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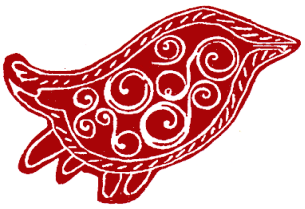

Title: Review: "The Walsingham Letter-Book or Register of Ireland, May 1578 to December, 1579", edited by James Hogan and N. McNeill O'Farrell (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1959)

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Reviews

The Walsingham Letter-Book or Register of Ireland, May 1578 to December 1579. Edited by James Hogan and N. McNeill O'Farrell. (Dublin, Irish MSS Commission, 1959. £2. 2*s*.).

The documents on Irish affairs from the letter-book of Sir Francis Walsingham, who held the office of secretary of state in England, are here published from a volume of the Carew papers in the Public Record Office, London. They cover the greater part of the year 1578 and all 1579 and are chiefly important for the light they throw on a rarely-studied aspect of the history of English colonialism in Ireland, namely, the extent to which the Dublin officials were prepared to follow the directions of their masters in London. The years 1578 and 1579 were momentous ones for many of the Catholic colonists, principally in Munster, and also for some of the autonomous Irish rulers. Hence, in the letters now published the names of the earl of Desmond and of James FitzMaurice are of frequent occurrence. Aodh Ó Néill's proposed marriage to a daughter of Turlough Lúineach's was not regarded favourably in either London or Dublin, and Drury received specific instructions to ' use all good meanes to impedite the same.' The Irish Manuscripts Commission is to be congratulated on making available this valuable source-material. It provides a rich quarry for those wishing to study the workings of the English colonial mind. The editors have performed their allotted task in a competent manner, but each of the indexes is less than complete.

S.P.

Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters. By Rev. T. J. Walsh, M. A. (Dublin, M. H. Gill and Son, 1959. £2).

Rarely has it been given to an author to be called upon to treat of such a diversity of important subjects as Father Walsh so competently and so lucidly does in this well produced volume. Around his authoritative and documented account of the life and labours of that dedicated lady, Nano Nagle, he has woven a multi-coloured web in whose glistening filaments are revealed almost every facet of the history of modern Ireland. It was in the crucible of the Cromwellian and Williamite wars and confications that the amalgam of the ancient historic Irish people and the Catholic colonists was mercilessly and oppressively formed, to emerge as the Irish nation of today. Nano Nagle, like Father Walsh, was of colonial stock. Indeed, it is quite likely that the Welsh followers of De Cogan and FitzStephen arrived in Ireland previous to the coming of the De Angulos. It is of importance to recall that when the Irish nation commenced its slow and tortuous ascent out of the deep pit of the penal code the Wyses and the Nagles and the Rices assisted the struggling masses to regain their sense of human dignity and self-reliance, just as the unknown leaders of the Whiteboys and the Defenders assisted them to take their first faltering steps on the road to political freedom. That is the most valuable lesson to be learnt from reflecting on the significance of the work of Nano Nagle. Her place in the history of Irish Catholic education and the unquenchable missionary zeal of the members of the Order she founded are incontrovertible. Father Walsh's brilliantly comprehensive study will assuredly bring feelings of pride and pleasure to Presentation Sisters everywhere. Nano Nagle, the poor frail vessel with the lacerated limbs and the festering wounds, was a practical exponent of the slogan, ' Educate that you may be free,' almost a certury before Davis and the Young Irelanders thought of writing about it.

S.P.

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