagh, p. 331.

⁷ Nis fagmait nis mo annso do naem-shencus, *Laud Misc.* 610 f. 42 r^o, col. 3.

⁸ Na bi amurus ag nech nach don lebur mor an duilleog bec so, ib. v^o.

I cannot find a single thing referring to the Leinster men.'¹ 'There is something still wanting to this Life, which I could not get to copy.'²

In one very interesting case the owner and part scribe of the Book of Leinster writes on the margin of his MS. a request to another literary authority to send him the missing portion of a tale.³ In one instance the scribe quaintly inserts his notice of a defect in the text of his narrative: 'And the druid sang a song, but I could not find it.' The editor, however, Mr. Eugene O'Curry, was able to supply it from another MS.⁴ In another a scribe modestly apologizes for making an addition to an incomplete tract: 'I did not like to leave it without a Finit. Amen.'⁵ In another case a scribe subsequently obtains and inserts on the margin a portion of a tract which, in the text, he laments his inability to find.⁶

Later scribes sometimes note the condition of a MS. Thus in *Laud Misc. 610* one scribe remarks: 'There are so many leaves in this MS.' Then another scribe comes along and says: 'The reckoning is false, there are only so many.'⁷ 'Great is the ill-luck which this book has met with,' reflects another scribe.⁸

Often the scribe's notes are in the nature of cross-references, explanations of the arrangement of his MS., &c.⁹ Or he begins a piece

¹ Is olc lem nach fagaim oen raed ar Laignib innso. Misi Conaire mac Muiris, *ib. f. 98^a*.

² Ata began d'uiresbaid fos aran mbetha so, nach fagaim rena scriobad anois, R. I. A. Stowe MS. 9 (A. 4. 1), p. 64; ni fagaim nisa mo do bethaid Cranatan, i. e. I cannot find anything more of the Life of Cranat, *ib. p. 93*; cf. Ériu v. 102 (from the same MS.); esbaid so air lebar, i. e. there is a defect in the book, H. 2. 17, p. 146^b; ni fuarus sa imtuilled desin, i. e. I could not find anything to add to this, H. 3. 18, p. 6^b (C. 16); cf. Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, p. 234. O'Clery has several notes of this kind, e. g. Ni fuarus an cuid ele do Martarlaic 'san sein-lebur, i. e. I could not find the rest of the Martyrology in the old book, Br. 5100 f. 224; ma atá ní sa mó do bethaidh ag Molaga, ni fuarus sa ni badh mo ina so 'san sein-liubar, i. e. whether there be any more of the Life of Molaga, I found no more than this in the old book, Br. 2324 f. 134.

³ L. L. p. 288; cf. *Silva Gadelica*, II, xiv, xv; Táin Bó Cúalgne, Ed. Windisch, pp. 910 f.

⁴ 7 do chan an draoi an laoidh, 7 ni bfuaras í, *Battle of Magh Lena*, p. 20.

⁵ The original in Abbott and Gwynn, *Catalogue*, pp. 213-14.

⁶ L. Br. 276^b 35, and bottom margin; cf. *Silva Gadelica*, i. 64; ii. 68.

⁷ f. 32^d; cf. L. L. p. 231.

⁸ Is mór an tanróid do fuair an lebar so, H. 2, 17, p. 477; cf. L. L. p. 53.

⁹ e. g. Eg. 88 f. 32 (33)^b (C. 2415); Ac so 'sa duilleog an cuid ele don ráed so thshuas, an duilleog beg aderim, i. e. here on this leaf is the remainder of the subject above, I mean the little leaf, *Liber Flauus Ferg.*, I. ii. f. 7^c; cf. *Lismore Saints*, pp. xxxii f.; O'Grady, *Catalogue*, p. 111; *Annals of Loch Cé*, ii. 366. O'Clery has several notes of this kind.

and breaks off, saying: 'I stop, for I have written this elsewhere.'¹ Or he gives notice that he is himself making omissions: 'hic plura praetermitto';² or he refers to some other authority.³ In one case he states that he deliberately inserted a piece in a wrong place, for fear of omitting it altogether.⁴

But it is not only the external condition of his materials that the scribe criticizes. He freely gives his opinion for good or evil as to their literary value, and as to the character of the actors in the various narratives. Thus in the Book of Armagh, against the mention of Judas Iscariot in Matt. x. 4, is the one emphatic word, *trógán*, wretch⁵; while in the Corpus MS. of the Gospels already cited, above St. Matthew's account of St. Peter's denial of our Lord 'cum iuramento', a scribe has written: 'By God, bad is the word of his black oath, and bad is himself, and we do not say which is the worse of them to-day; sudet qui legat.'⁶ This last phrase occurs also on the margin of the St. Gallen Priscian: 'Sudet qui legat, difficilis est ista pagina.'⁷ At the bottom of a page in the Tale of Troy describing the death of Hector, the scribe writes: 'I am greatly grieved at the above-mentioned death';⁸ while over an account of the institution of the Nemean games in honour of the child Opheltes or Archemorus another scribe writes: 'What folly of the Greeks to waste so much good and treasure on a little child.'⁹ There is a touch of pathos about the following note in the St. Gallen Priscian, where in the seventeenth book Priscian remarks: 'Magnus poeta Virgilius fuit'; and the glosser adds: 'and he isn't easy either',¹⁰ while the next is a sad blow to the cause of Greek; in Egerton 88, after a copy

¹ Sguirim fodesta ar ro sgribus chena é, Vita Trip. p. xix, from Rawl. B. 512 f. 41^b. O'Clery has notes of this kind also; one is given in Bethada Náem nÉrenn, i. 308.

² Rawl. B. 502 f. 74^b; cf. Silva Gadelica, i. 32; ii. 30.

³ O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 78.

⁴ Ni hanmfis tuc ind a, b, c, d, eidir na riaglaib, acht d'egla a faccbala, i. e. it was not ignorance that inserted the alphabet (i. e. a tract called *Aibgitir Crábaid*, or Alphabet of Devotion) among the rules, but for fear of omitting it, Gwynn and Purton, Monastery of Tallaght, p. 118; cf. ib. p. 161.

⁵ Gwynn, Liber Ardmachanus, p. 75^b.

⁶ Dar Dia is ole a briathar dub-luigi, 7 is ole é fein, 7 ni ebrem ni as mo d'ulc inna sein indiu, s. q. l.

⁷ Thesaurus, II. xxii.

⁸ Truag lem in bás so tuas, Mackinnon, Cat. p. 200.

⁹ Is mor in magadh do Gregaibh ar millset da maithus 7 da maoinibh ar son leiniph big, ib. p. 197; on Archemorus cf. Eusebius, Praepar. Evang. 72^c, and Dr. Gifford's note.

¹⁰ Thesaurus, ii. 224.

of the Greek alphabet the scribe continues: 'there's an end to that, . . . and my seven curses go with it.'¹ At the beginning of a tract on the Computus a scribe records his opinion: 'This is the worst computus in Ireland.'²

The scansion of a poem in the Book of Fenagh attributed to St. Caillin is adversely criticized: 'That is a faulty stanza, Caillin; and is it not a shame for Caillin to be guilty of a faulty stanza like that?'³ So too mis-statements of fact are commented on.⁴

Michael O'Clery is often unsparing in his condemnation of the pieces which he copied: 'I wrote this as I found it, but I confess that a great deal of it is disgusting and false, and in much of it utter nonsense; but I make my excuse that it was enjoined on me to follow the track of the old books.'⁵ This complaint of O'Clery that he was ordered to copy his authorities exactly, which occurs more than once, is interesting as an illustration of the fact that the Irish scribe was not always content to be a mere copyist, but aspired to be something of an editor as well; and we may be thankful to O'Clery's superiors for insisting on literal accuracy.

In Egerton 88, a MS. which is mainly legal, against a paragraph which concludes that in certain cases it is lawful to repel wrong with wrong, the original scribe, struck no doubt with the apparent contradiction with the Sermon on the Mount, writes: 'May God not impute it to me if this is false.'⁶

Sometimes the scribe's flesh seems to creep at what he writes or reads. In the Lebar na hUidre, above a list of Cuchulainn's magic feats, the scribe writes the ejaculation: 'O Emmanuel';⁷ in the Leyden Irish MS. the scribe explains his ejaculation: 'Emmanuel, this is a mysterious story';⁸ while the scribe of the Book of Leinster version of the Táin bo Cúalnge, in a Latin colophon, finds in that

¹ O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 130.

² Cotton App. li. (O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 322).

³ Book of Fenagh, p. 69.

⁴ Bethada Naem nÉrenn, i. 174, 302; infra, p. 22.

⁵ Ge ro sgríobus amhuil fuarus, ataim admalach morán da bfuil annso . . . do beith go ro-shalach, brionnach, . . . 7 go neimh-ceill do beith i ro-moran ele; 7 gabaim si mo leith-scél fein, oir do haithnigedh dhiom lorg na sein-lebar do leumain, Brussels, 2324 f. 273 v^o. This is the colophon to the metrical Life of St. Caimin of Inis Celtra. Similar colophons by O'Clery will be found in Bethada, i. 154, 182; cf. R. I. A. 3 B. 22, p. 23: cid bé le bud emeilt, do scribus mar do fuarus ind lebur so, i. e. if any one finds this tedious, I wrote this book as I found it (Gwynn and Purton, Monastery of Tallaght, p. 119).

⁶ Nar agra Dia orm ma brecc, Eg. 88 f. 16 (17)^a (C. 2220).

⁷ L. U. 73^a; cf. ib. 65^a, 77^a; L. L. 55, 57.

⁸ Rev. Celt. xiii. 2.

famous tale: 'quaedam praestrigia (*sic*) daemonum, quaedam figmenta poetica . . . quaedam ad delectationem stultorum.'¹

On the other hand the scribe sometimes expresses warm admiration: 'This is a marvellously good story which I am writing on Lough Rea in retirement.' 'This also is marvellous,'² he adds later on in the MS. And in defence of his MS. one of the annotators of *Laud Misc. 610* makes the rather pettish remark: 'Whatever leeches and bad scientists may say against this Psalter, it is they themselves that are the worse.'³ A similar remark occurs in the same MS.: 'If this is not well understood, it is not the book which is in fault but the reader.'⁴

These criticisms and other marginalia were liable to get incorporated in the text when a MS. came to be re-copied.⁵ Thus in the middle of a narrative in which the tribe of the Conmaicne is mentioned occurs the remark: 'This is not true at all, for the Conmaicne did not (then) exist.'⁶ In a legal MS. H. 3. 17, in the course of a discussion in which there are various mythological allusions, is found the complaint: 'There are many stories (alluded to) here, and it is a great pity not to know them.'⁷ In the same MS. there occurs in the text a verse beginning: 'Wondrous is the bird and her dwelling,' evidently a marginal jotting which had become embodied in the text of the vorlage. The scribe of H. 3. 17 notices it, and writes on his margin: 'A stanza which has no connexion, whatever the cause may be.'⁸

¹ L. L. 104^b; printed in Windisch's edition, p. 511.

² Is deig-scel ingnad in scel sa sis, oca scribend er Loch Riach hi nuaignes; as ingnad sin beos, L. Br. pp. 2, 11.

³ Acht gid bé ní aderait legha 7 droch-oes eladna risin saltair si, mesa íat fein, f. 113 v^o: cf. the address on f. 94 r^o; tuicid na nethi sin anuas, a senchada 7 a brethemna 7 a legha. Misi Diarmaid hua Conaire, i. e. understand the above matters, ye historians and brehons and leeches. I am Dermot O'Conry.

⁴ Muna tuicther e co maith, ni he in lebur is cintach, acht fer a legthe, ib. f. 116 v^o, col. 3. For a similar reply to criticisms cf. *Book of Fenagh*, p. 170.

⁵ The same sort of thing occurs in modern times. In the early copies of a *Bluebook on China*, in the middle of a dispatch, occurred the sentence: 'not very grammatical, but I suppose we must let Sir Claude Macdonald write as he pleases', evidently a criticism which an official had scribbled on the margin of his proof, and forgot to delete before the proof was returned to the printer.

⁶ Eg. 1782 f. 75^b (*Irische Texte*, iii. 240).

⁷ As mór do scélaib fil sund, 7 is liach gan a fis, col. 668 ad calc. (*O'D.* 995). As this occurs at the foot of a column it is possible that the incorporation into the text may be due to O'Donovan.

⁸ Is amra in tén 7 a adba, . . . rann nem-coibhnis, cip hé fath, ib. col. 433 (*O'D.* 540). A curious instance occurs in the oft-quoted legal MS. Eg. 88 f. 47 (48)^a (*C.* 2558), where the following rule is given: ma comogus leba 7 fine, segar

I will now give some instances of the scribes' complaints of the length and hardness of their task, and of their treatment. 'It's long that it is,'¹ is an exclamation which occurs more than once. 'Let no reader blame that script', writes a scribe, 'for my arm is cramped through excess of labour.'² 'May God forgive the owner of this book for compelling me to write on the eve of Sunday.'³ 'It is a great shame of you to demand scrivening of me to-day, when you made a raid in Ossory yesterday, and got great spoils.'⁴ 'On my word it is great torment to be keeping the Friday of the Passion on water, with the excellent wine which there is in the house with us.'⁵ All these three entries are in the same MS. Laud Misc. 610, which has already furnished so many examples.

for leba, ma innti bes cintach ; 7 manab innti, saiged fine, i. e. if the harbourage and family (of the criminal) are equally near, let the harbourage be sued if the criminal be there ; if he be not there, he (the plaintiff) would sue the family. Then follows : 'A Dia, an innti tá cintach?' These words puzzled O'Curry, and in his transcript he underlines them, and puts in his margin : 'Query if part of the text? E. C.' They are the comment of some former scribe, which has got embedded in the text, on what he considered the futility of the rule : 'Good God, is the criminal there?' i. e. is it likely that a criminal, for whom pursuit is being made, would be found in his harbourage?

¹ Is fada atá, Marsh's Library, V. 3, 4 (now Z. 3, 1, 5), f. 66^b, V. S. H. i. 244. Fada sin, a Dábi ; aidche féili na croiche fein, i. e. this is long, David ; the eve of the festival of the Cross, O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 128 ; cf. ib. p. 122 ; uch, fada ata, alas, long is it, Laud Misc. 610 f. 15^o.

² Na tabrad aon da leigfe so guth [ar] in leitir sin, oir do crap in cusli agam le imarcad mogsaine, Ann. Loch Cé, ii. 328 (wrongly translated ; for this meaning of *cusle* v. Dinneen) ; ata mo lam 'sa cuslenn co tinn, i. e. my hand and arm are weak, Laud 610, f. 34 r^o ; cf. R. I. A. Stowe MS. 32 (C. 3, 2) f. 5 v^o ; sguirim bodesta, 7 is sgithach mo cib, 7 is sgithidhe me, i. e. I will stop now, for my hand is weary, and more weary is myself ; uit mo chrob, alas my hand, sighs the glosser of the St. Gallen Priscian, Thesaurus, II. xxi. There is a little poem ascribed to Columba beginning : Sgith mo crob on scribinn, i. e. my hand is weary of writing, Laud Misc. 615, p. 55. The scribe of the St. Gallen MS. of the Irish Canons, whose name, however, Eadberct, shows him to have been an Englishman, remarks : qui nescit scribere non putat esse laborem ; tres enim digiti scribunt, [sed] totum corpus laborat, Wassersleben, Irische Kanonensammlung, p. xxx. Uch is tiun mo chorp, i. e. Alas, my body is weak, Auraicept, p. 234.

³ Cur loga Dia d'fir in lebair sin mo cumail (?) sgribneorecht aidchi domnaig. i. Emann Butler. Misi Gilla na Noem mac Aedagain a Cill Fraich ar bro na hEoire, Laud 610 f. 43 r^o ; cf. p. 15 supra, on Irish Sabbatarianism.

⁴ Is cortha [= cúrtha] uaid beth ag iarraid scribneorachta aniugh, tareis crechi do denam a nOiserge ané, 7 airce mora ; ib. f. 42 r^o, col. 3 ; cf. H. 2. 15^b, p. 36 : A Donnchadh, is mor a naire duit ag iarraid scripneorachta orm fein la feili Finnein. Misi Fl[ann?].

⁵ Dar mo breithir, is mor in pian duin uisci do denam aine in Cesta, 7 febus an fina ata a nen tigh rinn a Raith an Potaire, Laud 61 f. 46 v^o.

On the other hand, one of the annotators of that MS. seems to have had a glorious time in 1454: 'We could write much good', he says, 'of the owner of this book, but for the fact that he is not willing to let us set it down. However, I cannot forbear to tell of the expedition which he made in *Úi Feilme* (Co. Wexford); for we were there eight days and eight nights despite the Leinstermen. And this is my reason for (recording) this, apart from every victory and expedition and capture of castles, that I myself was with him on the expedition, and the quantity of wine and meat and usquebaugh that I got there, and myself sharing my lord's bed.'¹ This must refer to the original owner of the MS., Edmund Butler, as it was not transferred to the Earl of Desmond till 1462.² This raid does not seem to be mentioned in the Chronicles, which this note therefore supplements.

Here is an instance in which a scribal note confirms a date which has been questioned. The Four Masters place the death of Ulick, first Earl of Clanrickard, in 1544. Sir Richard Cox, quoted by O'Donovan *ad loc.*, places it in 1545. A strictly contemporary note in Rawlinson B. 485 shows that the Four Masters are perfectly correct.³

The following is interesting as combining private feeling with public events: 'A prayer of grace here to the man who gave me the copy for this book,⁴ Conaire, son of Torna O'Mulconry; and I am

¹ *Isi ais in tigerna an nodlaic so atam .i. mili bliadan, 7 iiiii. cet bliadan 7 cetri bliadna dec 7 da fichet; 7 is mor d'fetfamais d'innisin do maithus fir in lebair so, acht nach ail leis fen a legin duin a cur sis; 7 gid ed, ni fetaim fein gan innisin in sluaiged doroinne se a nIb Peilme, oir do bamar ocht la 7 ocht noidche inti d'ainneoin Laigen; 7 ise m'adbur do so seoch gach maidm 7 cach sluaiged 7 cach ar' gabh do caislenaib .i. me fein faris annsa sluaiged so, 7 a met d'fin 7 d'feoil 7 d'usci bethad 7 do cinel cach maithusa fuarus ann, 7 me a lepaid mo tigerna, ib. f. 58^d.*

² A very flattering tribute to the 'man of this book', by a scribe named Sigraid refers to one of the later owners of the MS. viz. Maurice, son of Thomas Fitzgerald who succeeded his brother James as Earl of Desmond in 1487, ib. f. 87 r^o; cf. Four Masters, sub anno 1487.

³ *Uilleg na gcenn .i. iarl Clainne Riccard, oncu engnama Érenn, 7 saoidh re hinech 7 re huaisle, iar dtecht o Saxanaibh do, 7 'ar fabhail comachta moir on ri. i. o an ochtbhad Hannri, moritur began roim nodhlóig, 1544, i. e. Ulick of the heads, Earl of C., the leopard of the prowess of Ireland, and a paragon of honour and dignity, after he had returned from England, and had received great power from the king, to wit Henry VIII, died a little before Christmas, 1544, f. 36^d.*

⁴ Another prayer for the lender of a MS. will be found Z. C. P. iv. 31, from Eg. 1782 f. 86^b: *Trocaire o Dia go bhfaghbadh in fer thug iasacht in lebair dham .i. Michail O Broin, i. e. may that man find mercy from God, who lent me the book; cf. infra, p. 30.*

sad at his long absence, for I miss him greatly, and my mind is sorrowful, because my father is long away from me in the west, and my kinsman, Eogan; and long long it seems to me till I see my friend and kinsman, Connla Mac in Lega, who is in Moylurg; and I greatly fear for him that this army of the Earl of Kildare has slain him. Long too (is absent) my foster child, and my foster brother, Cormac Mac in Lega; and many are a-yearning to-day.¹ How many could have written similar notes during the late war!

The next example, though not strictly contemporary, appeals to us by its touch of personal reminiscence: 'Bellum apud Cnoc Thua in festo Sancti Ludouici Episcopi, feria secunda, anno Domini 1504. Frater Dermicius O'Brugan; ego fui pro tunc scholaris.'²

And this forms a fitting transition to those entries in which the scribe gives expression to his own personal feelings on the margins and blank spaces of his MS. 'I am sad, and not without cause, owing to the long time that I have had no news from my native

¹ Orait raith donti dorat dam an eisimplair so an libair si .i. Conaire mac Torna I Mailconaire, 7 is dirsan lim a fad ata am ecmais, uair is mor a esbaid dam; uair is triamain ata m' inntin, uair is fada uaim siar m'athair isin [a word illegible], 7 mo brathair .i. Eogan; 7 is ro-fada lim co faicim mo shesi 7 mo brathair .i. Connla Mac an Lega ata a Muig Luirg, 7 is ro-mor a ecla orm, gur mill an sluag so iarla Cille dara he; 7 is fad[a] ata mo dalta 7 mo comdalta .i. Cormac Mac in Lega. Is imda indiu isin ailt atu . . . e do raith, King's Inns, No. 15 f. 76 v^o. I could not read the last sentence completely, and the translation consequently is uncertain. For this expedition of the Earl of Kildare in 1512, see *Four Masters*, v. 1316. For other instances of this combination of private feelings with public events cf. O'Grady, *Catalogue*, pp. 62, 147, 278-9.

² Rawl. B. 485 f. 40 v^o. The festival of St. Louis, bishop of Toulouse, is on Aug. 19. It would of course be impossible to give references to all the public events alluded to by the scribes. The following may be noted: is truag in tóitridh sin tucabair air Almuin aniu, a Saxanaigh; a Claimn Feorais damh, H. 3. 18, p. 372^b (C. 804); i. e. sad is this conflagration which ye have brought on Almain (the Hill of Allen) this day, O English. Unfortunately this is undated. The murder of John Burke, son of the Earl of Clanrickard, in 1583 is noted in Rawl. B. 485 f. 36 r^o. (This confirms the *Four Masters*, v. 1802; the *Annals of Loch Cé*, ii. 454, place it in 1582.) In Egerton 1781, f. 128, is a long contemporary note on the feuds between the families of O'Rourke and O'Reilly in 1487, and connected therewith a schism in the diocese of Kilmore between Cormac Magauran and Thomas Mac Brady, cf. *Four Masters*, iv. 1148-50; v. 1308. Other notes referring to public events may be found in O'Grady, *Catalogue*, pp. 62, 111, 114, 147, 220; Abbott and Gwynn, *Cat.*, pp. 126, 128, 363; Mackinnon, *Cat.*, p. 57; *Rev. Celt.* viii. 358; xi. 401; xv. 89; *L. Br.* pp. 28, 38, 132, 140, 175 (cf. *F. M.* sub anno 1411), 189 (cf. *ib.* v. 1772), 190 (this is a long and interesting note on the religious changes in England under Henry VIII and Edward VI, and Mary's attempt to restore the old system; I have printed this in full, with translation, in *Irish Litanies*, pp. xi. xii), 206, 249, 252, 254; *L. L.* pp. 49, 275.

territory, not knowing whether my tutor is dead or alive.’¹ ‘I am melancholy, not because of the treatise (which I am writing), but because of the death of those two, Cormac and Gilla na naemh O’Carbery, which has befallen at this time, and I give my blessing to the souls of those two.’² This is a pathetic entry in Egerton 89: ‘I am grieved for the tidings which I hear even now, that my mother and sister have died in Spain.’³ ‘I am sad at the news which I hear, that Donough Mac Rory is dead.’⁴

Absence of friends is a constant theme of lamentation.⁵ ‘Here is for thee, Hugh of my heart, and long is the day in thy absence.’⁶

Doubts and difficulties are confided to the MS. ‘Sorrowful is the place where I am, not knowing how I may bear it; may God help my difficulty which he sees to be upon me.’⁷ I do not know whether this refers merely to the difficulty of the scribe’s task, or to more serious trouble. The latter seems to me the more probable. ‘My mind is at strife with me to-day,’⁸ writes another. ‘I am between staying

¹ Is tursech me triana fat co tic fis om findtiu, 7 ni can fatho dam, gan fis agam in be[o] no in marb in fithir; 7 morualach na ceircid (?) f[is] ar Domnall óg a Lisdomnaill, R. I. A. Stowe MS. 32, f. 2 v^o. I am not sure of the reading *ceircid*, nor do I know the meaning. The sense seems to be: it is a grievous load that no news comes (?) of young Donnell from Lisdonnell. Lis Domnaill is not in Hogan; there is a Lisdonnellroe (= Lis Domnaill Ruaid) in the barony and parish of Kilconnell, Co. Galway.

² Is am sgithach, 7 ni o in tracht, acht o ciol na deise tecmaing annsa re mfrecaire .i. Cormac 7 Giolla na naem O gCairbre sin; 7 doberim bennacht ar anmain na deise sin, H. 2. 15^a, p. 105.

³ As olc lim an scél do cluinim anois .i. mu mathair 7 mu deirbshuir d’fagail báis isin Spain, f. 95 (O’Grady, Catalogue, p. 220). This is dated 1489. A good many years ago I went as a tourist to see the Atlantic Cable station at Waterville, and as I watched the machines printing and paying out the long strips of paper, I read on one strip a message announcing the death of a mother in the West Indies. The mention of Spain is interesting. So many Irishmen took refuge in Spain during the religious and civil troubles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that I cannot help wondering whether there may not be Irish MSS. lurking in Spanish Libraries.

⁴ Is sgíthech, me tresin ris adcluinim .i. Donnchadh Mac Ruaidri do bath, R. I. A. Stowe MS. 32, f. 9 v^o.

⁵ L.L. p. 192; BB. p. 445; Mackinnon, Catalogue, p. 62; O’Grady, Catalogue, p. 279; Ann. Ult. iii. 376; Ann. Loch Cé, ii. 224.

⁶ Sin duit a Aodh croidhe, 7 is fada in la at égmáis, E. 4. 14, p. 110 ad calc. (Abbott and Gwynn, Cat. p. 317.)

⁷ Is toirreoch an ait ataim, gan a fis accam gha rach congbaíl; 7 co foiridh Dia eir mo decair, mar docí se orm hi. Andsa Chuillaig damh, H. 4. 22, p. 9 (C. 1959). I cannot identify the place name.

⁸ Is imresnach mo menma rim hodie, Harl. 5280 f. 57^a (Z. C. P. iii. 226).

and going,' says a third, 'may God give me the right counsel.'¹ 'I am sad and weary,' is a constantly recurring cry.²

But the scribe's feelings are not always melancholy. He gives thanks for the escape of his lord from a great danger which he had incurred the previous night.³ He is pleased at finishing a piece of work.⁴ He is delighted with the things he has copied; he makes an index of them with this heading: 'These are things which I liked so much that I could not help copying them.'⁵ He is grateful for the hospitality which he has received: 'A year and a quarter have I been stopping in this place, and I should like to go for a year's tour in another district;⁶ and long and lasting life to the family, to wit, Brian Mac Egan and his children, and Gormlaith⁷ and all of them.'⁸

But besides these things the scribe delights to note all the little incidents of daily life. 'O God of heaven, reveal the theft that was committed in the church last night.'⁹ 'It is the festival of Benedict to-day, and my tutor has returned from his round of preaching.'¹⁰ 'Our curse on the saucy dog, for he has wounded the best child we ever saw, to wit, Piers son of Edmund' (Butler).¹¹ One scribe notes

¹ Ataim idir anmuin 7 imtechd, 7 go tucadh Dia in comairle coir dam, L. L. 395^b ad calc.

² Atú tuirsech gan amarus ag Droghaais, i. e. undoubtedly I am sad at Donegal, writes Michael O'Clery on March 3rd, 1629, who, however, very rarely writes in this self-pitying strain, Br. 4190 f. 274 v^o; cf. O'Grady, Catalogue, pp. 29, 122, 127; L. Br. pp. 58, 86.

³ Atlocar do Dia h'éрге cucainn iar mor-guasacht na hoidchi arer d'[fh]agbail duit, a Emainn Buitiller. Missi Gilla na Naem mac Gilla na Naem, Laud Misc. 610, f. 118 r^o.

⁴ H. 2, 17, p. 422^b (at the end of a tract on the Passion): As maith linn an paisi do tairgsin andiu, i. e. we are glad to have finished the 'Passion' to-day.

⁵ Neithe iad so do thaithnigh liom nar fhédas gan a sgriba, Egerton, 112 f. 523 (O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 57).

⁶ Or, into the district of Eile.

⁷ No doubt the wife.

⁸ Bliadain 7 raithi ataim 'sa bhaili sea im comhnaidhi, 7 budh sainnt lium dul ar cuairt bliadhna i crich eile [or Eile], 7 go romhairea in muindter sa co fata buan .i. Brian mac Aedhugan cona chlaind, 7 Gormlaith, 7 siat uili, Rawl. B. 506 f. 18^c.

⁹ A Dé nime, follsig in slat doronad airraier isind eclais, Bodleian, Auct. F. 3, 15 f. 35 v^o.

¹⁰ Feil Bendict indiu, tanic m'aite dia chuairt praicepta, ib. f. 62 v^o.

¹¹ Ar mallacht arin coin mbedaige, or d'fuilig si air lenab is ferr da facamar riam .i. Piarus mac Emainn mic Risderd, Laud Misc. 610 f. 116 v^o, col. 2. This important fact is elaborately dated 1454.

that the vicar¹ is ill of a fever,² another that the mistress of the house is very sick,³ a third that his master is a long time asleep, and that he doesn't like his sleeping opposite an open window.⁴

In two places on the margin of the St. Gallen Priscian occurs the Irish word *latheirt*, one entry being in ogham.⁵ This word in a later Irish glossary glosses the Latin *crapula*.⁶ It is to be feared that the good scribe had made too free overnight.

The Lebar Brecc is rich in these casual remarks. 'My comrade is digging and I am writing'; 'Murrough would not be pleased if he knew that the herd had been driven across the Shannon to foul it' (or them). More serious is the following: 'they seized our brother yesterday, and they harried him last year.'⁷

I will deal lastly with the religious feelings of some of our scribes. One or two instances have been already given of the way in which they ask for the prayers of their readers for themselves and for others,⁸ 'gli altri che fur cari,' as Dante calls them.

One of the earliest and most interesting is St. Columba's own subscription in the Book of Durrow: 'Rogo beatitudinem tuam, sancte presbiter Patrici, ut quicumque hunc libellum manu tenuerit, meminerit Columbae scriptoris, qui hoc scripsi [mihi]met euangelium per xii dierum spatium.'⁹ Another early one (ninth century) is the following: 'Diarmait scripsit; orate pro illo peccatore.'¹⁰

'A prayer for the soul of the wretch who wrote this vellum, to wit Gilla Riabach . . . O'Clery.'¹¹ 'Let every reader give a prayer for the benefit of the soul of this dust.'¹² Still more pathetic is this by

¹ Not, 'he who makes us jump', as O'Grady translates.

² Is doilge lium . . . in bigaire do beith a bhfiabhrus, O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 139, cited from H. 3, 18, p. 450.

³ Is tind ata ben in tighe si, Add. 15582, f. 61 (O'Grady, Catalogue, p. 279).

⁴ Laud 610 f. 76^b: is fada linn ata Emann ina collud (cf. ib. f. 84^d); ni maith [l]im Emund do colladh ar comair na fuinneoigi gaithe, ib. f. 86^d.

⁵ Thesaurus, II. xxi. f.

⁶ Stokes, Irish Glosses, p. 10; but the reading is doubtful.

⁷ Ata mo shessed oc ruamar, 7 me buden oc scribend, p. 27; ni bud maith la Murchad dia cluined an imirge sin do breith tar Sinaind dia salchad, p. 187; dogabsat ar nderb-brathair anné, 7 do aircset he anuraid, p. 139.

⁸ Above, pp. 9, 12, 16, 24.

⁹ Cited, Reeves's Adamnan, p. 242, where other Latin colophons from Irish MSS. are given.

¹⁰ Cod. Ambros. C. 301 (Thesaurus, II. xv; Ascoli, Codice Irlandese, i. 610).

¹¹ Oraid ar anmain an truagain scribas an cuilmen so .i. Gilla Riabach . . . I Clerich, Harl. 5280 f. 64^b; for a similar note see Book of Deer, p. lx.

¹² Tabrad cach aon leigfis orait do raith anma na crefóigi sin, L. Br. p. 114.

the same scribe: 'I am the son of the dead man who is passing to the land of the living. O pitiful man, whoever you may be, give a blessing to my soul.'¹ 'A prayer for Maelbrigte, qui scripsit hunc librum; great is the deed, the slaying of Cormac Mac Carthy by Turlough O'Brien.'² This is an interesting case of a public event being mentioned not on the margin but in the colophon of a MS.³

The following is curious. In a blank space in a MS. of the Annals of Ulster an obit, unconnected with the narrative, has been entered, and the scribe who enters it begs the reader of 'this little bit' to give a blessing to his soul. On which another hand remarks: 'It were more fitting to give it to the soul of Rory O'Luinin, who wrote the book right well.'⁴

In one case a scribe, not in a very Christian spirit, invokes curses on those who do not comply with his request for their prayers.⁵

Not infrequently it is the 'man of the book', the owner of the MS., for whom the prayer is asked. Two entries on the same page of *Laud Misc.* 610 furnish another illustration of the change of ownership when the MS. passed from the Butlers to the Fitzgeralds by the fortune of war. On the top margin of f. 43 v^o is this petition for the original owner: 'A prayer here for the man of this book, to wit, Edmund Butler, and may God grant him to accomplish now what he has not accomplished yet';⁶ while on the bottom margin we read: 'A prayer here for the man of this book, to wit, Thomas, son of James, son of Gerald.'⁷ In another note in the same MS. it is the fosterer

¹ Misi mac in fir mairb ac triall a tir na mbeo .i. Eogan og, 7 tabuir bennacht do raith m'anma, a duine trocairig eigin, *ib.* p. 152. The phrase 'tir na mbeo', land of the living, is noteworthy, because, though perfectly patent of a Christian interpretation, it is one of the old pagan names for the Celtic other world.

² Is mor in gnim, Cormac mac Carthaig do marbad o Tairdelbach huu Briain, *Harl.* 1802 f. 60 (*Rev. Celt.* viii. 358, where other colophons by the same scribe are given). The murder of Cormac Mac Carthy is mentioned by the Four Masters under 1138; it was perpetrated 'in his own house, by treachery'.

³ Other instances will be found in O'Grady, *Catalogue*, pp. 62, 220.

⁴ *Ann. Ult.* ii. 565; an earlier Rory O'Luinin was the scribe of the Franciscan copy of the *Félire*; v. *Félire*², p. xiii.

⁵ Muna tugaidh, mallacht Dia do son, *Eg.* 88 f. 24 (25)^d (O'Grady, *Cat.*, p. 116).

⁶ Oraid annso d'fir an lebair so .i. d'Emunn Butiler, 7 co tugad Dia do, gach ni do crichnugud anois ni do crichnaig riam, *cf. ib.* f. 42 r^o.

⁷ [Orai]d annso d'fir in lebair seo .i. do Thomas mac Semais mic Georoit. On the change of ownership, v. s. pp. 10, 15, 24.



of the original owner, Richard O'Hagan, Archbishop of Cashel, for whom the prayers are asked.¹

Sometimes, as we have seen, it is the translator,² sometimes the lender of the MS. to be copied,³ who are to be prayed for.

The following has its pathos, because the writer apparently did not know whether his friend was alive or dead: 'Our blessing be with thee, Manus Mac Egan, if thou hast gone before us, and may thy soul and the whole Christian community benefit by the seven things which God has promised on earth. Amen.'⁴

I will give in conclusion a few illustrations of the general piety of some of the scribes: 'It is the Saturday before Christmas, and in Clonfad under the protection of God and His mother am I, Conchobar, who wrote this.'⁵ 'It is the festival of Maedoc to-morrow, and to him I commit my soul's protection.'⁶ 'Easter Eve to-night, and under the protection of the Son of Mary, who rose from the dead (am I).'⁷ 'O Mary, queen of the seven heavens, help us, and free us from every disease.'⁸

Very beautiful is the following conclusion of Peregrine O'Clery's preface to his enlarged recension of the *Naemsenchus naem nÉrenn*:⁹ 'And for God's sake, O reader, pray earnestly, not only for the soul

¹ *Bennacht air anmuin aird-escoip Caisseil .i. Risderd O hEdigáin, oir is aigi do hoiled fer in libair so .i. Edmund mac Risderd, f. 115 v^o. According to Gams, Richard O'Hagan was archbishop from 1406 to 1440. He does not seem to be mentioned in the Annals.*

² Above, p. 16.

³ Above, p. 24. This is also probably the purport of a mutilated note in R. I. A. Reeves MS. 1, p. 52^b: *Tadg ua Rigbardan qui scripsit; 7 cach aen leigfus tabrad bendacht ara anmain, 7 ar anmain anti o fuair . . .*, i. e. and let every one who shall read it give a blessing to his soul, and to the soul of him from whom he got . . . Michael O'Clery mentions a priest, Nicholas O'Casey, from whom he borrowed a MS. The colophon is given in *Irish Litanies*, p. xiv, note 2.

⁴ *Ar mbennacht lat, a Mágnais mic Aedagain ma do imthigis romaind; 7 cor gaba gréim dot anmain sea, 7 don choitchend cristaide in sechta dorairngair Dia hi talmain. Amen. Pater Noster, L. Br. p. 200.* By the 'seven things' the seven sacraments are probably intended.

⁵ *In satharn ria notlaice indiu, 7 ar comairci De 7 a mathar dam; 7 a Cluain fata atú. Conchubar qui scripsit, LL. p. 179, col. 2 ad calc.*

⁶ *Fél Moaedog imárach; coemna m'anma fair, Eg. 90 f. 15 (O'Grady, Cat. p. 80).*

⁷ *Aiche Casc anocht, 7 ar comairce Mic Muire do eirig o marbaib . . .*, H. 2. 15^a, p. 22.

⁸ *A Muire, a rígan na secht nime, conacna frinn, 7 cu ro saera ar gach ngalur, Rawl. B. 512 f. 91 v^o (Vita Trip. p. xxix).*

⁹ On this work and its three recensions v. *Miscellanea Hagiographica Hib.*, pp. 227-8.

of the man who first began this work, but with kindness and compassion for the soul of the latest man who spent great labour and pains upon it, that he may be worthy through thy prayer and intercession to find the mercy of the Lord, and to reach the golden Kingdom when he shall depart from this present world. Amen.¹

But the most beautiful and touching of all these entries are the two written on the margin of a Law MS. in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, during the prevalence of the plague in Ireland.² 'It is one thousand three hundred and fifty years to-night since Jesus Christ was born, and in the second year after the coming of the plague to Ireland was this written, and I myself am full twenty-one years old; . . . and let every reader in pity recite a 'pater' for my soul. It is Christmas Eve to-night, and under the protection of the King of heaven and earth am I on this Eve to-night. May the end of my life be holy, and may this great plague pass by me and my friends, and restore us once more to joy and gladness. Amen. Pater noster. Hugh, son of Connor Mac Egan, wrote this on his father's book, the year of the great plague.'³ Then, just one year later, for so long at any rate he survived, on the top margin of the same page he writes again: 'It is just a year to-night since I wrote the lines on the

¹ Ar Dia friot, a leghtoir, na rab amain guidfes tú co diocra ar anmain an fir thoisicch ro tionseccain an saethar so, acht guidh frissin co caenduthracht 7 co ccoindercele ar anmain an fir deideanaicch fuair iomad saothair 7 friochnamha uaithe, ardaigh go madh diongmala e tret irnaigthe 7 tret atach cendsa an Coimded d'fagail le rochtain na flatha forórda iar scérad [? scarad] frisin mbióth frecnairc. Amen. Br. 2542 f. 1^b. On Peregrine O'Clery, one of the Four Masters, see O'Curry, MS. Materials, pp. 178-80. According to the D. N. B. he was third cousin of Michael O'Clery.

² A later visitation of the plague is mentioned in a note in H. 3. 17, cols. 552-3: is truag in sgél so do chluinim ó chach .i. in fpláigh do beth ar lasad a Crichmhuill, i. e. sad is the tale which I hear from every one, that the plague is raging at Crawghwell (Co. Galway), Abbott and Gwynn, Cat. p. 139; cf. ib. p. 185, where, however, the nature of the epidemic, 'the sickness of the time', is not mentioned.

³ Mile bliadan 7 tri cet bliadan 7 deich bliadna 7 da fichit bliadan o rugadh Isa Crist cos anocht; 7 isi sin indara bliadain iar tichtain na plaga i nEirinn ro scribad sin; 7 bliadain 7 fiche is slan dam fein .i. d'Aed mac Conchubair mic Aedagain; 7 cach aen leg[fes] gaibed paiter trocaire ar m'an[main]. Aiche Nollag anocht, 7 ar comairce Rig neime 7 talman ata ar ind aiche anocht dam; corub naem crich mo bethad, 7 co cuirea in plaigh mor sa secham 7 secha mo cairdib 7 co [? cuirea sinn] atharrach fa suba 7 fa sobron. Amen. Paitter noster. Aed, mac Conchubair, mic Gilla na naem, mic Duinnslebe mic Aodagan ro scrib sin ar leabar a athar fein in bliadain do bai in plaig mor, H. 2, 15^a p. 36.

margin below ; and, if it be God's will, may I reach the anniversary of this great Eve once more. Amen. Pater noster.'¹

Even after the lapse of more than five and a half centuries, it seems almost sacrilege to unveil the record of feelings so intimate and so sacred.²

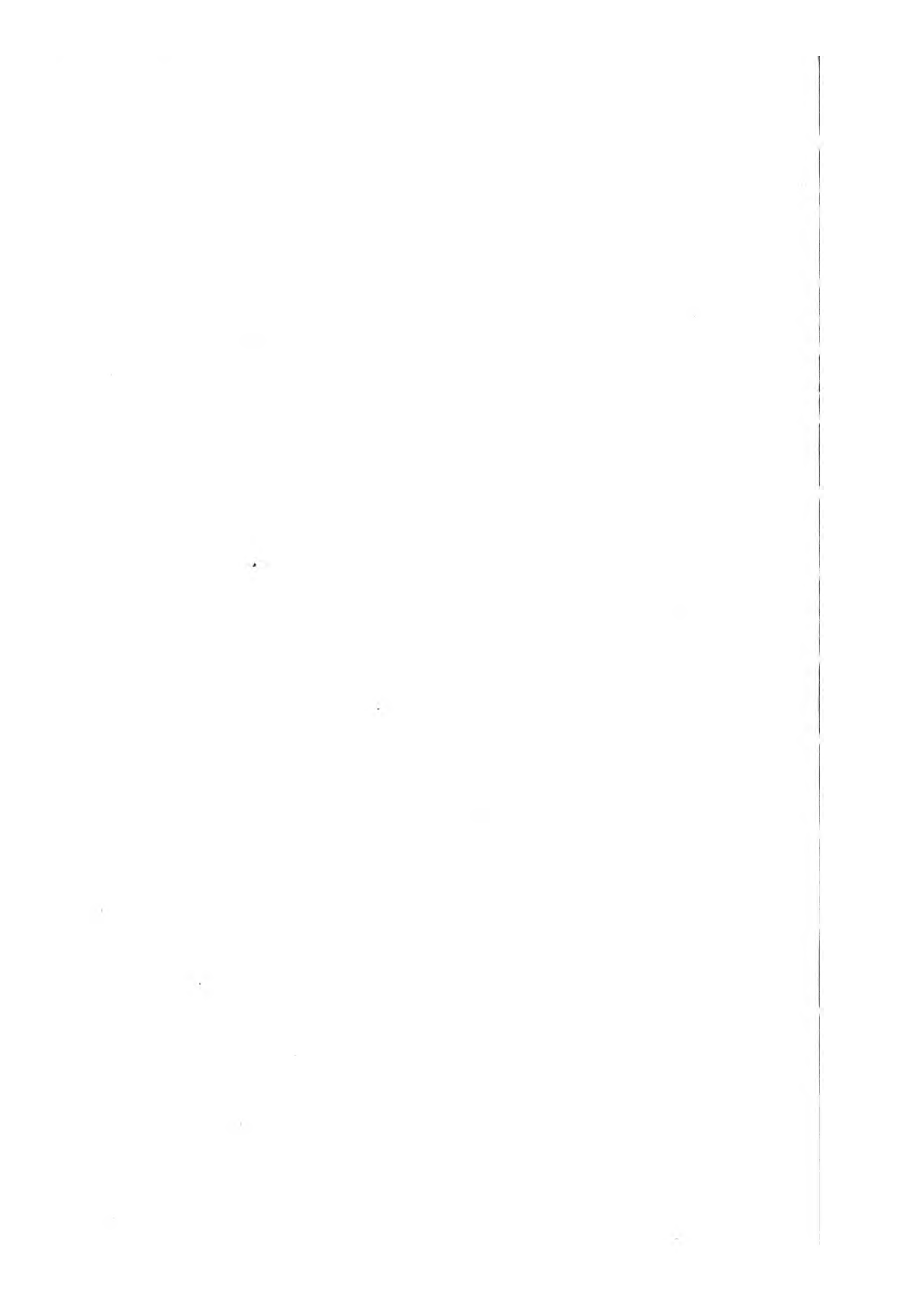
¹ Bliadain cosan aiche anocht do scrib me na lineda sin tis ar margan ; 7 do toil De co roiche comainm na haiche anocht mor natharrach. Amen. Paiter noster.

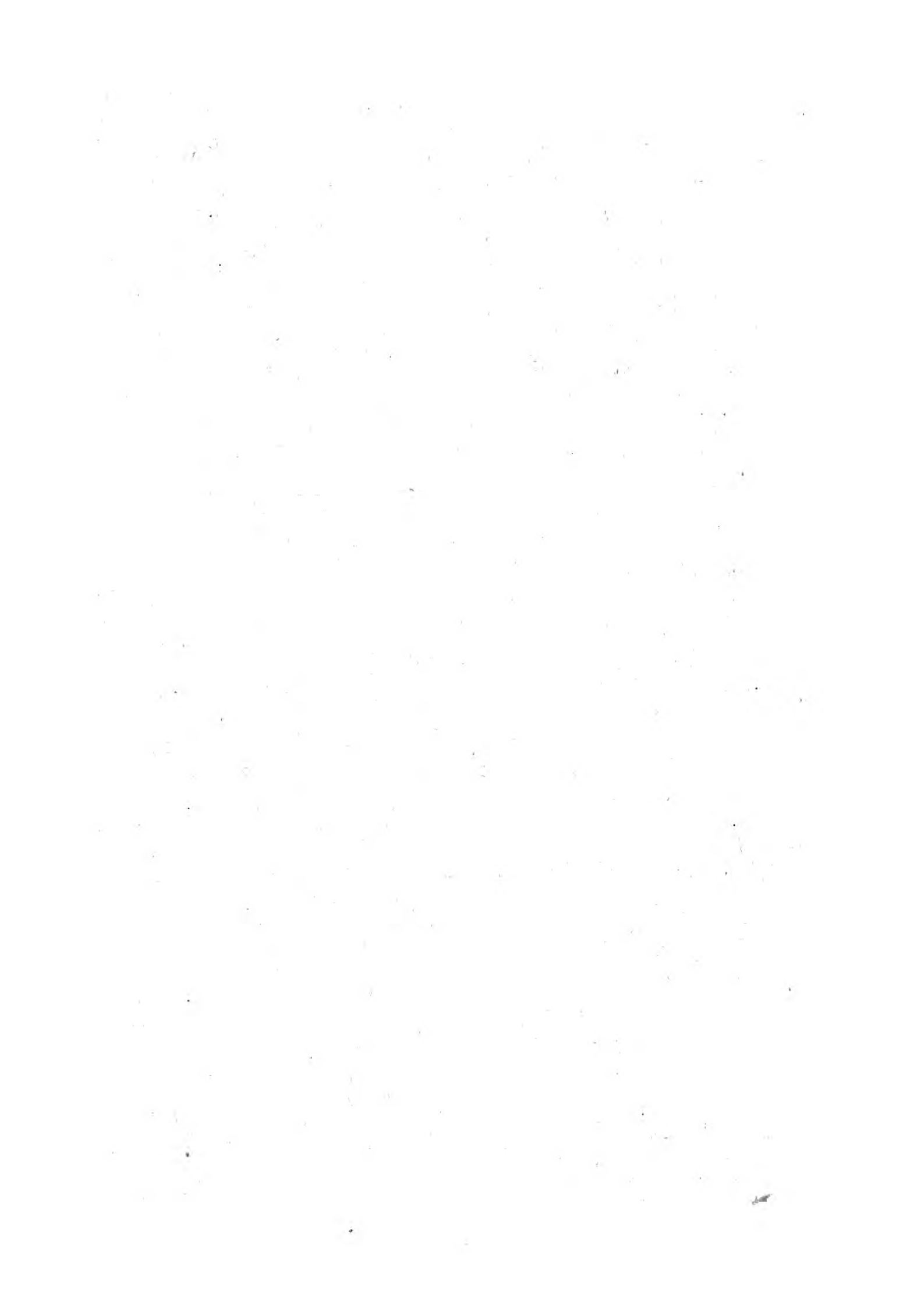
² Compare the beautiful scribal note at the end of the Reichenau Liber Confraternitatum, though there is no indication of the nationality of the scribe : 'The names enjoined on me to enter in this book, but omitted by carelessness, sloth, or forgetfulness of mine, I commend to Thee, O Christ, to Thy mother and all the heavenly host, that here and in life eternal their happy memory be kept in honour,' *Libri Confraternitatum*, *Mon. Hist. Germ.* 4to, p. 302, cited by Bishop, *Liturgica Historica*, p. 353.

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