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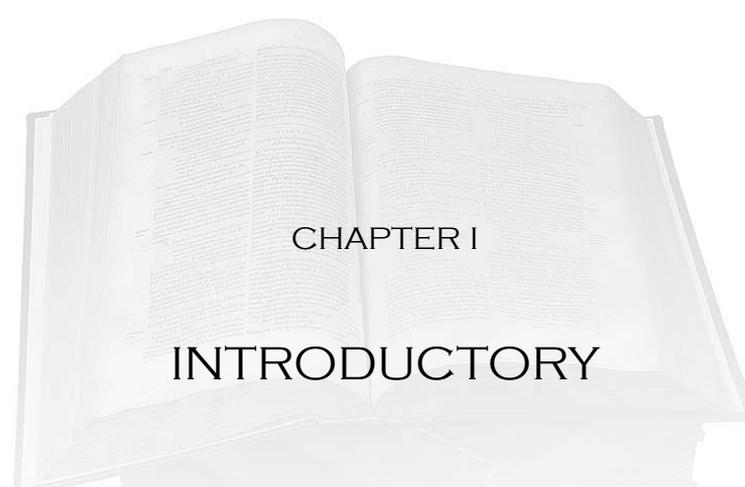
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## CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTORY

**J**ames Ussher, the greatest luminary, as he has been justly called, of the Church of Ireland was born in the year 1581. It was a memorable time. Queen Elizabeth was struggling hard to make her seat secure on the throne of England. The Roman Catholic reaction of Queen Mary's time had not yet died out. Jesuit Fathers Campion and Parsons, formerly Fellows of Oxford Colleges, were still preaching in Smithfield. Francis Drake had just returned from his wonderful voyage to the remotest parts of the earth, and was fettering his Sovereign on board the little craft in which he had accomplished his daring enterprise. Bacon was even then cultivating those seeds of thought that were destined in due course to revolutionise alike the principles of science and theology.

Shakespeare was nourishing his mighty intellect, and dreaming immortal dramas.<sup>1</sup> Abroad, Spain was contemplating the proud design of the Armada, and collecting together her warships. In Ireland, things were in a very troubled condition. The country, never thoroughly conquered, was chafing under English

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1. "Venus and Adonis" was entered upon the Stationers' Register in 1592, and "King Richard II" in 1597, but they had been probably written some time previously. — See Dowden's *Shakespeare*, p. 33.



rule, and premeditating another uprising. Not far from the town of Fermoy, within the shelter of Kilcolman Castle, Spenser, “always idle among the cool shades of the green alders by the Mulla’s shore,” as it seemed to his friend Walter Raleigh, would shortly be completing the first three books of the *Faerie Queen*.<sup>2</sup>

It was in the January of this year that there was born in the city of Dublin a child who was to bear the honoured name of James Ussher, and become, in after years, one of the greatest scholars of his day in the Christian Church.<sup>3</sup>

In the year of grace 1581, the city of Dublin presented an aspect very different from that it bears now. Around the castle, then, as now, the symbol and the centre of English authority, there gathered, with few exceptions, blocks of ill-built and irregular houses, most of them wood, and many of them roofed with thatch,<sup>4</sup> which stretched themselves down the hill on which the castle stands, to the Liberties and Cathedral Church of St. Patrick. On the other side of the castle, the River Liffey extended its yellow waters almost to the foot of the sister Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, the survivor and memorial of the Danish conquest, and beneath whose walls the small vessels, which then did service as merchant ships between the two countries, deposited their freightage. The river was noted from earliest times for the turbid colour of its waters, which gave its name to the city of *Duibh linn-nigra therma*, or the Blackpool.<sup>5</sup> A small harbour existed at the mouth of the Poddle River, and was protected by the city ditch of that time.

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2. A part of the poem was certainly written previous to 1584. See Hale’s *Life of Spenser*, p. xxxii–iv. in Globe edition of the *Works of Spenser*.
  3. “An eminent New Year’s gift to the benefit of the whole Church of God.” — Bernard’s *Life of Ussher*, p. 19. Called James, after his grandfather, James Stanihurst.
  4. See preface to Gilbert’s *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, iii, p. xxix.
  5. Halliday’s *Scandinavian Kingdom of Dublin*, p. 23.



About the centre of the city, as it then stood, in the parish of St. Nicholas, James Ussher was born on the 4th of January, 1581. The house, No. 57 High Street, now a grocer's shop, is still pointed out as occupying the site of the original house where he was born.<sup>6</sup> It was at the time an important part of the city of Dublin. Here the first books published in Ireland were issued from the press, and here the first newspapers were started. The booksellers of that day flourished in St. Nicholas Street, Castle Street, and, Skinner's Row. In St. Nicholas Street was printed one of the first volumes of which there is any record in Irish history, being a copy of the *Articles of Religion* with the following title: "A brefe declaration of certain principall Articles of Religion set out by order and authoritie, as well of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Sidney, Knight of the most noble Order, Lord President of the Council in the Principalities of Wales and Marches of the same, and General Deputie of this realm of Ireland, as by Tharchebyshops and Byshopes and other of Her Majesties High Commissioners for causes ecclesiastical in the same realme,

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6. This is the only house in High Street that stands in the parish of St. Nicholas. It faces the present Synod Hall of the Church of Ireland. Having been born here, Ussher (who was one of nine children, having had two brothers and six sisters) was probably baptised in St. Nicholas Church, but there is no record of the event, and the church has long since disappeared. The neighbourhood was then a fashionable one. Stanihurst, in his description of Dublin in 1577, says of the adjoining parish of St. Audoen: "The parish of this church is accounted the best in Dublin for that the greater number of the aldermen and the worships of the citie are demurrant within that parish." — *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, ii, p. 544–5. Some of the houses were fine enough to receive the Lord-Deputy of the day. Thus we read how Sir William Russell removed on the night of March 1st, 1597, from the castle to lie at Mr. Ussher's house at the Bridgefoot (so called when there was only one bridge in Dublin) to make room for the new deputy, Lord Burg, "against he should receive the sword." — Carew MSS. of above date. The Liffey then flowed round Ussher's house at the Bridgefoot. The gardens extended along the banks of the river, where Lord Moira's house (now the Mendicity Institution) afterwards stood. The banks were then planted with trees.



imprynted at Dublin by Humfrey Powel the 20th of January, 1566.”<sup>7</sup>

Here also the first Irish newspaper saw the light under the title of *Pue's Occurrences*.

The first mention of the family of Ussher occurs in the reign of Henry the First, when we find one Richard le Ussher possessed of a house in Winchester. A Robert Ussher is witness to a deed in the reign of Edward the Third. We find a family of the name settled in Yorkshire in 1377. The descendants of Primate Henry Ussher quartered the arms of the Yorkshire Usshers, and many of their Christian names correspond with

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7. See Arber's *Stat. Reg.* under above date. The only copy of these articles believed to be in existence may be found in the library of Trinity College (Class DD. gg. 65). The first volume printed in Dublin appeared in 1551 from the press of the above Humfrey Powel. It was Edward VI's first Prayer-book. It has the following title-page: "The Boke of Common Praier and the administracion of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church after the use of the church of England, Anno Dom. M.C.L.I." This volume, which was a folio of some 140 pages, was printed in black letter and in a superior style. What is believed to be a solitary copy may be seen in Trinity College, Dublin (Class BB., A. 3). Humfrey Powel, who lived in London in 1548, above the Holborn Conduit, migrated to Ireland in 1551, and was the first to introduce the art of printing into that country. His name appears in the Charter, 1556, as a Fellow of the Stationers' Company. — See Arber's *Register, the Irish Builder* for 1887, Ball's *History of the Reformed Church of Ireland*, p. 46 (note), Killen's *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 1, p. 377 (note). The name was a common one then among the printers. Arber records no less than eighteen. The persistence of names in the printer's art is remarkable. Thus we have almost from the beginning, Pickerings, Rivingtons, Newberys, &c. The first book printed in the Irish language was an Alphabet and Catechism translated from Latin and English "with the privilege of the great Queen," who gave the type for the purpose, and published by John Ussher (Alderman), in his house at Bridgefoot, Dublin, June 20, 1571. The first Irish version of the New Testament was printed by Sir William Ussher "at the Town of the Ford of the Hurdles" (Ath-Cliath, an old name for Dublin), by John Francke, 1602, from the text of William O'Donnell, afterwards Archbishop of Tuam.



those of the Yorkshire clan. The name is also to be found in Scotland, and there is a tradition that James Ussher's family and that of the Scotch Usshers sprang from a common stock. John Ussher of Topfield, near Melrose, was a friend of Sir Walter Scott.<sup>8</sup> The name appears in Ireland as early as 1281 under the form of Usher, and in 1288 as De Usher.

The Ussher family appears to have been an influential clan in the city of Dublin at the opening of the sixteenth century, where they held a large amount of property. In 1517, Christopher Ussher had the lease of a house in "the Fishe Street in Dublin," and Nos. 3, 16, and 17, in the same street, were in the possession of the family at the close of the century. Ussher himself lived in No. 17 in 1593 when he became a Scholar of Trinity College. In later years, when he had attained to the Primacy, his country house in Dublin stood outside the city boundaries on Hoggan Green, opposite to Trinity College, and probably on the site of the present Bank of Ireland. In the Dublin Assembly Rolls, Easter 1632, there is this entry: "A lease made to Archbishop James Usher, Primate, of a plot of ground, walled about facing his house on Hoggan green, for 99 years, containing the ditch west end 10 yards, and from north to south 30 yards, at 5s. sterling." Ussher's name is still largely preserved in the nomenclature of the streets of Dublin. Thus we have "Usher's Quay," "Usher's Island," "Usher's Street," "Usher's Court," "Usher's Lane," &c. The family must have been a prominent and influential one in the olden time to extend its name after this fashion.

It is said that the founder of the Irish family of Ussher originally bore the name of Neville, but that coming over to Ireland with King John in 1185 in the capacity of an usher in the Royal

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8. Ball Wright's *Memoirs of the Ussher Families*, p. 3.

9. The house on Hoggan Green had belonged to Lord Caulfield. Ussher desired to build and reside there, "in regard to the affection he bore to the city, having been born and bred there." — Gilbert's *Cal. Anc. Records*, iii, p. 260.



household, he changed his name for that of his office.<sup>10</sup> James Ussher's father was one of the six Clerks in Chancery, while his mother, Margaret, was the daughter of James Stanihurst, Recorder of the City of Dublin and Speaker of the House of Commons for three successive Parliaments. Ussher thus came into the world with all the prestige that belongs to high social position. Stanihurst seems to have been a person fully alive to the importance of changing with the times. He was Speaker in Queen Mary's reign, and afterwards in that of Elizabeth. The probability is that he was always in heart a Roman Catholic.

His brother Richard was a strong Roman Catholic controversialist. It must be said to his credit that Stanihurst was one of the first to move in Parliament the matter of founding a National University for Ireland. James Ussher<sup>11</sup> was essentially a city man, and there is evidence that he took much pride in his native place and was full of admiration for its surroundings. Very early in his life, while he was still a student, he writes a Latin epistle to the learned Camden, who was then accumulating material for his great work on the antiquities of Britain in which he describes the city of Dublin. This is the picture he draws of the city and suburbs as they were known to him at the close of the sixteenth century. He calls it "the city of his birth," and he

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10. "The coat-of-arms which was in use by the father and uncles of the great Primate-viz., a chevron ermine between three batons or, on a ground azure, and the crest, a mailed hand and arm holding a baton are testimony of the tradition being founded on some such fact." — Ball Wright's *Ussher Memoirs*, p. vii. The Ussher arms may still be seen on the front of a house formerly occupied by Adam Ussher. No. 3 Lord Edward Street, and formerly No. 3 Fishamble Street.— *Irish Builder*, 1888, p. 23.

11. A controversy has always gone on as to the correct way of spelling Ussher's name, whether with one or two s's. In Ware's work, the double s uniformly found. It is also found in the MSS of the day and it is printed so in the title of his *Annals*, London, 1658. Elrington uniformly observes this spelling. Some branches of the family, however, use only one s. Archbishop Henry Ussher in his will spelt his name "Uscher." We have the Irish spelling "Uiser," in Arber's *Stat. Reg.* under June 1571.



describes is as “full of people (as well he might, considering how it was hemmed in at the time by its surrounding walls, rendering it difficult enough to accommodate the increasing population); it is most beautifully situated; it’s river and the neighbouring sea are full of fish” (the “Dublin Bay herring” was even then prized as a well-known luxury).

It is also noted for its commercial enterprise. The city itself is enclosed by green fields — all outside the end of Dame Street, Nicholas Street, and Castle Street, being then open country to the south and east, and beyond were oak groves and hazel woods with preserves of game for the amusement of the citizens. “I may say,” he writes, “that the city, enjoys a particularly beautiful and salubrious situation. The mountains rise on the south, and a level country stretches away to the west. On the east is the sea, and looking to the north the River Liffey is seen pursuing its way seawards, where it affords a fine harbour for ships.” He also speaks of the “Keys,” by which the course of the river is confined. The city is surrounded by strong walls built of stone and with six gates leading into the open country.<sup>12</sup> Stanihurst, in his description of Dublin in 1577, enumerates eight gates as follows: “Whitefriers, Saint Kevin his Gate, Hogs Gate, Dammes Gate, Poule Gate, Newgate, Wintavern Gate, Saint Audoen his Gate, hard by the Church, going down by the Cooke Street.”<sup>13</sup>

In his *Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, composed later in life, Ussher dilates with evident pleasure of the two Cathedrals. He writes with the eye of an antiquarian and a Churchman. “Dublin,” he says, “has two Cathedral Churches — one without walls of the city known by the name of St. Patrick’s (it will be observed that the St. Patrick’s Cathedral was then outside of the city), the other in the midst of the city, and dedicated to the Holy Trinity, within the bounds whereof the Archbishop of Dublin was hereto seated,

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12. For much of his description Ussher evidently drew on Jocelin’s *Life of St. Patrick*. — See Camden’s *Ireland*, p. 92.

13. See *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, ii, appendix 1.



we learn from Giraldus. Within the limits of the Church of St. Patrick, not far from the belfry, we see the well (lately enclosed) at which the new converts of Dublin were baptised by St. Patrick, near the city to the south. The other Cathedral, consecrated to the name of the Holy Trinity, commonly called Christ Church. The arches or vaults were built by the Danes before the coming of St. Patrick, and at that time Christ Church was not founded nor built as it stands now. So it was that St. Patrick celebrated Mass in one of the vaults which is called to this day 'St. Patrick's Vault.' " Elsewhere, we find Ussher again enlarging on the features of the two Cathedrals, whose noble proportions seemed to have filled him with pride.

St. Patrick's is a spacious church, noted for its carved work, its tessellated pavement, and its fine tower. He also speaks of the wealth of silver and gold that had been lavished on Christ Church Cathedral.<sup>14</sup>

We have already alluded to the ancestry of the Ussher family. We may observe that Archbishop Ussher, always interested in archeological and historical questions, drew up a pedigree of his family, dating from Arlandus Ussher, who was Bailiff of Dublin in 1460, and afterwards Mayor, and who was one of the merchant princes of his day. Sir William Betham enlarged on this genealogical table, and traces the Ussher family onwards, showing the connection with the noble families of Wellesley, Mornington, Wellington, Cowley, and Kildare. Among other noted families connected with the Usshers are the Carberys, Plunketts of Dunsany, Newcomens, Warings, Osbornes, Colleys, &c.

In addition to the great James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, there were his uncle and predecessor in the see, Henry

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14. Ussher's *Works*, xv, p. 10–14. Camden seems to have availed himself of Ussher's knowledge in his *Ireland*, p. 93. In 1607, Camden himself was in Dublin collecting materials for his *Britannia*. It would be an interesting and suggestive study to trace the fate of the silver and gold ornamentations and plate of our cathedral churches. The old Norman Cathedral of Waterford, for example, was rich in such.



Ussher, Luke Ussher, afterwards Archdeacon of Armagh, Robert Ussher, Bishop of Kildare, and other noted ecclesiastics. In secular life there were also distinguished members of the family filling the offices of Mayor, Sheriff, and Alderman of the city of Dublin.<sup>15</sup> And in other walks of life this family likewise distinguished itself in later times. For example, we have the Rev. Henry Ussher, D.D., and Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, first Astronomer Royal of Ireland, who died in 1790; and Sir Thomas Ussher, who died in 1862, was Rear-Admiral of the Blue. John Ussher, another of the family, filled the honourable position of Maser in Chancery in 1730. The connection of the Welsey or Wellesley family with the Usshers will be of interest. Mary Ussher, the sixth child of Sir William Ussher, of Bridgefoot, County Dublin, Knt., married Henry Cowley, or Colley, of Dangan, County of Westmeath, and Castlecarbery, County of Kildare, in 1674. Richard Colley, their son, took the name and property of his cousin, Garret Wesley, and was created Lord Mornington. He married the eldest daughter of Dr. Sale, Registrar of the Diocese of Dublin, and their eldest son was created Earl of Mornington.

He married the eldest daughter of Lord Dungannon, and their eldest son was Richard, afterwards Marquis Wellesley, their second son William, afterwards Earl of Mornington, and their third son, Arthur Wellesley, afterwards the famous Duke of Wellington.

Coming back now to James Ussher, an interesting question suggests itself as to where this great scholar and divine, who shed such lustre on his native land, and whose learning acquired a fame for itself far beyond our insular precincts, obtained his early education. Ten years before Ussher was born a statute of Queen Elizabeth required a free school to be established in every diocese in Ireland. The masters were to be "Englishmen, or of good birth." But independently of that statute, the Dublin Corporation had

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15. See Gilbert's *Calendars*, Vols. ii and iii, Passim.



established a free school for the sons of its citizens, and in that school it would appear that Ussher received his earliest education.<sup>16</sup> We find in the records of the City of Dublin, recently published under the learned editorship of Mr. J.T. Gilbert, an order for payment of the salary of one James Fullerton for the year 1588 of £20, due to him for fee and diet.<sup>17</sup>

The entry runs as follows: "Order: James Fullerton, schoolmaster, to have twenty pounds sterling for teaching the children of the citizens for this year. He shall use all diligence, take nothing from the children, and have liberty to teach scholars from the country for so much as he may reasonably agree upon with them." James Fullerton and James Hamilton the latter afterwards ennobled by James I. As Viscount Clancarty, an ancestor of the present Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, had come over from Scotland to take charge of the school.<sup>18</sup> There Ussher was entered as a pupil when eight years of age. Among later pupils in the same were Theophilus Tate, D.D., F.T.C.D., John Churchill, afterwards the great Duke of Marlborough, and Bishop Foy, F.T.C.D., who afterwards founded a scholastic establishment in the city of Waterford.<sup>19</sup> Can we identify at the present time the site of this interesting academy?

The present Bishop of Cashel, Dr. Day, in a lecture on Ussher, mentions a tradition that the school in a room over the

16. The first schoolmaster was David Duke, who had a salary of £10 a year, and 12d. (Irish) per quarter for every child of a free citizen. — *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, ii, p. 181.

17. Ditto, p. 245.

18. James Hamilton, "one of the greatest scholars and hopeful wits of his time," was the eldest son of the Rev. Hans Hamilton, Vicar of Dunlop, Ayrshire. In his estate at Killelagh he built "ane very strong castle, the lyke is not in the North." — See *Dictionary of National Biography*, xxiv, p. 178.

19. The Rev. W.G. Carroll, in articles on the school in the *Freeman's Journal* (1875 and 1877), preserved in the MS. Room, College, Dublin. See also Gilbert's *Calendar of Ancient Records of Dublin*, ii, p. 245, 249.



south aisle of St. Patrick's Cathedral, possibly the present robing room;<sup>20</sup> but this tradition appears to have no proper support. There seems to be little reason for doubting that the school stood in a locality at the rear of the present Synod House in Christ Church Place, and gave its name to the narrow street in which it was situated. "School House Lane" is marked in the old maps of the City of Dublin. It was a narrow passage that ran down to the river from the High Street at the back of St. Owen's, now St. Audoen's Church, to the west of the site now occupied by the Synod House, and where formerly stood the Old Church of St. Michael's, on St. Michael's Hill.<sup>21</sup>

In 1859, Ussher took his place here as a pupil under the tutelage of the above-mentioned Scotchmen, who were graduates of the University of Glasgow, and had been pupils of the celebrated Andrew Melville, Principal of Glasgow, and afterwards of St. Andrew's University. When the newly founded University of Dublin was opened for students, a few years later, these two men were the first elected Fellows of the new College. Scarcely a trace of this ancient schoolhouse now remains, as it was only the investigations of the late Rev. W.G. Carrol in the

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20. See *Archbishop Ussher: His Life and Character*, by Rev. Maurice L. Day, *Lectures to Young Men*. 1861, p. 293-4. Canon Leeper was also under the impression that Ussher received his education in St. Patrick's Free School. — See his *Hist. Handbook to the Cathedral*, p. 71.

21. "The schoolhouse, of which some walls still remain, stood on the eastern side of School House Lane, which is extremely narrow, and runs north from High Street to Cook Street. The schoolhouse only fell about 1846. The great and learned Archbishop Ussher had been educated at this school." — *The Life of the Duke of Marlborough*, by Viscount Wolsley, I, p. 29. Lord Wolsley, it may be observed, is also allied by marriage of an ancestor with the Archbishop's branch of the Ussher family. — See Ball Wright's *Memoirs*, p. 153. A daughter of Adam Ussher, second son of Sir William Ussher, married Daniel Molyneux, Ulster King of Arms, in 1597. Their third son was ancestor of Sir Capel Molyneux, whose granddaughter married Sir Richard Wolsley, ancestor of the present Viscount.



Dublin Assembly Rolls that a few years ago unearthed the fact of its existence and site.<sup>22</sup>

Ussher's daily walk to and from his studies was not a very prolonged one. The boy had only to leave his father's home, and quietly stroll down, his satchel on his back, between rows of cage work houses,<sup>23</sup> from the High Street, to School House Lane, on the opposite side of which, in a recess on the right-hand side stood the school buildings.

It is an interesting reflection that if in the earliest ages of the Christian faith Ireland gave to Scotland such teachers as St. Columba, Scotland, in her turn, provided at the close of the sixteenth century the teachers who were in a large measure to direct the studies and fashion the mind of a youth who in later days was to revive the ancient fame of his country for learned and pious studies, and earn for himself, even at the hands of one of his rival religionists, the title of *acatholicorum doctissimus*. When Trinity College was opened in 1593, James Ussher was elected one of its first Scholars. He afterwards became a Fellow, was the first Professor of Divinity, collected the first books for the Library, and was subsequently raised to the Bishopric of Meath and, finally, to the Primacy. It is the story of the life of this great Irish Churchman and scholar we propose to tell in the following pages.

In order to fix Ussher's place in that wonderful galaxy of writers and literary workmen that were then making the age famous, we may observe that Bodley, the founder of the library,

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22. "Here it was," says, Bishop Reeves, "that the building stood where, in the lad James Ussher, the light was kindled which shed such lustre on his native land as to draw the eyes of learned Europe towards it, and for a generation, restore to Ireland her ancient pre-eminence in sacred literature." — Bishop Reeves' Preface to Carroll's *Succession of Clergy in St. Bride's Parish*, p. 1.

23. For an account of the old Irish half-timbered houses, see article by Dr. Frazer in *Journal R.S.A.*, i, p. 367–369; Harris's *History of Dublin*, p. 76–81; Petrie's article in *Dublin Penny Journal*, I, p. 268–270.



was thirty-seven in the year Ussher was born; Camden, the learned antiquarian and one of his earliest correspondents, thirty; Spenser and Raleigh, twenty-nine; Hooker, twenty-eight; Bacon, twenty; Shakespeare, seventeen; Andrewes and Cotton, eleven; Laud, eight; Jonson and Hall, seven; Selden, three.

The first three books of Spenser's *Faerie Queen* were published when Ussher was fifteen, and Bacon's *Essays*, the first part of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, and Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* in the following year. It does not appear that Ussher ever met Hooker, but he was evidently well acquainted with his great work; nor does he mention Shakespeare in any of his correspondence. Ussher may be regarded as the sole Irish representative of that golden era of literary energy that characterized the close of Elizabeth's reign and extended to those of her two successors.<sup>24</sup> The times in Ireland were against his producing any great work of constructive theology; he was too taken up with the everlasting Roman controversy, but his *Religion of the Ancient Irish* will perpetuate his name as a student in ecclesiastical history, and his labours on the *Ignatian Epistles* establish his position in the first rank critical scholars.



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24. See, for a literary estimate of Ussher, *Carte's Ormonde*, I, p. 77.

