

**A MEMOIR OF THE
REV. JOHN
LINGARD, D.D.**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649747627

A memoir of the Rev. John Lingard, D.D. by M. A. Tierney

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY THE
REV. M. A. TIERNEY, F.R.S. F.S.A.

CANON OF ST. GEORGE'S, SOUTHWARE.



LONDON:
CHARLES DOLMAN, 61, NEW BOND STREET,
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A MEMOIR
OF
THE REV. DR. LINGARD.

It has been frequently, and not unnaturally, remarked, that the history of an author's life is little more than the history of his works. Withdrawn from the world, and communing with his own mind in the retirement of his study, he neither shares in the excitement, nor mingles in the throng, of passing events. The field of action is not his sphere: the labours of ambition are not his delight. He has neither deep intrigue, nor brilliant exploit, nor daring adventure, to offer to the admiration of the world. His life flows on, a calm, quiet, gentle stream, unmarked, save by the murmur of its waters and the freshness that appears upon its banks.

The subject of the present memoir is not an exception to the general rule. Though living during a period of more than ordinary religious and political excitement, he took no ostensible part in the turmoil and contention that surrounded him: though consulted on every matter of importance in the Church of which he was so distinguished a member, his name was seldom heard in connection with the events of the day. Neither honours nor employments could withdraw him from the retirement of his study; nor could the offer of the highest dignities induce him to abandon the seclusion to which he had devoted his life.

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JOHN LINGARD was descended from a family, which, though comparatively in humble circumstances, had been immemorially established at Claxby, a sequestered village at the foot of the North Wolds, in Lincolnshire.* His father followed the trade of a carpenter: his mother was the daughter of a respectable farmer named Rennell, who, during the times of persecution, had more than once been subjected to fine and imprisonment for his faith.† They were neighbours' children. In their infancy, they had played together in the same village: in their youth, they had stolen to the same altar, and listened to the precepts of the same instructor.‡ But time, and accident, and the pursuits of life had separated them. The young man had sought improvement in the metropolis: the maiden, in the seclusion of Claxby or its vicinity, had grown into womanhood, and was settling down to the duties and occupations of her sphere of life. It was at this moment that the storm of persecution again swept over the peaceful retreats of Lincolnshire. Known as a Recusant, Rennell became one of the first objects of attack to the zeal of the pursuivants. His house was searched, his books and papers were seized, and he himself, hurried away to prison, was at length summoned to answer, at the assizes, for his attachment to the faith of his fathers. But the courage of the confessor was not to be shaken by the terrors of the law. In the face of the court, he at once avowed his religion, and maintained his innocence of any crime. He was a Catholic, but not a traitor. He had injured no one; he had offended no one. If, however, they wished for his life, it was in their power, and they might have it: his faith no man should take from him. A sentence of two years' imprisonment, with a heavy pecuniary fine, was passed

* The family name, with the accent on the first syllable, is still common in the district, which, within the memory of persons yet alive, was a wild expanse covered with furze and *ling*.—A vignette engraving of the cottage and workshop occupied by the historian's father, and still known as "Lingard's Place," at Claxby, will be found at the end of this Memoir.

† He was said by Mrs. Lingard to have been related to the family of Dr. Thomas Rennell, late dean of Winchester.

‡ "We used to go in a cart at night to hear mass; the priest dressed in a round frock to resemble a poor man."—*Mrs. Lingard's own Narrative.*

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upon him; and this, added to his previous misfortunes, completed the ruin of his family.*

His children, driven from their home, were now thrown on the charity of their friends, or the exertions of their own industry. Under these circumstances, Elizabeth, the future mother of the historian, removed to London; and there, after a separation of several years, accidentally met her early friend and playmate, John Lingard. A marriage ensued. In the first instance, the young couple returned to settle in their native village, where a daughter, Jane, was born, in 1769. But circumstances appear to have subsequently suggested a removal. Winchester was selected as the place of their future residence; and, some time in the autumn of 1770, they took up their final abode in that city.

It was in Winchester, on the 5th of February, 1771, that John, the subject of these pages, was born.† Endowed with qualities of unusual excellence, and displaying, even in his childhood, that quickness of intellect, and that piety of demeanor, which seemed to mark him out for the ecclesiastical state, he was, at an early period, recommended to the notice of Bishop Challoner, and by the successor of that prelate, Bishop James Talbot, was, in 1782, sent to the English College at Douay.‡ Here the promise of his earlier years was abundantly realized. With a perception almost intuitive, he mastered every difficulty that presented itself in his studies; and, after a course of humanities, in which the brilliancy of his genius was equalled only by the modesty of his disposition, he entered

* Mrs. Lingard's Narrative.

† Register of Baptisms at St. Peter's, Winchester.

‡ In the postscript of a letter addressed, in 1838, to his gifted friend, Mrs. Thomas Lomax, he says, "September 30. N.B.—This day fifty-six years ago, I entered the walls of the college of Douay." It has been said, that he was sent to Douay by Bishop Milner: in fact, that prelate once condescended, in the pages of the "Orthodox Journal," (vii. 304), to insinuate that he had been educated at his expense. Lingard, however, noticing this passage, thus peremptorily contradicts it: "I was never under any other obligation to him than this. His predecessor (the Rev. J. Nolan) had spoken to the bishop to send me to college: he approved of the choice; but I was never indebted to him for a farthing. . . . He never did anything in the world for me; nor did I want it of him."—*Letter to Kirk, December 18, 1819.*

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the School of Theology, in October, 1792.* But a cloud was gathering over the destinies of France,—and that College, which had so long been “the nurse of martyrs and the bulwark of the faith,” was already destined to destruction. For some time, and especially during the preceding year, the increasing violence of the democratical party had surrounded its inmates with alarms. Twice had the garrison of the town broken loose: the excesses of the soldiery had again and again intruded within the walls of the College: and while blood was flowing in the market-place, and peaceful citizens were being hurried to the gibbet, the bayonet had been pointed at the breasts of the students, and the sword had more than once been bared over the heads of the superiors of the house. It was only in the June of 1790, that our youthful student had himself narrowly escaped destruction. He had wandered into the town, at the moment when the populace, with frantic yells, were dragging a Mons. Derbaix to execution. He was acquainted with the victim. His feelings prompted him to approach the crowd and inquire into the cause of the present proceeding: but his dress attracted the notice of the rabble: a cry, first, of “*La Calotte,*” and then of “*Le Calotin à la lanterne,*” roused him to a sense of his danger: and it was only by the fleetness of his steps that he was able to escape the fury of his pursuers.

These events naturally awakened the anxieties both of Superiors and students. Still, the protection derived to them, as British subjects, from the provisions of the treaty of commerce, and from the presence of an ambassador in Paris, gave them some confidence: nor was it until the murder of the king, and the declaration of war by England, in the early part of 1793, that they became fully sensible of their perilous situation. Within three weeks, however, after the latter of those events, the forcible occupation of the College by an armed body of the rabble warned the more prudent, or the more timid, to pro-

* Diary of Douay College.—In the ordinary course he should have commenced his theological studies in 1791; but an interruption of twelve months, from October in that year, had occurred, during which he was employed in teaching the school of Grammar.

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vide for their safety. The young Lingard saw the danger, and resolved, if possible, to elude it. Many had already sought and found an opportunity to withdraw from the country. Their example encouraged him to make the attempt; and, on the 21st of February, 1793, he left the College, in company with William, afterwards Lord Stourton, and two brothers named Oliveira. Before the orders were issued which removed the remainder of the community to Escherquin, and thence to the citadel of Dourlens, he had safely effected his retreat into England.*

It was not unnatural that the talents which he possessed, combined with the attention which he had been able to bestow on the youthful companions of his flight, should have recommended him to the patronage of Lord Stourton, the father of one of them. By that nobleman he was immediately invited to his residence. At the same time, he received from him the

* A letter written from the college on the day on which Lingard took his departure gives the following account of the state of things at that time. "On the morning of Monday last, the 18th of the present month, a body of national guards was ordered to assemble at the Market Place, without being informed of the design of their expedition. They were no sooner assembled, and the commissaries from the district arrived, but they filed off to the five British establishments, which are settled in the town. We had not been informed of their coming till a few moments before their arrival, when some people, with countenances bespeaking their fears, ran to inform us that the guards were assembled to expel us from our habitations. I leave you to judge of our alarm at this information. They arrived soon after, and summoned the president and some others into the parlour. There an apostate priest and monk of Marchiennes, as a member of the district, read over a warrant which authorized them to impose the national seals upon the goods and papers of the college, as also those of the superiors. On leaving the parlour, the guards dispersed themselves in different galleries; some few excepted, who attended the commissaries in the different places where they laid the seals. The guards in general formed a despicable collection,—they were seemingly the scum of the town: the commissaries were equally unknown to us. The places on which the seals are to be seen are the president's and procurator's chests and papers, the divines' library, the curiosity room, the street-doors of the bakehouse, infirmary, and church. The sacristy was left untouched: the refectory plate *in part* was seen, but nothing taken. We are, indeed, apprehensive that, when they come to erase the seals, an entire inventory of our goods will be taken, after which term they will be said to be no more at our disposal. . . . There is no one amongst us who discovers reason for hope; but I suppose we shall linger on a month or two longer. . . . We have had two or three guards in the house since Monday last, the most ill-looking fellows you ever saw, so that we are obliged to have one or two to sit up to guard them."

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appointment of tutor to the son in whose company he had escaped; and, during the next twelve months, continued to superintend the studies, and direct the pursuits, of his youthful friend. Meanwhile, however, a party of the students, who had contrived to elude the vigilance of the guards at Dourlens, had arrived in England, and had found a temporary refuge in a school kept by the Rev. Arthur Storey, at Tudhoe, a village about six miles from Durham. Lingard had heard of their arrival, and, at the invitation of Bishop Gibson, had agreed to join them. With this view, therefore, he mentioned the circumstance to Lord Stourton, and, having signified his desire to resume his studies, solicited and obtained permission to resign the charge of his pupil. In the course of the summer, 1794, he repaired to Tudhoe, and assumed the direction of the little community, which had there been formed. In September, he removed, with his companions, to Pontop, the missionary residence of the Rev. Thomas Eyre; and, a few weeks later, accompanied the party to its final destination at Crook Hall, a dilapidated mansion, near Durham, which Bishop Gibson had hired and fitted up for its reception. It was on the 15th of October, 1794, that eight individuals, the sad but honoured representatives of the College of Douay, took possession of Crook Hall, and once more resumed their collegiate exercises. The seminary was now permanently embodied. Mr. Eyre, by the authority of Bishop Gibson, was installed as president; and Lingard, who had rapidly completed his course of theology, received the appointment of vice-president. In the following spring (April 18, 1795), he was ordained priest by Bishop Gibson at York.* About the same time, he became Prefect of the Studies, and for many years filled the chair both of Natural and Moral Philosophy.

In his position as Professor, the future historian soon displayed those abilities for imparting information and instruction, which so eminently distinguished him through life. With a mind singularly clear and distinct in its perceptions, with a patience and perseverance not easy to be discomfited, he

* Ushaw Register of Ordinations.