

## PREFACE

THE work of which the present volume is the first part is designed to serve as an introduction and guide to the study of the written sources for the early history of Ireland, so far as they have been made available in print. The period treated is that prior to the Anglo-Norman invasion, and terminates about A.D. 1170. The volume now published deals with the sources that have a character or associations predominantly ecclesiastical, and also with the references to Ireland that are found in the ancient writers of continental Europe and of Britain. It is hoped that a second volume may cover the Irish secular sources and such later foreign records as do not relate chiefly to ecclesiastical affairs. No absolute lines of division have, however, been drawn, either in time limits or in subject classification. The two volumes will, it is believed, constitute a fairly complete survey of the documentary—the word is used in its broadest sense—sources of early Irish history. An excellent guide to the archaeological sources is already provided by Dr. Macalister's *The Archaeology of Ireland*.

The scope of this survey has been made as broad as possible so as to cover all significant documents illustrative of old Irish life and civilisation. The sources listed are primarily those that can be consulted in printed editions, but notice has also been taken of some of the relatively few texts that are still confined to the manuscripts. Moreover, although the book is not a catalogue of manuscripts, some account is given of all important codices, written by Irish hands or under Irish influence within the period under consideration, of which facsimiles, analyses of the contents, or other descriptions have been published.

The normal treatment of each source is to give, first, the title and the date, or approximate date, followed by the *incipit* and *explicit* of the text; then a bibliographical paragraph, listing manuscripts and editions and the more valuable commentaries in books or periodicals; finally, a summary exposition of the character and significance of the document, and of the results of such noteworthy critical study as it may have received. From this scheme there are, of course, many divergences; especially in the treatment of foreign sources it has often seemed unnecessary to provide so full a critical apparatus. In the introductions, with their bibliographies, to the several chapters, sections,

and subsections, an attempt has been made to present briefly the general characteristics and the historical settings of the various groups into which the sources have been classified.

The writer began his investigations into the historical records of Ireland when he was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin in 1907-1908. The plan of the book took definite shape when he was at Columbia University in 1909-1910. The work was continued slowly through later years when the greater part of his time and energy had to be given to other tasks. In November, 1926, the manuscript of the present volume was placed in the hands of the printer. It was possible to make some slight changes in the text after it had reached the printer, but for the most part material that was either first published or first brought to the author's notice since that date has been treated in the *Addenda* at the end of the volume. To those *Addenda* the attention of the reader is directed.

It is a matter of regret that individual acknowledgment cannot here be made of the assistance that has been so fully and freely given by many scholars — historians and librarians — in both America and Europe. To five among them, however, the author feels that he must render explicit homage. To Dr. John L. Gerig, of Columbia University, under whom he studied Old and Middle Irish, he has appealed repeatedly for information and advice, and always with success. The late Kuno Meyer read a large part of the manuscript while it was still in relatively crude form. His kindly approbation is a treasured memory, and his suggestions and emendations have contributed materially to the making of the book. Father Paul Grosjean, S.J., of the Society of Bollandists, has shown an interest of the most helpful kind in the welfare of the work; to his keen observation, critical acumen and broad scholarship every section of it is indebted. The debt would have been still greater had it not been that the text was already in proof when it first came to his attention. Dr. James T. Shotwell, former editor of the series, has not only by counsel and criticism guided the author's efforts, but also by his own unflagging patience and enthusiasm kept him keyed to the task through long and difficult years. To him and his successor in the editor's chair it is due that the volume ever reached the stage where publication was possible, just as publication itself is due to the generosity of the Columbia University Press.

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