

SAINT CATALDUS.

Known as Cathal or San Cataldo.

By 'A Pilgrim'.

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AMONG the scattered biographies of our Irish Saints, there are few that claim a deeper interest, or present a more fascinating or instructive chain of incidents than the life-tale of Saint Cataldus. And yet there is none, we venture to think, of that long line of heroic apostles whose names fill our national calendars, of whom less is known in the country of his birth.

Far away in that sunny land of Southern Italy where the white-capped waves of the Adriatic break upon the shingly beach, there is an olden city, whose domes and towers and long lines of roofs, grown russet and brown with the shadows of centuries, where the memory of Cataldus of Ireland is preserved as lovingly and as freshly as in that far-off day when its citizens chose him for their patron, and dedicated their noblest temple to his honour. This is the proud city of Tarantum or Taranto, which gives its name to the land-locked gulf of the Adriatic Sea. In its period of classic glory, it seemed to rival Imperial Rome, and in the vastness of its commerce and the fame of Tarantum's industries and manufactures, it once vied with the famous but fated cities of Sidon and Tyre.

It is, indeed, strange in the paths of history as we trace the footprints of our wandering Irish apostles, that here in this distant foreign city we find the narratives of the life, legends, and miracles of this sixth century Saint handed down as a precious heirloom from sire to son, while at home in the land that bore him, his name and existence awaken little more than the faintest echoes of dim tradition. As our story is unfolded, this reflection — regretful thought as we may call it — cannot fail to suggest itself to our Irish readers as it does to us.

Cataldus — or Cathal, as he is styled in the terse records of our Irish manuscripts — was born in the kingdom of Mononia (our present Munster) in the latter part of the fifth century. The learned Franciscan historian, John Colgan, to whose pen and researches Ireland owes so much, fixes his birthplace in the riding of Upper Ormonde, North Tipperary. Here there is a town-land called Ballycahill, which is identified as the tribal home of his clan, and here we trace one of the faint outlines of his name to which we have just alluded. His father was a minor prince, and Cathal was the eldest and seemingly the only child of his house. Miracles or strange manifestations of the favours with which God was pleased to mark his career, from dawn to close, were vouchsafed from the hour of our Saint's nativity.

The joy, which his birth brought his parents, was quickly turned to sadness, for a few hours after the child came into the world his mother died. However, we are told that the infant fingers of the babe, having by chance touched the lifeless corpse that lay beside it, life returned, and the young mother, whose loss was mourned, was restored to her husband and child. In connection with the infancy of our Saint, several legends are recorded. One tells us, how an aged hermit who lived in the solitude of the Galtee Mountains, on the night Cathal was born, saw a miraculous light encircle the abode of his parents as he looked down from his cell over the distant plain. Hastening to the scene, the holy man blessed the child and predicted that he was destined by God for great things. Again, we are told that while still very young, by accident, the little boy fell, and his head was dashed against a rude stone. It was believed the fall would have cost him his life, but he was left unhurt, while, like softest wax, the stone received the impress of his head. His preservation was looked on as miraculous — which no doubt it was, since, for years afterwards, water placed within the hollow of the stone was found to possess healing powers for various diseases.

Very early in his life the sanctity of the child led his parents to place him at the famous school of Lismore founded by Saint Carthage.

The fame of the schools of Ireland at that period had spread over Europe. Each would seem to have cultivated some special branch of religious or secular education. But Lismore, in the vale of the Blackwater, had become famous as embodying in its teachings what we would call a general system, providing its scholars not only with the means of acquiring knowledge of the deeper sciences of mathematics and philosophy, but also all the accomplishments and useful crafts of that day. Students flocked to it from England, Scotland, France, Germany, Spain, and even from the shores of the Aegean Sea. It was here, as we learn from history, that at a later time than the period of which we write, that Oswald, of Northumbria, perfected himself in languages and psalmody, and was, on his return home, able to interpret for his people the preachings of the foreign missionaries he brought amongst them. And to the teachings of his Irish masters in Lismore, we may doubtless attribute the sanctity and sacrifices of this holy king, which secured for him a place among the royal Saints of his own country.

Alfred the Great, too, spent years of study in the vale of the Blackwater, and from the Irish bards learned to play the harp, and interweave with its melodies those weird songs with which he charmed his Danish foes, when disguised he visited their camp and perfected the stratagem by which he won back his crown and kingdom.

But let us return to the thread of our story.

Cathal won distinctions without number in the school of Saint Carthage, and when he had completed his course was retained as a teacher, so highly were his attainments estimated. Being, however, filled with a longing to spread afar the tidings of the Gospel, after some time he returned to his native place, where many of his relatives, and other inhabitants were still plunged in superstition and paganism. Success attended his preaching on every side, and miracles seem to bless every effort of the Saint in the course of his Apostolate. For the conversion of so many

souls, Cathal was filled with gratitude towards God, to whose mercy he attributed all his powers, and in thanksgiving, we are told, he built a church in Lismore, which he caused to be dedicated to the Mother of God.

Cathal, though he taught the Divine truths, and had conducted so many into the fold of the True Faith, had not yet entered the sacred Ministry. He was at this time living in his father's home. The death of both his parents occurring within a brief period, and releasing him, as he felt, from earthly and domestic ties, the holy youth determined on disposing of his patrimony, and carrying out his desire of entering the religious state. His whole life had been a preparation for this step, and very soon the holy order of priesthood was conferred on him.

His zeal and reputation for sanctity, together with the wonder-working powers, which were accredited to him, brought such crowds around him, and coupled such praises with his name, that in his humility he determined to leave the people among whom he ministered, and who were so devoted to him.

Secretly he stole away and retraced his steps to Lismore. Here, amidst the vast concourse of monks and scholars, he hoped to escape the notice and flattery of men, and undisturbed, might devote himself more intimately to the service of God. Almost immediately on his return to the place where he had passed so many happy years, the zealous priest set about building another oratory at which he worked with his own hands. His whereabouts were however traced, and, as in the scenes he had just left, so now again, the blind, the lame, and the sorrow stricken hourly sought his aid and consolation.

It is related that at this time Cataldus, almost unconsciously, worked some of his greatest miracles. The child of a soldier who served in the army of the Prince of Desii, in whose territory Lismore was situated, was seized with a grave illness. The troubled father was advised to set out for the birthplace of the Saint and procure some water from the hollow of the stone on which the impress of Cathal's head had remained since the accident, which had occurred in his childhood. On his return, the soldier was grieved to learn that during his absence his son had died. Hearing the Saint was at Lismore, the poor man in his frenzy took the lifeless corpse, and carrying it for many miles reached the spot where Cathal was to be found. The holy man at the time was busy digging out, as we are told, the deep foundation for his new church. Laying the body close to where the Saint was working, the soldier besought him to have pity on him, and implore God to restore his child to life. At the moment, as Cathal was casting the earth up from the deep trench a portion of the clay fell upon the lifeless form. A rosy hue at once stole over the pale cheek of the dead child. A movement of life returned to the rigid limbs, and, as if awaking from a sleep the child rose up, and was quickly enfolded in the arms of his father!

Rumour, with its myriad tongues, soon bore the tidings of this miracle far over the land. It seemed like a renewal of the Gospel wonders wrought by the shores of Galilee. And, like as with his Divine Master, the blessings, which Cataldus brought to others, were to be likewise fruitful of persecution to himself. Meltride, the Prince of Desii, was still a pagan. Urged on by the

representations of his Druid priests he petitioned the King of Munster, whose vassal he was, to have the saint imprisoned, lest by his magic and seditious language he should mislead his subjects. The wily insinuation had the wished-for result. The old king yielded to the suggestions of Meltride and his wicked advisers, and ordered the holy priest to be arrested, and cast into prison.

Strange to tell, and as if in punishment of his crime, Meltride died suddenly and the aged Monarch of Munster, like the king in tragedy, could “sleep no more.” His brain was tortured with the thought of his injustice, and, moreover, he was besieged with the ceaseless demands of the people for the release of their benefactor. “Conscience makes cowards of us all,” and kings are no exception, and soon by royal mandate, the guiltless prisoner was set free.

The king, we read, not only released him, but in his effort to repair the injustice of which he had been the instrument, offered Cataldus the principedom and territory of the unhappy Meltride.

These favours the Saint declined, at the same time assuring the King of his hearty forgiveness. However, later on we learn, the bishopric of Rahan becoming vacant, Cathal was compelled to accept it, and found unexpectedly the estates of Meltride conferred by royal gift on his diocese as mensal property to provide meals for the bishop’s clergy.

This generosity abundantly proved that the King, who once cast him into prison, was indeed a generous enemy, and, better still, a penitent one. There is no longer a diocese of Rahan in Ireland, but, if we mistake not, it was the same small monastic see from which Saint Carthage was expelled by some ungrateful men of Meath. This circumstance of expulsion led to Saint Carthage founding the School of Lismore. And, by a strange coincidence, within the neighbourhood of this self-same Rahan, the Irish Jesuits have today one of their famous seats of education, Saint Stanislaus’ Tullabeg, Tullamore, where we feel that it will be ever their pride to revive and keep green the memory of our great early Irish scholars, Carthage and Cataldus.

Some of our readers, versed in antiquities, will gather interest from this novel side-gleam of ecclesiastical story. It reveals that the first see of Carthage was, at most, but one of Abbatial jurisdiction, confined to the extent of his monastic estates. There were many such sees in Ireland; in fact, they seem to have been almost as numerous as are parishes now. Moreover, it will remind them that, after the coming of the Cistercians, in the days of the Sainted Primate Malachy of Armagh, Pope Eugenius III, the patron of Saint Bernard, made a redistribution of sees in ecclesiastical Ireland, much as we find them today.

But let us go back to Cathal and his subsequent history. Just at this time — the earlier decades of the sixth century — an anxious yearning to go forth on missions of Apostolic enterprise took possession of our Irish scholars. They seem to have been urged, in prosecuting their holy desires, by three distinct motives. Some left their country, like Romuald of Dublin (better known as Saint Rumbold of Mechelen), in order to avoid regal and worldly honours which their faithful people would feign thrust upon them. Others made sacrifice of home and country, for Christ’s sake, to

preach and spread the Gospel. But a still greater number seem to have been actuated by the wish to visit, as pilgrims, places sacred to the birth of Christianity — the Holy Land, the temples and the tombs of Rome.

Cataldus was one of the latter band. He left his diocese — not, we should think, with any idea of forsaking Ireland for ever — and set out for Jerusalem. He had long cherished a desire to visit and venerate scenes consecrated by the footsteps of our Redeemer, and worship in the places where Christ had trod. After months of travel and various vicissitudes, he reached the Holy Land. His enthusiastic aspirations and holiest dreams seemed now about to be satisfied. To him each scene was almost familiar, so long had their associations been coupled with the life and thoughts of Him whom he had chosen from infancy as his model, and on whose Divine teachings he had pondered in meditation. In his fervour, a strange, yet holy thought filled his mind to take up his abode, at least for a time, and live as a hermit in the Holy Land. Close to Bethlehem, he chose for himself a grotto cell, whence he visited all those spots sacred to Scripture story. For a time, he felt happy and satisfied in the realisation of his holiest life dreams.

But the path Cataldus had chosen was not the one for which he was destined by the Providence of God. Soon it occurred to him that the life of an anchorite, even amid places of such holy recollection, was, as far as the outer simple world was concerned, a selfish one. He was, after all, but labouring now for the salvation of one soul — his own — while within him lay the power of gathering many guests to the everlasting feast. The parable of the “ten talents” may have realized its meaning more forcibly for him, as he meditated amid the very scenes where the imperishable simile fell from the lips of the Divine Teacher. Gifted as he was with the highest knowledge and acquirements of his time, was he not called upon to turn to account those endowments, and not leave “his talents” buried in the pound? And full of faith, as these reflections caught a faster hold on his soul, he sought the will of God in prayer, promising that he would follow the inspiration of Divine guidance whithersoever it beckoned him. At length his prayer was heard, and it was mysteriously revealed to him that he should travel to Italy and restore the faith to the City of Tarantum, where once the Apostles Peter and Paul had preached, but where their teachings were now, alas, forgotten.

At once, the Saint obeyed, although his departure from the land which he had longed for as the home of prolonged contemplation was a grave trial — a sacrifice made more bitter still by the thought that he was never perhaps again to return to his beloved Ireland.

Travelling on to the shores of the Levant, Cataldus found a vessel on the point of starting for Italy. The day he embarked was calm and beautiful; favouring winds filled the sails of the barque and gave promise of a happy voyage. However, at sundown, although nothing as far as human calculation could foresee betokened a change, Cataldus warned the captain of a coming storm. The suggestion was, however, badly received by the master of the ship and his crew, who smiled at the words of the inexperienced passenger. Soon, however, they found that Cataldus was not far astray. Unexpectedly, a storm arose of such violence that the vessel became unmanageable and

had to be allowed to drift along, a plaything of the tempest. One of the sailors, who attempted to mount the yards, and reef the tattered sails, was dashed upon the deck and killed. In the face of such peril the anxious crew crowded round the stranger who had foretold the disaster, and pitying them, Cataldus, lifting his eyes to heaven invoked the Blessed Trinity, and making the sign of the cross over the raging sea, the winds fell and the surging billows quickly sobbed themselves to rest! This miracle won for our Saint, it is needless to say, the boundless gratitude of the poor sailors, but better still, it won for him their souls, for they were pagans, and all were converted by this manifestation of the power of the one true God.

At the close of this eventful voyage, Cataldus was landed at the little port at the mouth of the Adriatic, ever since known as "Porto di San Cataldo." Close to the beach was a little cave wherein the holy man offered thanks for his safety. In after times, through veneration for his memory, it became a votive chapel, wherein, on festival occasions, the sacred mysteries continued long to be celebrated.

If we look at the map of Italy, a little below the well-known call-port of Brindisi, this point connected with and named after our Irish Saint will be found. The journey from his landing-place to Tarantum was not very far. Yet in those days, when neither rails nor bicycles were available, it was not pleasant. The country here has none of the attractive characteristics, which go to make an ideal Italian landscape. It is dreary and monotonous, and would compare sadly with the tamest of our Irish lowlands.

On his journey, it is related that our Saint was often obliged to ask his way. On one occasion, he inquired of a little shepherdess the road to Tarantum. The child gazed upon the venerable stranger with sad yet wistful eyes, but made no reply. She was deaf and dumb, as Cataldus quickly perceived. Taking pity upon her, the holy man placed his hands upon her head, and at his prayers, her faculties of speech and hearing were restored perfectly. Full of joy, the little girl took him by the hand and led him to the village where her parents lived, and which lay in his direct road to Tarantum. The poor parents knew not what to think, and were almost beside themselves with joy, when their child, who had never spoken from her birth, rushed in to tell them what had occurred. All the neighbours and kinsfolk were quickly on the spot to witness the miraculous cure and see the wondrous stranger who had wrought it. Cataldus, availing of the opportunity, explained to them that he was but the representative of the Great God who was the Giver of every good gift, and to Him alone should thanks and praise be given for the wonder worked amongst them.

Very little more effort was here needed to reap a plentiful harvest of souls, and before the sainted missionary left the village, he had the happiness of receiving every soul there into the bosom of the Church. A journey of a few miles further brought Cataldus to his destination. In the designs of Providence, Tarantum was to be the home of his earthly exile.

In his school time, he had often read the lines of classic reference in which many of the Latin poets had enshrined the name of the old-world city. As our Saint may have lingered beneath the lichened arch of its mighty gates, crowds of thoughts will have come upon him, linking perhaps

with his lonely visit to this scene, the memories of his teachers in far-off Lismore. Dreams will have crowded on his imagination of long ago, when certainly he never dreamt that with the classic poet, Virgil, he, too, might sing — “Trojae ab oris . . . in Italiam venit.” (‘From the shores of Troy . . . in Italy he came.’)

If such were his reveries, they were broken by the plaintive supplication of a blind beggar who sought his alms! Then, as now, were verified, in the words of Christ, “the poor you have always with you.” In reply to questions, which he put to the old man, Cataldus found he had lived from his youth in Tarantum, and had during his life shared the sympathy and charity of the citizens. By no other could the story of Tarantum have been better told, and Cataldus was quick to perceive that in his first acquaintance — the blind beggar of the wayside — he found the best introduction to his mission, the conversion of the faithless city. For some days, the saint came to meet his loquacious acquaintance at his accustomed resting place.

The mendicant was poor not in wealth only, but in faith, too, for he was a pagan. Cataldus gradually unfolded to him the truths of the Gospel, while sympathising with him in his physical privations and sufferings. He explained to him how much more precious was the light of Faith than that eyesight which he had only temporarily lost. How little was the transient light of earth when contrasted with the endless, undimmed brightness of Eternity? Needless to observe, the poor beggar was converted, and when Cataldus led him for baptism to a spring close by the gates of Tarantum, as the darkness of his soul passed away, earthly sight was restored to his sightless eyeballs. Tarantum, we may be sure, quickly rang with the news of the blind man’s cure. The people ran in crowds to see the wonder-working stranger, and listened with docility to his teachings.

In the great squares of the city, and in the busy marts, Cataldus preached daily till he completely won the hearts and wrought the conversion of the whole city. Nor, were the blessings of his Apostolic zeal confined to Tarantum, for, far beyond its walls the seeds of faith which fell from the words of Cataldus were carried everywhere, to bear an abundant harvest. The old city, though partly fallen from the splendour of pre-Christian times, still held a position of great mercantile importance. The merchants of many nations, east and west, found it a convenient market for exchange. It was noted for the production of certain textures made from the wool of a peculiar kind of sheep, which were only to be found on the plains of Calabria. The dyes of Tarantum were still prized in the world of fashion, while the waters of the Adriatic supplied a species of fish from which a type of silk was manufactured, and which rendered the looms of the city famous over the world. The promiscuous gathering of all races, as we may say, afforded our Apostle a splendid field for his missionary zeal. His wonderful proficiency in the knowledge of dialects (which seems to have been one of the marvellous acquirements of our Irish scholars in the sixth century) made to Cataldus comparatively easy what to other preachers would have been a graver task.

As proof of the far-reaching effects of the Apostolate of Saint Cataldus, we need but consider the

number of widely separated states and cities in which he is venerated. These we touch upon in the close of our necessarily too brief sketch of his eventful life.

The apostolate of Cataldus presents us with an extraordinary instance of missionary tact and labour. The Faith planted in Tarantum by the first Apostles can hardly have been said to have wholly died out. But perhaps a worse fate had befallen it, in its having degenerated and become incorporated in course of years with the superstition and errors of paganism into which the inhabitants had gradually relapsed. To unweave this tangled web was the difficulty. Every trace of the erroneous belief had to be rooted out — the gold to be sifted from the worthless dross.

To this end, Cataldus firstly sought the ear of the educated classes, knowing well that, if example were given by those in high places, half his conquest would be achieved. His method proved successful beyond all he could have hoped for. But, in addition to his ingenious zeal, we cannot help thinking that this Irish Saint was more specially favoured by Heaven than were many others of our Apostles. Miracles seem to shower on his footsteps, and even forestall his every undertaking. It will strike many a devout reader of the Saint's life as he contemplates this phase of his life, that somehow the great secret, or mainspring of his Apostolic success, may likely have been his devotion to the great Mother of God.

With his own hands, he built two shrines to Her honour by the banks of the Blackwater in Ireland. They were both votive churches or memorials of thanksgiving. Again, on the shores of the blue waters of the Adriatic Sea, after his initial missionary successes, in token of gratitude, his first act was to erect a shrine in honour of His Blessed Mother.

In the annals of our Irish Saints, of the early date in which the life of Saint Cataldus was cast, we find no such constantly recurring and remarkable evidence of filial devotion to our Blessed Lady.

Our Saint cannot have been young when he came to Tarantum. The years which were marked by the first fervour of his preaching, and during which he was so successful, must have been few. Yet, within a brief compass of time, what great achievements may be accomplished, the life of our Saint strikingly exhibits. During the pontificate of Agapitus I, Cataldus was consecrated Bishop of Tarantum, and he ruled the diocese for fifteen years. Probably within that decade and a half, the events, which gave such lasting glory to his memory, took place. It was during this period, that he introduced into his cathedral the custom of having the psalms sung daily in the choir accompanied by music — a custom for many centuries observed, and became one of the most attractive cathedral services in Italy.

Again, his literary pursuits must have involved unwearied toil, since the works ascribed to his pen ran into volumes. His most famous works were "Homilies for the People," "A Book of Prophecies," and a "Treatise on Visions."

The immediate province over which his episcopal jurisdiction extended shows, even in our own day, how deeply his teachings struck root in its soil. Wherever we find traces of his footsteps,

there, too, we are sure to find a shrine of the sweet Madonna, whose praises he ever extolled, whom he ever thanked, and to whom he had unfailling recourse in all his cares.

The last years of Saint Cataldus, in the details of their holiness, furnish an epitome of the blessings, which God sheds so often over the closing days of his elect. But amid them all, as in all his wanderings, his love of Ireland never waned, never grew faint; and we may well believe that, stretched on the bed of death, his aged heart travelled back to Lismore of Erin, and that his dying lips invoked a parting blessing on the loved “Isle of Destiny” in the Western Ocean.

As the springtide sun slowly sank from the cloudless sky into the bluer depths of the Adriatic Sea, and while that prayer for Ireland trembled on the lips, Cathal of Lismore, gave his soul to God on the 8th day of March, AD 550.

Many of the accounts given by Italian writers describe the intense grief, which pervaded the city of Tarantum on the death of its second apostle. Some records remind us of an incident similar to one narrated in connection with the life of another client of the Mother of God, Saint Antony of Padua. As happened with the sainted Franciscan centuries afterwards, we are told, that the death-knell of Cataldus was tolled by the bells of Tarantum of their own accord — unswung by human hands.

With every mark of honour and devotion, the body of the Irish saint was placed within a marble casket and laid to rest beneath the choir of the cathedral, which he had built. Here, for six centuries votaries came to pay respect to his memory and his sanctity. In the eleventh century, when the enthusiasm of Christendom began to show itself in the erection of more splendid temples, Dragone, Archbishop of Tarantum, undertook the rebuilding of the cathedral of his see. Coming on the coffin of Cataldus, the workmen were first apprised of its location by the sweet odour, which the clay that covered it exhaled. In the presence of the clergy and the people, the sarcophagus was reverently opened. Beside the precious remains of the saint were found a golden cross — a tablet engraven — and a book plated with silver. On the cross were inscribed the words— “Famulus Christi Cataldus Epus Tarantius”, “The Household Servant of Christ, Cataldus, Bishop of Taranto’.

This relic is still preserved among the treasures of Tarantum.

In after centuries, on three successive occasions, the remains of the Saint were translated and re-enshrined with increased solemnity and becoming splendour. During the Pontificate of Pope Eugenius III, on May 10th, 1161, Bishop Giraldo had the relics encased in a silver shrine of costly workmanship, placing with the bones of the Saint a portion of the True Cross. Almost two centuries later — in 1346 — the then Archbishop of Tarantum had the silver reliquary of Cataldus melted down and modelled into a statue, within which he placed the skull and several of the Saint’s bones. On this occasion, we learn, the same prelate, with the approval of the Holy See, distributed portions of the relics to many places where the Saint was held in special veneration. Amongst them, we reckon chiefly Rome, Sicily, Venice, and some cathedrals of France.

The statue represented Cataldus clad in pontifical vestments, bearing in his left hand a crozier, while his right hand was outstretched as if imparting a benediction. On certain feasts the statue was washed, the water used being afterwards distributed among the faithful. It was treasured by votaries of the Saint as fruitful of wonderful cures.

On May 9th, the anniversary vigil of the third translation of the relics, this statue is borne through the streets of Tarantum in solemn procession, in which celebration the citizens and peasantry of the surrounding districts take part in immense crowds. In seasons of drought, when oftentimes the vineyards and crops of Calabria are threatened with ruin, we are told that the presence of this venerated statue, carried over the parched plains, is often followed by beneficent falls of rain, which avert the dreaded loss.

The magnificent chapel, at the Gospel side of the Altar in the Cathedral of Tarantum, was erected in the seventeenth century by the Prince-Bishop, Thomas Carraciolo. It was designed after the Pantheon in Rome, and subsequently enriched with the richest mosaics and marbles, carved with choicest architectural skill. The shrine of the statue of the Saint is one of the finest specimens of the Rococo style to be found in any monument in Italy. So late as 1892, the Archbishop of Tarantum had the figure of the Saint, to which so much veneration is attached, still further adorned, and at considerable expense. And so it is, as we gather from these details, devotion to the Irish Apostle of the Adriatic City not only lived, but has grown warmer in the hearts of his adopted children, as each successive age rolls on.

The miracles, which, like beams of heavenly light, gleam through the pages of his life, never ceased in the land he blessed and sanctified. And this, although well nigh fourteen and a half centuries have passed since, footsore and weary, he asked his way from the little dumb shepherdess, and restored sight to the blind man at the gate of Tarantum.

We have alluded to the places, far from the scenes of his labours, to which the faith, which Cataldus preached in the crowded marts of Tarantum was carried by his hearers. In the Italian cities of Naples, Corato, Lecce, Cattanello, Patignano, and numberless sister-towns, churches and shrines have been raised to his honour. At Rimini, where Saint Antony once preached from the sands to the fishes of the sea, the parochial church is dedicated to our Irish saint. In Viterbo, of apostolic fame, again Cataldus is highly venerated. Far from the confines of Italy, in the French city of Sens — whither the craft of the silk weaver was brought by the traders of Tarantum — the parish church claims our saint as its patron. Many towns over the southern Continent bear his name, and it is also perpetuated in a well-known spot in the island of Malta.

In connection with our story many of us will have shared, at least in spirit, a few months since, in the ceremonies which took place in the churches of the Irish Jesuits in celebrating the Canonisation of the latest Saint added to the catalogue of the sainted sons of Saint Ignatius — Blessed Bernardino Realino, beautified in 1895, canonised in June 1947.

He was, as we may remember, the Apostle of Lecce in Italy. In that time-honoured city the most venerable shrine of the many shrines of Cataldus stands in the midst of the Campo Santo, or cemetery outside the walls. It was erected in 1181 by the pious Count Tancred of Lecce. Here during the forty years of his Apostolate, Realino, no doubt, often prayed, and poured out his soul in supplication to that august Queen, that sweet Madonna, whose praises and whose glory Cataldus bore from the valley of our Irish Blackwater Valley to the shores of the Adriatic Sea.

Our pen is stealing on and it threatens to glide beyond the limits of our task. The story of Cataldus will, we trust, be a welcome guest amongst our Irish readers. They will, we hope, agree with us that it is one of the most fascinating memoirs of our Saints. May it also be fruitful of reflection and instruction. Perhaps it may suggest to some who are blessed with fortune or endowed with education and accomplishments to follow, even in a remote way, in the footsteps of our great Saint, and not allow their talents, which must be accounted for, to lie buried in the field. May it also inspire many of the young Levites of our Seminaries with an ardent vocation to spread the Faith in foreign lands. May the bright example of Cataldus of Lismore teach them to trample under foot all temptations to ungenerous and inordinate love of home and kindred, and urge them to cross land and sea, leaving behind them for ever, like Cataldus, the land they love above all things after God, to bring the Gospel and Cross of Christ to souls seated in the darkness of heresy and paganism. But we will pray too, that like Cataldus, on foreign shores, they may never, never, never forget dear old Ireland, God's chosen island of Apostles, Saints and Scholars!

PRAYER.

O Blessed Cataldus! Kindle more brightly than ever in the hearts of Holy Erin's youths and maidens, the flame of vocation for foreign missions. Kindle it too, in the hearts of young people of those lands, which Irish feet have touched. Teach them to brave the pangs of separation from home and kindred, and to encounter every privation and death itself, if needs be, to spread the name and knowledge of Christ Crucified and of His Blessed Mother Mary. Amen.

(Thanks to Irish Messenger Office.)
