

**MEMOIR OF THE
GREAT ORIGINAL,
ZOZIMUS**

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Memoir of the Great Original, Zozimus by Gulielmus Dubliensis Humoriensis

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GULIELMUS DUBLINIENSIS HUMORIENSIS

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MEMOIR
OF
THE GREAT ORIGINAL
Z O Z I M U S
(MICHAEL MORAN)

THE CELEBRATED DUBLIN STREET RHYMER AND RECITER

With his Songs, Sayings, and Recitations

BY
GULIELMUS DUBLINIENSIS HUMORIENSIS

DUBLIN
M'GLASHAN & GILL, 50 UPPER SACKVILLE ST.
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INTRODUCTION.

EVERYBODY believes that the well-told lives of noted men are most useful. Those of what are called 'the higher classes,' whether in the Church, the senate, in the field, or at the bar, create more interest, owing to their education, or the varied scenes through which they pass; but for the mass of the people, the memories of humble men may be more instructive and interesting. And it has also been said that if the life of any individual, however humble his station, was written, it would be found, by those intimate with him, of as much interest to them as the biographies of kings and statesmen, or the records of nations, have been to the world.

It is now exactly a quarter of a century since the unsparing hand of time authorized that last friend of man,—the grave-digger, to sever from a Dublin celebrity all the associations of this wonderful life, by covering over the remains of MICHAEL MORAN, known for very many years as 'ZOZIMUS,' the name of a holy priest and 'abbot, who was a hero in the poem of the subject of this memoir.

Ancient history has furnished us with characters such as we have before us—their fame brightening as the centuries roll; not that we fancy poor ZOZIMUS will inherit the interest of far off posterity, but his presence in our city for so many years was an evidence of the street appreciation of peculiar talents. Homer, the lofty, grand, and beautiful, was in his day a street reciter. Nor are we without warrant that the sweet, flowing strains of Virgil were heard in the public streets also.

Any resident of Dublin, over thirty-five years of age, may recall the memory of a tall, attenuated, blind man, dressed in a heavy, coarse, long-tailed coat, and a very much worn hat, which, with strong shoes, constituted the entire visible costume of Zozimus, save indeed his indispensable talisman, guide, and protector, a stout blackthorn stick, secured to his wrist by a leather thong, and finished by an iron ferrule. His face upturned displayed his sightless eyes; his peculiarly formed mouth, and strongly marked facial muscles, gave decision to his aspect. His voice was so remarkable as to draw the attention of mimics, being deeply guttural, accompanied by a peculiar lisp on certain words. His *side remarks* to the crowd, which were highly secular in their style, created much amusement, as they contrasted remarkably with the sacred character of his recitations, which were of a poetic order, evidently in some cases the production of a muse which condescended to inspire the untaught genius who uttered them. On any week-day evening, about dusk, but on Saturdays especially, he commenced his tour through the principal humble streets of Dublin, making Essex Bridge his grand centre, from thence progressing in slow and measured steps, halting every five or eight minutes to receive the contributions of such 'good Christians' as might be edified by his efforts; or perchance to give those annoying wasps, the jackeen boys, a reminder of his anger with the end of his iron-clad stick. With this short introduction the Author submits the following pages, hoping they will not diminish the name or fame of the 'Liberty Warbler.'

DUBLIN, *St. Patrick's Day*, 1871.

MEMOIR OF ZOZIMUS.

IN a sequestered part of our city, utterly unknown to moderns, called Faddle Alley, off Black Pitts, in the Liberties of Dublin, an event of some importance occurred about seventy-seven years ago; for the birth of a child is under all circumstances interesting, but that of a public character still more so—particularly when he is to be ‘renowned in story,’ or ‘put in print.’

Michael Moran, *alias* ‘Zozimus,’ was born in the aforesaid locality, about the year 1794, of humble parents; but although born with sight, from a severe attack of illness he became blind, when only a fortnight old. Notwithstanding this great privation, and the poverty of his parents, who were subject to much want and affliction, yet, by the exercise of a very extraordinary memory, tact, and power of voice, he was enabled to support himself and family; he soon became a famous street rhymers, and reciter of poems, ballads, and essays, read to him, which he ‘learned by heart,’ and delivered with an energy peculiarly his own. His dress consisted of a long, coarse, dark description of frieze coat, with a cape, the lower parts of the skirts having an appearance of being mitred or scalloped; an old soft greasy brown beaver hat, corduroy trowsers, and strong Francis Street brogues. He always carried a long blackthorn stick with a heavy iron ferrule at the end, secured to his wrist by a leather thong or strap, and his hands always resting on the top, as he appears in the photographs just published.¹ The

¹ A truthful and life-like likeness of this extraordinary man, photographed by Millard and Robinson, from an original portrait painted by Mr. Horatio Nelson, formerly of Grafton Street, can be had of the publisher; price 6d., 1s. 6d., and 2s. 6d. each.

illustrative title-page of the excellent and humorous periodical *Zozimus*, erroneously represents our hero in an untruthful costume. He did not appear in a modern surtout, whose flying skirts revealed the old-fashioned knee-breeches and grey hose. Nor had he the wallet so prominently suspended from his neck. The dog is also an addition, for he knew the city too well to require the aid of what, under other circumstances, is a most valuable assistance to the blind.

From our earliest recollections of Zozimus (in 1822) he had obtained laudable notoriety as the chief of itinerant reciters from the Liberty and elsewhere, whose names are now nearly forgotten; a few of whom we will immortalize by honorable parenthetical mention:—

John M'Bride, the hedge poet, who like 'the Hedge Schoolmaster,' of old, as Goldsmith says:—

'For e'en though vanquished, he could argue still;'

and could, in the language of Shakspeare,

'A round unvarnished tale deliver.
Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.'

J. M. Brady, son of a tanner in Winetavern Street, of a higher class; who wrote good lines, on the great Dr. Doyle, and several humorous songs on 'The Heroes of Burgh Quay, under King Dan.'

Richard Madden was a weaver in the liberty, and a poet,

'Of many rhyming powers;
Even during working hours,
His brain and shuttle worked in time,
And by the yard he'd spin his rhyme.'

He was the author of the real Irish Hudibrastic poem called 'Farnham Hall,' in which he gave the detailed account of the rotten converts there,

'By stirabout, buttermilk and bacon.'

Then we had John Martin from Meath, who came up to enlighten 'the gents of Dub,' as Judy of Roundwood used to call them.