



MEDIEVAL LIBRARY

Gerald of Wales
Collected Works



DELPHI
CLASSICS

The Collected Works of
GERALD

(c. 1146 - c. 1223)



Contents

The Translations

Topography of Ireland (1187)

Conquest of Ireland (1189)

The Itinerary of Archbishop Baldwin through Wales (1191)

The Description of Wales (1194)

Concerning the Instruction of Princes (c. 1198)

The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis (c. 1203)

The Biographies

Giraldus de Barri (1900) by Henry Richards Luard

Introduction to Gerald of Wales (1908) by W. Llewelyn Williams

Giraldus Cambrensis (1913) by James MacCaffrey

The Delphi Classics Catalogue



© Delphi Classics 2025
Version 1

Medieval Library

GERALD OF WALES



By Delphi Classics, 2025

COPYRIGHT

Collected Works of Gerald of Wales



First published in the United Kingdom in 2025 by Delphi Classics.

© Delphi Classics, 2025.

Cover illustration: *A Dream of the Past: Sir Isumbras at the Ford* by John Everett Millais, 1857, Lady Lever Gallery, Wirral.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.

ISBN: 978 1 80170 274 4

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

United Kingdom

Contact: sales@delphiclassics.com

DELPHI  CLASSICS

www.delphiclassics.com

The Translations



*Manorbier Castle, a late eleventh century Norman castle, five miles southwest of Tenby, Wales —
Gerald's birthplace*



The inner ward of Manorbier Castle

Topography of Ireland (1187)



Translated by Thomas Forester, 1905

Gerald of Wales was a prominent priest and historian of the late twelfth century. Born in c. 1146 at Manorbier Castle in Pembrokeshire, Wales, he was of mixed Norman and Welsh descent. He received his initial education at the Benedictine house of Gloucester, followed by a lengthy period of education in Paris from c. 1165-74, where he studied the *trivium* (grammar, logic and rhetoric). On his return to England, he was employed by Richard of Dover, the Archbishop of Canterbury, on various ecclesiastical missions in Wales, where he distinguished himself by his efforts to remove alleged abuses of consanguinity and tax laws in the Welsh church. He was appointed in 1174 as Archdeacon of Brecon, to which was attached a residence at Llanddew. He obtained this position by reporting the existence of the previous archdeacon's mistress, which led to his predecessor being dismissed. While fulfilling this post, Gerald collected tithes of wool and cheese from the populace and the income from the archdeaconry supported him for many years.

Upon the death of his uncle, the Bishop of St Davids, in 1176, the chapter nominated Gerald as his successor. St Davids entertained a long-term aim of becoming independent of Canterbury and the chapter hoped that Gerald was the priest to take up its cause. King Henry II of England, fresh from his struggle with Archbishop Thomas Becket, promptly rejected Gerald in favour of Peter de Leia, one of his Norman retainers, possibly due to Gerald's Welsh blood and ties to the ruling family of Deheubarth, which made him appear a troublesome prospect. Disappointed with the result, Gerald withdrew to the University of Paris. From c. 1179 he studied and taught canon law and theology. He returned to England and spent an additional five years studying theology. In 1180, he received a minor appointment from the Bishop of St Davids, which he soon resigned.

Then, Gerald became a royal clerk and chaplain to King Henry II of England in 1184, first acting as a mediator between the crown and Prince Rhys ap Gruffydd. He was selected to accompany one of the king's sons, John, in 1185 on an expedition to Ireland. This journey was the catalyst for Gerald's literary career. *Topographia Hibernica* (1188) provides a detailed account of his journey to Ireland, describing the island's landscape and people, soon after the Norman invasion of Ireland. It was the longest and most influential work on Ireland circulating in the Middle Ages and its direct influence endured into the early modern period.

It would appear that Gerald's travels within Ireland were not extensive. He spent most of his first visit in Waterford and Cork. During his second visit, he visited Dublin, Wicklow, Meath, Kildare and possibly Athlone and Lough Derg. Whether or not he visited some of the places he mentioned or he simply related tales he heard from others is still under much dispute.

Composed in Latin, as were all of Gerald's works, *Topographia Hibernica* is divided into three parts. The first primarily deals with the landscape, flora and fauna of the country; the second concerns Ireland's miracles and marvels; and the third narrates a history of the people and their culture. The text reflects the breadth of Gerald's classical learning and interests. He claims to have based his work primarily on his own observations and on reliable eyewitness testimony, rather than on written sources. Among the few written works that he used was the Irish *Lebor Gabála*

Érenn. The author appears to have added to the work throughout his life with the result that four principal versions of the text have come down to us. The final recension is almost twice as long as the first.

Topographia Hibernica was dedicated to King Henry II in 1187, two years before his death. Soon after King John's accession to the throne, Gerald published a revised edition, which he dedicated to the new king. The work is known to have been read to Archbishop Baldwin of Exeter by Gerald while both were travelling in Wales to preach the Third Crusade in March 1188. By Gerald's own account, Baldwin thought very highly of the *Topographia Hibernica*. It may have been read publicly at Oxford in 1187 and it was certainly read there in sometime around 1188. Gerald notes in his autobiography, *De Rebus a se gestis*, that he read the work on three successive days, one part of the book being read on each, before a great audience. He claims that the public readings were intended to recall "ancient and authentic times of the poets".

The text went on to enjoy much wider popularity in manuscript than Gerald's second work on Ireland, *Expugnatio Hibernica* and vernacular translations of the work or of parts of it were produced throughout Europe. Gerald's influence was such that even in the seventeenth century, commentators like Geoffrey Keating noted that all foreign commentators on Ireland wrote "in imitation of Cambrensis". Among the sixteenth-century luminaries that were familiar with the text and drew upon it in their own writings were John Leland, John Bale, Abraham Ortelius, Henry Sidney, Philip Sidney, Edmund Campion, Hooker, Holinshed, Hanmer, William Herbert and William Camden. Camden produced the first full printed at Frankfurt in 1602.

Topographia Hibernica is generally acknowledged to have played a key role in shaping early British attitudes towards the Irish people in general. Gerald's depiction of them as savage and primitive was challenged and refuted by a number of Irish writers. The seventeenth century saw the production of several prominent attacks on Gerald, including *Cambrensis Eversus* (1662) by John Lynch and notable works by Geoffrey Keating, Philip O'Sullivan Beare and Stephen White.



A contemporary depiction of the University of Paris during the approximate time of Gerald's attendance

CONTENTS

PREFACE.

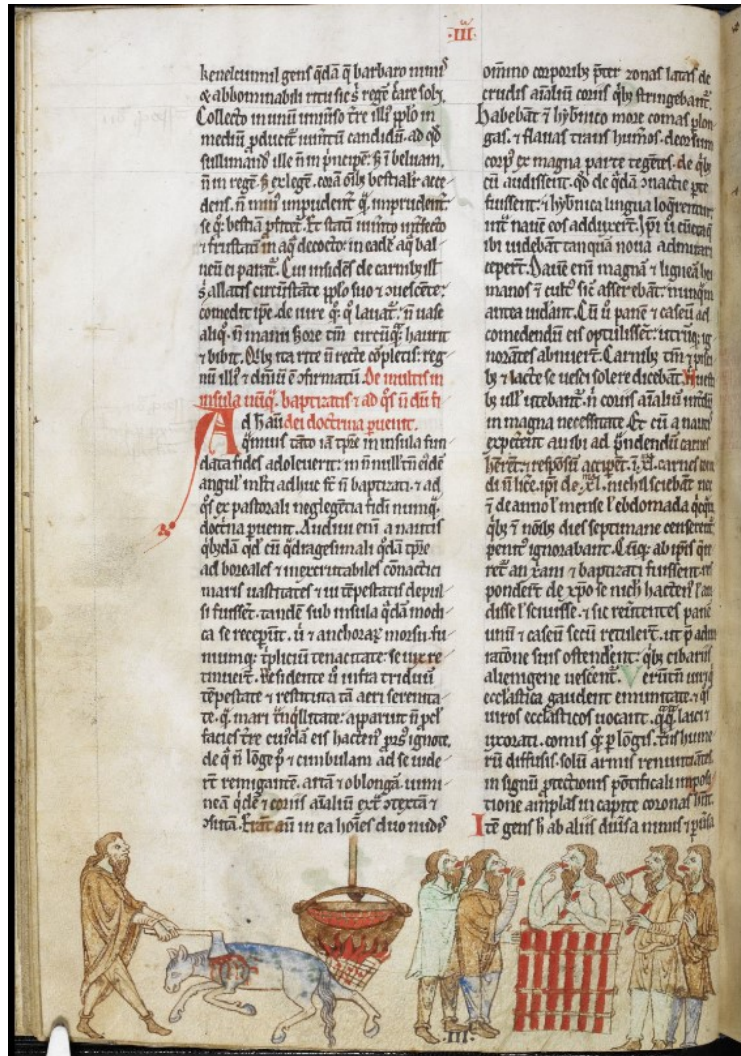
DISTINCTION I.

DISTINCTION II. OF THE WONDERS AND MIRACLES OF IRELAND.

DISTINCTION III. OF THE INHABITANTS OF THIS COUNTRY.

ENDNOTES

DETAILED TABLE OF CONTENTS



A page of the original manuscript of 'Topographia Hibernica', British Library

PREFACE.



GIRALDUS CAMBRENSIS, so called from the country of which he was a native, was born about the year 1146, and belonged to one of the most distinguished families in South Wales. A Norman, or Anglo-Norman, chieftain had established himself in that district, and left to his family a name taken from the little island of Barri, on the coast of Glamorganshire. William de Barri, the head of this family in the reign of king Stephen, was lord of the princely castle of Manorbeer, in Pembrokeshire, and became allied by marriage with one of the most remarkable families in Wales. Rhys ap Tudor, prince of South Wales in the reign of William Rufus, had a daughter named Nesta, celebrated for her beauty, and for other accomplishments, who became the concubine of king Henry I., and was subsequently married to Gerald de Windsor, castellan of Pembroke. From this marriage sprung the illustrious family of Fitzgerald. William de Barri, just mentioned, married Angharad, the daughter of Gerald de Windsor and the princess Nesta, whereby the Barris became related both to the powerful Norman family of the Fitzgeralds, and to the princes of South Wales and the numerous families of Welsh chieftains who claimed kindred with them. Giraldus, the author of the historical treatises, of which we now publish a translation, was the youngest of the sons of William de Barri and Angharad; and was no doubt named after his maternal grandfather, the castellan of Pembroke. In one of the books translated in the present volume, Giraldus relates how his cousins effected that extraordinary series of exploits, the conquest of Ireland; and it was the unity of family of the conquerors, and their great connections in Wales, which made them objects of jealousy, for their success, to king Henry. The same feeling of jealousy was extended to Giraldus himself; and, according to his own statement, stood in the way of his advancement to the bishopric of St. David's; and this circumstance will explain many sentiments expressed by him in various parts of these writings.

Giraldus was born in the castle of Manorbeer, and, as he says, displayed in his childhood a love for literature, and for the ecclesiastical profession, which led his father to call him "his little bishop." His education was entrusted to the care of his mother's brother, David Fitzgerald, bishop of St. David's, with whom he remained until he had reached his twentieth year; and then he repaired to Paris, and gained great distinction in that University. He returned to England in 1172, and obtained ecclesiastical preferment; but his activity in correcting the abuses in the church gained him many enemies. In 1176, the see of St. David's became vacant, and the chapter chose Giraldus as their bishop; but the king refused his consent to his election, and Giraldus and the canons were compelled to yield. Peter de Leia, prior of Wenlock, was chosen in his place. He returned to Paris, and continued his career in that celebrated University, where he rose to great honours; but he came home again in 1180, repaired to his archdeaconry of Brecknock, and was appointed administrator of St. David's during a temporary absence of the bishop. During the few years preceding, the first conquest of Ireland had taken place. King Henry, visiting the borders of Wales in 1184, became acquainted with Giraldus, and, admiring his learning, took him to court. He employed him on several occasions in diplomatic negotiations with the Welsh, made him one of his chaplains, appointed him preceptor to his son, prince John, and, in 1185, sent him with the young prince to Ireland, in the quality of secretary.

Giraldus was evidently a zealous, if a rather credulous, observer and collector of facts. It was during this visit to Ireland that he occupied himself diligently in collecting materials for a description of that country, and remained there for that purpose some time after the departure of prince John. The result was his "Topography of Ireland," which he began to compose soon after his return to Wales, a little after the Easter of 1186, and completed in 1187. Its completion gave occasion for a remarkable display of the writer's vanity and love of ostentation. He recited his book, which was divided into three parts, which he called by the then fashionable term of distinctions, before a public audience of the university of Oxford on three successive days; and, to give more effect to this proceeding, he gave on each day a sumptuous feast. The poor people of the town were entertained on the first day; the doctors and students of greatest distinction on the second; and on the third the other scholars and the burghers and soldiers. Giraldus was evidently very proud of the sensation he had made on these occasions; for in one of his books (that *De Gestis Suis*, lib. ii. c. 16), he declares that it was worthy of the classic ages of the poets of antiquity, and that nothing like it had ever been seen in England. Its effect appears to have been to increase his celebrity.

In the latter part of this year news arrived of the capture of Jerusalem by Saladin, and all Western Europe was thrown into a state of great excitement. Preparations were made on every side for a new crusade; and Henry II., though too prudent a monarch to be led away by the enthusiasm to which it gave rise, could not avoid seeming to encourage it. He accordingly proclaimed the crusade; and Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, was sent to preach it in Wales. Giraldus was appointed to accompany the archbishop, in which there was no doubt a stroke of policy; for our author was then known throughout Wales as the champion of the rights and independence of the Welsh church against the pretensions of the metropolitan see of Canterbury; and it was thought that, by joining him in the mission, the fears and suspicions of all who might be inclined to look with distrust upon the visit of the English metropolitan would be silenced. It is probable, indeed, that the presence of Giraldus, the Welshman who had morally been raised to the see of St. David's, did give favor in the eyes of the Welsh to archbishop Baldwin's preaching; although the vanity of the archdeacon led him to believe that his own Marvellous eloquence was the chief element in their success. This expedition is the subject of one of the most interesting of his books, the "Itinerary of Wales," which was compiled with the avowed intention of immortalizing the acts of the archbishop, and especially of his companion, the archdeacon.

In the year 1189, Giraldus accompanied Henry II. on his last expedition into France, and he appears to have been present at that king's death. The new king, Richard I., showed the confidence he placed in our writer, by sending him immediately to Wales, to persuade his countrymen to abstain from revolt, and he appears to have fulfilled his mission with success. We find a further proof of the king's consideration, in the circumstance, that, when Richard departed for the Holy Land, he appointed Giraldus, who had obtained a dispensation from the crusade, to be coadjutor with the bishop of Ely, in the administration of the kingdom. Our author was now so confident in his expectation of obtaining, through the king's favor, the high ecclesiastical preferment to which he aspired, that he refused the lesser bishoprics of Bangor, in 1190, and Landaff, in 1191, but his hopes seem to have met with continued disappointment, until, at length, he quitted the court, and, being prevented from going to France by the breaking out of war between the two countries, he retired to Lincoln, where he gave himself to his old literary occupations. And he remained in this retirement several years. In 1198, Peter de Leia died, and the bishopric of St. David's thus again became vacant. Giraldus was elected by the

chapter, and opposed by the archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert Walter, who refused to accept the nomination on the same grounds which had been previously alleged by king Henry II., that it would be dangerous to the English supremacy to appoint a Welshman to the metropolitan see of Wales. Meanwhile king Richard died, and king John, whose favor Giraldus enjoyed, gave him reason to expect that his election would now be confirmed; but the king yielded to the arguments of the archbishop, and, after a rather obstinate struggle on the part of the canons of St. David's to sustain their choice, the election of Giraldus was set aside, and the bishopric of St. David's was finally conferred on Geoffrey de Henelawe, in 1203. In the course of this dispute, in which an appeal was made to the pope, Giraldus gave so much offence to king John, that that monarch proclaimed him an enemy to the crown, accusing him of a design to raise a rebellion among the Welsh, and seized upon his lands. He, however, made his peace with the king, after the election of Geoffrey de Henelawe; but, having resigned his archdeaconry in favor of one of his nephews, and retaining only his two church preferments of canon of Hereford, and rector of Chesterton, in Oxfordshire, he retired finally from public life. The see of St. David's was again vacant in 1215, and was offered to Giraldus, but he was now unwilling to accept it. We know nothing of his history during the rest of his life, but he appears to have died in the year 1223.

Such was Giraldus de Barri, or Cambrensis, the writer of the four works translated in the present volume, and of many others, most of which have been preserved. In these writings he appears to us in the character of what we may truly describe as an elegant scholar, deeply learned in the learning of his day, and widely read in classical and medieval literature. He was evidently a diligent collector of facts, but he was at the same time a man of extraordinary credulity, as all who read the following treatises will soon discover. Yet the information he gives us is almost always curious, and we feel in every instance that it is the bona fide result either of his own observations, or of his own inquiries. In common with Walter Mapes, and others of his contemporaries, he was fond of anecdote, and the continual introduction of popular stories into his writings not only render them extremely interesting, but give us very curious pictures of life and manners in the twelfth century. Our readers will soon detect another characteristic of Giraldus Cambrensis, which is not less apparent than his credulity — I need hardly say I mean his vanity. He seldom omits an opportunity of speaking of his own writings, and almost always in a laudatory vein — of talking of his own eloquence, of which he was evidently proud — or of setting forth his own deeds with the utmost degree of self-satisfaction. He also affects humor and wit; but this consists too often in puns and jokes upon words which tend rather to confuse than to amuse the reader. With all these different qualities, Giraldus Cambrensis is one of the most agreeable prose writers of the middle ages.

The four books contained in the present volume are those which may more strictly be called the historical treatises of Giraldus Cambrensis. The Topography of Ireland, as already stated, was completed in the year 1187, and was dedicated to king Henry II. The History of the Conquest of Ireland appears to have been commenced immediately after the completion of the Topography, and was dedicated to Richard, count of Poitiers, then the heir to the crown of England, which he inherited some two years afterwards, as Richard I. In the preface to the description of Wales, he informs us that this history was the labour of two years, so that he must have completed it just before that prince ascended the throne. At a later period he published a revised edition of this book, and dedicated it to king John. The Itinerary through Wales, which was intended to commemorate the mission of archbishop Baldwin to preach the third crusade to the Welshmen, and the part which Giraldus himself acted in it, was dedicated to

archbishop Langton, and therefore cannot have been completed before the year 1207, when that prelate was elected to the see of Canterbury. The Description of Wales, or the *Topographia Cambria*, appears to have preceded, in the date of its composition, the Itinerary, as the first edition was dedicated to Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, who occupied that see from 1186 to 1203; but a second and probably enlarged edition was subsequently published, and dedicated, like the Itinerary, to archbishop Langton. In the account of his own writings, given in a letter addressed to the chapter of Hereford, Giraldus tells us, that in order to make his country better known, as well as to occupy his leisure, and exercise his talents, he had drawn “a map of the whole of Wales, with its lofty mountains and dense forests, its principal lakes, rivers, and castles, many cathedral churches and monasteries, especially those of the Cistercian order,” and that this was executed in a small space, on a single leaf, but perfectly distinct and clear. The loss of so singularly curious a record is greatly to be regretted. It appears that Giraldus had already imbibed the taste for writing topographies when he composed that of Ireland, for in various passages in that and his other works he announces his intention of writing similar works for Wales, England, and Scotland. One only of these plans he fulfilled, when he published that of Wales, the extent and plan of which differ very considerably from those of the Topography of Ireland. We have every reason for believing that the Topographies of England and Scotland, which appear to have been delayed until the close of his life, were never written. It is certain that no such works are known to have existed.

It only remains to add, that the translations of the Topography of Ireland and the Vatical History of the Conquest are the work of Thomas Forester, Esq., well known by many excellent translations of our medieval chroniclers and historians, published in Bonn’s Antiquarian Library. They are the first complete translations of these books that have ever appeared. The translations published by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, in 1806, have been adopted for the Itinerary and Description of Wales. All have been carefully revised on the original texts by the editor. A large portion of the notes on the Topography of Ireland are by the editor, while the rest, with nearly all those on the history, are by the translator. Sir Richard Colt Hoare took the Itinerary as a frame on which to build a large work on the local history and antiquities of Wales, and it was neither possible nor desirable to give the whole of his notes in the present volume. In abridging them the editor has retained chiefly that part which related to the history of the different places visited by Giraldus down to the time of his visit, and to the description of scenery or antiquarian remains. The words of Sir R. C. Hoare are retained, with the exception of a few necessary alterations and corrections; and wherever the writer speaks in the first person, the reader will understand that Sir Richard alone is responsible for the statement or opinion.

T. W.

THE AUTHOR'S FIRST PREFACE.



WHEN I REFLECT that our life is short and fleeting, I am filled with admiration of the noble aims of those men of genius who, before their path for the future was yet plain, resolved on making it their principal object to leave behind them some excellent memorial, by which they might secure enduring fame, and at least live in after-times, when their brief span of existence had ended. Thus we read in the books of celebrated poets: —

“Denique, si quis adhuc praetendit nubila livor,
Occidet; et meriti post me referentur honores.”¹
“Should clouds of envy still around me spread,
Harmless on me their venom will be shed,
And honor’s meed be mine, when numbered with the dead.”

And elsewhere: —

“Quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
Oro legar populi, perque omnia saecula, fama,
Si quid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.”²
“Far as the power of Rome the world obeys,
All climes and nations shall peruse my lays;
And, if inspired poets can divine,
Renown, through endless ages, shall be mine.”

This was the first, and main, incentive with the greatest authors to undertake their works. There was another, second indeed in merit as well as in order, namely, the patronage, reward, and encouragement of illustrious princes. For honours are the nurses of the liberal arts: —

“Nam si Virgilio puer et tolerabile desit
Hospitium, caderent omnes a crinibus hydrae.”³
“The snakes, had Virgil no Mecaenas found,
Shook from the Furies’ head, had dropt upon the ground.”

And again: —

“Quis locus ingenio, nisi cum se carmine solo
Vexant, et dominis Cyrrhae Nisaeque feruntur
Pectora nostra, duas non admittentia curas.”⁴
“What room for fancy say, unless the mind,
And all its thoughts, to poetry resigned,
Be hurried with resistless force along
By the two kindred powers of wine and song.”

The philosophy, however, which loves a happy mean and modest independence, neither reveling in wealth, nor exposed to poverty, seems to have been condemned by Solomon:— “Give me, O Lord, neither riches nor poverty, but only what things are necessary for subsistence” For, although mediocrity is not allowable in poets,

“Non dii, non homines, non concessere columnae;”⁵
Which gods, nor men, nor *critics* will permit

still, if their wits be slender, there is no reason why they should not possess a moderate competence.

When, therefore, at any former period, the last mentioned inducement to write ceased, poetry began to fail. Not, indeed, that poetry was altogether lost, or philosophy extinct; nor did the imperishable records of glorious deeds ever fall into oblivion. Letters were not wanting, but lettered princes. The liberal arts had not disappeared, but the honours which ought to attend them were withheld. There would be no lack of eminent writers at the present day, if there were none of enlightened rulers. Give but a Pyrrhus, and you will have a Homer; a Pompey, and you will have a Tully; a Caius and Augustus, and a Virgil and Horace will follow in course. While, then, in our case, the second motive for writing fails for want of patrons, the first and most powerful of those I have mentioned urges me on. For nothing can better tend to kindle the sparks of mental vigour, and fan the innate fire into a flame, than that, supported by so many and such great authorities, and borne, as it were, upon their shoulders, we may rise to eminence by the aid of their manifold grandeur, if only we have confidence in ourselves. Nothing is so great a hindrance to bold attempts as diffidence. Despair of success is fatal to all efforts for obtaining it; so that many men of praiseworthy talent and learning have for this reason lived in idleness and seclusion, and while they shrunk from proving their abilities by active exertion, their brilliant merits remained hidden. Hence it happens that numbers of men of the greatest learning grow old without knowing their own powers; and turning the force of their genius to no account, for want of vigour of mind, perish like the beasts, and their names are lost in oblivion.

Since, then, “there is little difference between powers not called into action and buried in sloth;” since “fear is the token of a degenerate mind;” “a work well begun is half ended;” and “fortune favours the brave;” I have resolved on writing, preferring rather to incur the ridicule of the envious and malicious, than to seem in the judgment of worthy persons to shrink from my task through fear. Nor am I deterred by the example of Cicero, who says:— “I do not compose a poem on that subject, because I cannot write such verses as I could wish, and those which I can I am unwilling to write.” My own determination is this, and on this subject it is very decided —

“Cum neque chorda sonum reddat, quem vult manus et mens,
(Poscentique gravem persaepe remittit acutum:)

Nee semper feriet, quodcunque minabitur arcus.”⁶

“For oft the strings the intended sound refuse:

In vain his tuneful hand the master tries;

He asks a flat and hears a sharp arise;

Nor always will the bow, though famed for art,

With speed unerring wing the threatening dart.”

Francis.

If I cannot write as well as I would, I will at least write according to the best of my ability. Devoting myself, therefore, to a task requiring long and close application, shall I be esteemed presumptuous or provident, exposing myself to the shafts of envious malice while I live, in the hope of possibly achieving a glorious reputation when my days are ended?

After long musing on this subject, and after anxiously revolving it in my mind, at last it occurred to me that there was one corner of the earth, Ireland, which, from its position on the furthest borders of the globe, had been neglected by others. Not that it had been left altogether untouched, but no writer had hitherto comprehensively treated of it.

But it may be asked, "Can any good come from Ireland?" "Will its mountains drop sweetness, and its valleys flow with milk and honey?" Let us, then, endeavor to suck honey out of the rock, and draw oil from the flint. Let us follow the example of great orators, who, in an admirable manner, most polished the shafts of their eloquence, when the poverty of their subject required it to be elevated by the superiority of their style.

Et ferat invalidae robur facundia causae.

It behooved them, therefore, to lavish the graces of elocution on cases which were in themselves barren of interest, that, where reasoning little availed, language might do its best. For such is the effect, such the power of eloquence, that there is nothing so humble which it cannot exalt nothing so copious which it cannot amplify, nothing so obscure which it cannot clear up, nothing so clear which it cannot illustrate. For, as the noble senator says in his *Paradoxes*: "There is nothing so incredible that it cannot be made probable by the manner of putting it, nothing so rude and barbarous that a brilliant *oratory* cannot ornament and polish." But what can a discourse which has but a slender pith of sense, a barren waste of words, offer to erudite ears, and to men of the highest eloquence? For it is useless, and altogether superfluous, to address the eloquent in barren phrases, or to set before the learned things which every one knows. What sort of sounds would the cackling goose utter among tuneful swans? Are we, then, to publish what is new, or what is already well known? Men recoil with disgust from what is trite and common, while, on the other hand, novelties require the support of authority. For, as Pliny says, "it is a difficult matter to give novelty to old subjects, authority to new; to embellish what is threadbare, shed grace on what is out of fashion, light on obscurities, give confidence in what is doubtful, and nature to all"

Notwithstanding, it will be my endeavor, in the best manner I can, to rouse the reader's attention, by setting before him some new things, either not before related or very briefly noticed; exhibiting to him the topography of Ireland in this little work of mine, as in a clear mirror, so that its features may be open to the inspection of all the world.

I propose, therefore, to take, at least, a distinct view of this most remote island, both as regards its situation and character, explaining its peculiarities, so long hidden under the veil of antiquity, and searching out both the qualities and defects of almost all things which nature has produced there, both for the ornament of the better class and the use of the lower orders. Besides this, I propose to unravel the stupendous wonders of nature herself, to trace the descent of the various tribes from their origin, and to describe from my own knowledge the manners and customs of many men. And

since the country of which we treat is backward and feeble, it will be no small satisfaction to studious minds to survey, at least in thought, our better part of the world and its condition, having all things made easy to be understood.

This work is divided into three parts. The *first* treats of the situation of Ireland, and its locality in reference to the Greater Britain; of the quality of the soil, its inequalities, and its various properties; of the fishes and birds which are distinct from ours in place rather than in origin; of wild beasts and reptiles, the nature as well as defects of the several species; and of the absence of all venomous creatures. It will also contain a comparison of the East and the West, showing that the West is deservedly to be preferred. All which is distinctly noted in the titles prefixed to the several chapters.

The *second* part tells of the prodigies and wonderful works of sportive nature, not those only which are found in this country, but others also, of whatever kind and wherever existing, which are of the same description. It also sets forth the famous records of Saints celebrated for their virtues, which were manifested by glorious miracles unknown to the world.

The *third* part treats, in regular order, of the first inhabitants of this country, and the various immigrants of different nations, their arrival and departure; of the habits and customs of the Irish race which inhabits the island to the present day, and of their subjugation by foreign invaders. In short, it gives a history of all that is worthy of notice respecting this nation to our own times.

In the two first parts I have found no direct evidence from the Irish records, nothing from other sources, except the advantages I derived from personal inquiry, which could aid me in my task. It is only in the third part, which treats of the inhabitants of the island and the origin of the various races, that I obtained some information from their own chronicles. But these having been heaped together by the native writers in a loose and disorderly manner, with much that is superfluous or absurd, and being composed in a rude and barbarous style, I have digested them, with much labour, as clearly and compendiously as I could, like one seeking and picking up precious stones among the sands on the sea-shore, and have inserted whatever was of most value in the present volume. But since, from the wretched state of human imperfections,

‘Judicis argutum labor hic formidat acumen;’⁷

‘I tremble at the critic’s shrewd review;’

if not the work itself, at least the author’s design has claims to commendation. For the love of study is praiseworthy; nor does it appear unmeritorious to have had some regard for reputation amidst the regular and almost insupportable cares of attendance at court. Be it his praise, then, that while the body was subject to servitude, the mind was free. And since it is the part of a wise man to take breath in the refreshment of his own spirit of cheerfulness when at times he is worn by outward vexations, and to diversify wearisome employments by an interchange of such as are agreeable, nothing that is pleasant being considered a task, dignified leisure intervening between the multifarious calls of business is surely worthy of commendation.



End of Sample