

History of St. Edward's College.

(The following account of the History of St. Edward's College is taken from a paper read by the late Very Rev. Canon Cosgrave, of Preston, to the students at St. Edward's in 1880. It appeared in the pages of the *Upholland College Magazine* and by the courtesy of the Editor we are enabled to give the present students of St. Edward's this account of their College in bygone days. We desire to express our grateful acknowledgments for the permission so readily given to make use of this material).

IT is known to all that the House which now forms part of the College buildings was not originally built for the purposes of education.

Before it was set apart for the instruction of youth under the patronage of St. Edward the Confessor it had an existence of almost fifty years, which it is hoped will have an interest for all. To proceed in order, we shall treat (1) of its original proprietor and founder; (2) of the different uses it was put to after it had passed from the hands of his family; and lastly, of the different stages of its growth and development as St. Edward's College.

About the middle of the 18th Century, all the lands from St. George's Church and between Netherfield Road on the west and Beacon Lane on the east side, formed what used to be called "the commons." In the year 1755 Mr. George Campbell, a West India merchant and sugar refiner, living in this town, purchased the lands hereabouts from the families of the original lessees, H. Halsall and J. Seacombe. On the triangular corner, between what are now called St. Domingo Road and Beacon Lane, Mr. Campbell erected a mansion which was rather an eccentric sort of a place, resembling very much an ecclesiastical edifice. There extended in front of it an

extensive grassy lawn separated from the road by posts and chains. He gave it the name of "St. Domingo House," in consequence, it is supposed, of a privateer which he owned, taking a rich prize off the island of St. Domingo. Mr. Campbell was Mayor of Liverpool in 1763. After his death in 1770, the estate, comprising fifty-three acres was sold to Mr. John Crosby for £3,800. Becoming unfortunate in business, he was unable to complete his bargain, and the contract was transferred to Messrs. Gregson, Bridge and Park. In February 1773, they sold their interest in it to Mr. John Sparling for the sum of £3,470. Mr. Sparling was a man of large means, having made a considerable fortune in the West India trade. He was one of the old school. We can picture him to ourselves on the Liverpool "Change," with knee-breeches, broad-flapped coat, gold-laced waistcoat, broad shoes with gold buckles and wearing a three-cornered hat. He filled the civic chair in 1790 and 1791. Two years later he took down the old mansion built by Mr. Campbell, and erected the present palatial residence. The three fishes—three small sparlings—the crest of the family, carved in stone over the principal entrance, perpetuate the memory of the original founder. St. Domingo House was the most splendid edifice in the whole township. It is a noble mansion, built of stone. Situated on a lofty eminence it commands an extensive view. To the north, away to Southport and Ashurst Beacon, to the west the noble river Mersey is full in view and a great part of Cheshire, while to the east the eye stretches beyond Croxteth and Knowsley, the residences of the Earls of Sefton and Derby. (Owing to the extension of the city the view on the east side, especially, is not now so extensive.—ED.). The north or chief facade is ornamented by four attached Corinthian columns, supporting a massive

entablature, and a bold cornice, that extends round the building. It is approached by a double flight of stone steps, at the base of which are four cannons supposed to have been taken from the privateer belonging to Mr. Campbell, the original proprietor. We enter through a spacious entrance hall worthy of the old Baronial castles; from this lead off the dining-room, drawing-room and libraries, the doors of which are of the finest mahogany, imported by Mr. Sparling. The rooms are large and lofty and adorned with cornices worthy of a very much later date. In the centre of the house is a noble area, lighted by a circular window in the roof. We ascend by a very handsome staircase to the various bedrooms.

It was built at an expense considerably beyond his calculations, but Mr. Sparling was desirous to tempt his successors to live at a spot to which he was so much attached. He built for his family a magnificent mausoleum in the cemetery attached to Walton Church—in which he himself was buried—within view of the entrance of St. Domingo House, to deter, it is said, his family from ever leaving the mansion. Certain it is that he took great pains in his will to oblige his heirs and successors to keep possession of the property. Should they be unwilling to reside at the place themselves, so highly did he regard the name of Sparling, that he directed them, in a special clause, to give a preference to the application of any tenant of that name. However, the sequel will show that an Act of Parliament was obtained, under the powers of which the property was sold and alienated altogether from the family.

The grounds in front of the house stretched to Walton Road, and Mr. Sparling spared no cost in beautifying them by planting, erecting terraces, and other embellishments, so that it was in every sense of the word a noble estate. He died in 1800, and the property passed to his son William, who resided for some time in the mansion. This gentleman, who was a

lieutenant in the 10th Regiment of Dragoons, obtained an unfortunate notoriety by a duel with Mr. Edward Grayson, a shipbuilder of the town, on February 26th, 1804, in which he mortally wounded his antagonist. They met opposite the old Chapel in Toxteth Park, and thence proceeded down the retired valley of the Dingle. Mr. Sparling's second was Captain Colquitt, R.N., of the frigate "Princess," Mr. Grayson's, Dr. Macartney, a physician of eminence in the town. At the first fire, Grayson fell mortally wounded. Mr. Sparling gave himself up to Justice, and was tried along with Captain Colquitt at the Lancaster Assizes, April 4th, 1804, before Sir Allan Chambre. Both were acquitted. Mr. Sparling never again resided at St. Domingo House. For some months previous to this, he had been travelling on the Continent, and immediately after his withdrawal from Liverpool, the house was let to the Government as headquarters of Prince William of Gloucester, nephew of George III., at that time Commander-in-Chief of the district. Shortly after Mr. Sparling's decease in 1809, his executors obtained an Act of Parliament in behalf of his heirs, enabling them to dispose of the estate. It was sold to Messrs. Ewart and Sitt for £20,295; the latter gentleman lived for some time on the premises. Ultimately Mr. Ewart became the sole proprietor. Thus St. Domingo House passed out of the hands of its original founders and owners, and for a period of thirty years it had a troubled existence, going through many hands and serving many purposes.

Prince William of Gloucester took up his residence here in 1803 and remained in the district for several years. He was, of course, for the time, the cynosure of all the neighbourhood, the fact that a prince of royal blood lived here brought St. Domingo House into prominence.

The Prince seemed perfectly satisfied with his mercantile and munificent neighbours and

graced many a banquet at Everton with his presence. On his departure in 1811 he bore testimony to the generous hospitality of the merchants of Liverpool.

In that year, the Government, requiring a site for barracks, and being acquainted with this locality from the residence of Prince William, entered into a negotiation for the purchase of the estate from Mr. Ewart. He sold it to them for £26,313. The people of Everton were much disturbed, not to say alarmed, at the prospect of establishing barracks in the very heart of their hitherto quiet and delightful township. Meetings were called and protests made, but to no purpose. Delegates were sent to London but they returned "re infecta."

The prospect progressed and the military were stationed here for a short time. The barrack department, however, soon found that the house was ill-suited to accommodate many of the common soldiery. They grew tired of their bargain and offered the whole for sale; no purchaser could be found for the place in gross, so that they were obliged to divide the property into lots, some of which they sold by public mart.

That part with which we are immediately concerned, St. Domingo House, as well as the land stretching to the north as far as the present site of Everton Valley Convent, was sold to Messrs. Sandback and McGregor. This property was at a later period divided into lots again, one of which, immediately to the north of our grounds, was sold to the Government. In the year 1825 the Misses Corrie rented our present house from the owners and for four years conducted a young ladies' school there. They had taken it on a lease of seven years. Hearing that a Swiss gentleman, Mr. Voelker, who had a boarding-school for young gentlemen in the neighbourhood, was looking for a larger house, they offered it to him. Accordingly in 1829 he moved here, with twenty-three pupils, having previously stipu-

lated with the owners to renew his lease for a further term of seven years. His school grew rapidly, and when he left, ten years later, his numbers had increased to eighty-three. Sixty-three lived in the house with him, and for the remaining twenty he rented a villa near St. George's Church, which he put under the control of Rev. Mr. Brunner, one of his professors. Among Mr. Voelker's scholars were many who subsequently held high positions. The Rathbones of Liverpool claim St. Domingo House as their Alma Mater. (Canon Cosgrave's paper was written in 1880.—Ed.). The sons of the well-known engineer, Fairbairn, Mr. Fielden M.P. for North Lancashire (1880), the Hon. Mr. Stansfield, a member of Mr. Gladstone's first Ministry, Mitchell Henry, M.P. for Galway—all received their training here. Sir—Heywood, banker, of Manchester, Messrs. Ridyard, Lightbody, Cator, Woodhouse, Noakes, merchants of Liverpool, had sons under Mr. Voelker's care. Scotland, Ireland, North and South America, and Sweden were all represented in St. Domingo House. Owing to the delicate health of his wife, at the expiration of his lease in 1839, Mr. Voelker returned to Switzerland. (He was still alive in 1880—the date of this paper, and Canon Cosgrave learned the foregoing facts from himself.—Ed.).

We now come to what we may call the Catholic period of the History of St. Domingo House.

In the year 1841 Captain Heatley of Brindle Lodge, a partner with the father of Sir Robert Peel in a cotton mill at Bury, died. He had always taken a lively interest in the spread of religion in his native county. At his death he left a large sum of money for the carrying out of such charitable projects as he had during his life conceived. Under a document that was not legal, but still binding on the honour and conscience of his trustee, he appointed Very Rev. Dr. Youens to execute his benevolent intentions. It is to the memory of the latter

that the handsome cross in the grounds to the West of the College was erected. These were the foundation of a college for the education of Catholic youth in Liverpool and the establishment of a home for young women of good character, who might be unable to provide themselves with a living suitable to the position in which they had been born. For this purpose two properties were bought, with the sanction and approval of the Right Rev. Dr. Brown, the Bishop of the district, the Rev. Richard Thompson, the Vicar-General the Rev. Thomas Sherbourne and other clergy of the diocese. The property called St. Domingo House, now unoccupied for two years was bought.

A law-suit between Captain Heatley's executors and his heirs-at-law prevented the work being carried out as it had been intended. The death of the Vicar-General also added to the delay. He was succeeded by Very Rev. Dr. Youens, who governed the diocese in the absence of Dr. Brown, and his first care was to carry out the instructions with which he had been charged in the document referred to. He was urged to do this by the Rev. George Gibson, at that time senior priest of St. Patrick's, the Rev. Robert Gillow and the Rev. John Walmesley, of Copperas Hill, who gave all the moral help they could to this work. Owing to the lawsuit already mentioned a compromise was made. So large a sum of money was absorbed that there was not at the time sufficient to pay for the Convent and the College. Dr. Youens, however, chose to pay for the Convent out of the funds which he had received from Captain Heatley. The cost of St. Domingo House was £4,760: towards this payment, he borrowed £4,000 from the late Mr. Gillow, of Leighton. The balance, £760, was generously given by Mr. Edward Challoner of Oak Hill, the first benefactor of the College. He also presented a statue of St. Edward, carved in solid mahogany. (This statue is now at Upholland.) The interest upon the

loan from Mr. Gillow was always paid by the College, so that, notwithstanding the charitable intentions of Mr. Heatley, none of his money was ever spent upon it.

The name of Thomas Lupton, a man foremost in his day in every good work, should hold a high place in the roll of St. Edward's benefactors. At the request of Dr. Youens, he put into tenable repair the house, which through long disuse and neglect had become very much shattered. For eight months he superintended the work personally, from early morning till 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening, bringing in his pocket his meagre mid-day meal of bread and cheese. The repairs having been completed, the Rev. John Fisher, who had been on the mission at Dukinfield, and the Rev. Alexander Goss, who had just completed his studies at Rome, were named by the Bishop to be the first Superiors of the new College. It was placed under the protection of St. Edward, King and Confessor, with the sanction and approval of Pope Gregory XVI. On January 16th, 1842, it was formally opened. Its commencement was but humble and modest. The old dining-room was turned into a study-hall, the drawing-room into a library, the servants' hall into a refectory; two large rooms were converted into a chapel, and a dormitory was formed from the bedrooms. The winter term was not likely to be favourable for gathering together a number of pupils, as midsummer is the time generally chosen by parents for sending their children to College. Still, during the half-year a fair number of boys mustered within its walls, and after midsummer that number was greatly increased. It was not intended by the founders that, for some time at least, more than fifty boys should be received, and before the completion of the first two years, they numbered forty-five.

The first student was Thomas Pattison, from Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the first student of St. Edward's to be ordained priest was the

Rev. J. Ray, who for the last twelve years of his life (1866-1878) was in charge of the mission of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

Dr. Fisher and Dr. Goss, for the first year of the existence of the College, were alone in conducting the studies, except for a visit of two hours in the afternoon from a non-resident master who gave lessons in writing and arithmetic.

* * * *

In the year 1874 the Superiors, knowing that the accommodation of the College was too scant for the growing wants of the diocese, determined to erect a new wing. Monsignor Fisher, the President, set about the work with all his native vigour and energy of character. Wishful to learn from the experience of others, he visited a great number of the newest and most important educational establishments in the land. The new wing—consisting of dormitories, study room, class rooms, refectory, libraries, and private chapel—is the result of his investigations. Of the dormitories, spacious and comfortable, Cardinal Manning said they were "the sensible work of a sensible man."

In concluding his paper, Canon Cosgrave addressed the following exhortation to his hearers. We think it well to give it verbatim as it might equally well be addressed to their successors, those who now occupy the halls of St. Edward's, the heirs of its great traditions:—

"I have tried to record, as simply as I could, the history of the past. What is to be its history in the future? He who in years to come will take up the narrative where I have broken it off—what will he have to record? It is in your hands. Remember, we live in an age of progress. We are foot to foot and neck to neck with those who would believe nought good nor kindly of us. It is for you to show, by the high places you gain in the honours list of the public examinations we enter, the love you bear to your Alma Mater. By your energy, by your earnest and steadfast

labour, make St. Edward's College be respected as the home of learning, but more than all, by your genuine virtue and manly, fearless devotion to duty, make it be esteemed the nursery of humble, pious, sterling men. Surely no one here will be a signpost of scorn pointing to his Alma Mater."

* * * *

In the year 1919, the development of the Catholic Institute in Hope Street made it necessary to provide additional accommodation for the large number of boys. The ecclesiastical students at St. Edward's College were transferred to St. Joseph's, Upholland, and the College passed into the hands of the Christian Brothers, with the approval and active interest of the late Archbishop, Most Rev. Dr. Whiteside, *clarum ac venerabile nomen*. On January 12th, 1920, the Senior boys were transferred from Hope Street, the Brothers in charge going each day to St. Edward's from the C.I. Owing to the confusion and disturbance of the removal, many inconveniences had to be endured by those who were the pioneers of the new school, but after a few months, things were got into shape. At Easter six of the Brothers came to reside in St. Edward's and on May 13th, Ascension Thursday, the whole Community took up residence in the College, the Rev. Br. W. D. Forde being the first Superior in the new regime. The Archbishop had a short time before left St. Edward's and gone to reside at his new home in Belvidere Road, Princes Park. After the Summer holidays, 1920, the whole of the School—700 boys—was transferred from Hope Street and thus began a new phase in the History of St. Edward's College.

Considerable alterations had to be made in order to make the College suitable for its new purpose as a day Secondary School. The Chapel was converted into an Assembly Hall, the two side chapels in the wings being used as class-rooms. Later on, when alterations

had been completed, the whole College was consecrated to the Sacred Heart and a large, beautifully carved and decorated Statue was erected in the Assembly Hall—the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as King and Lord of the School, claiming the loyalty and devotion of its students. The Organ was removed to the place where the Altar formerly stood, and the latter, a beautiful marble structure in chaste Classic style, was transferred to the Brothers' Oratory in the House. Refectory, study-hall and dormitories were divided up into class-rooms by movable glass partitions and the buildings formerly used as laundry, furnace-room, etc., were completely altered inside and now serve as Manual Instruction Room and Chemical laboratories. The heating system was extended through the whole building—House and Schools, and electric light was installed throughout. The lower entrance hall and adjoining rooms were fitted up as luncheon-rooms for the boys. A play-

ground was laid out and later asphalted. A new covered stairs of Yorkshire stone was built (1923) leading from the top class-rooms, down by the South wing of the Assembly Hall, into the yard between the Gymnasium and the main building. A cricket pitch was specially laid and the playing-field in front levelled up where it had sloped towards the Lodge and Observatory. All this, together with various minor alterations, involved, it is needless to say, a very large expenditure, especially as at the time they were carried out—just after the war—the cost of material and labour was at its highest.

It is hoped that the St. Edward's of the future may not be unworthy of its splendid past and that its students—to quote again the late Canon Cosgrave—may make St. Edward's College respected as a home of learning, and esteemed as the nursery of virtuous, sterling men. Floreat Semper!