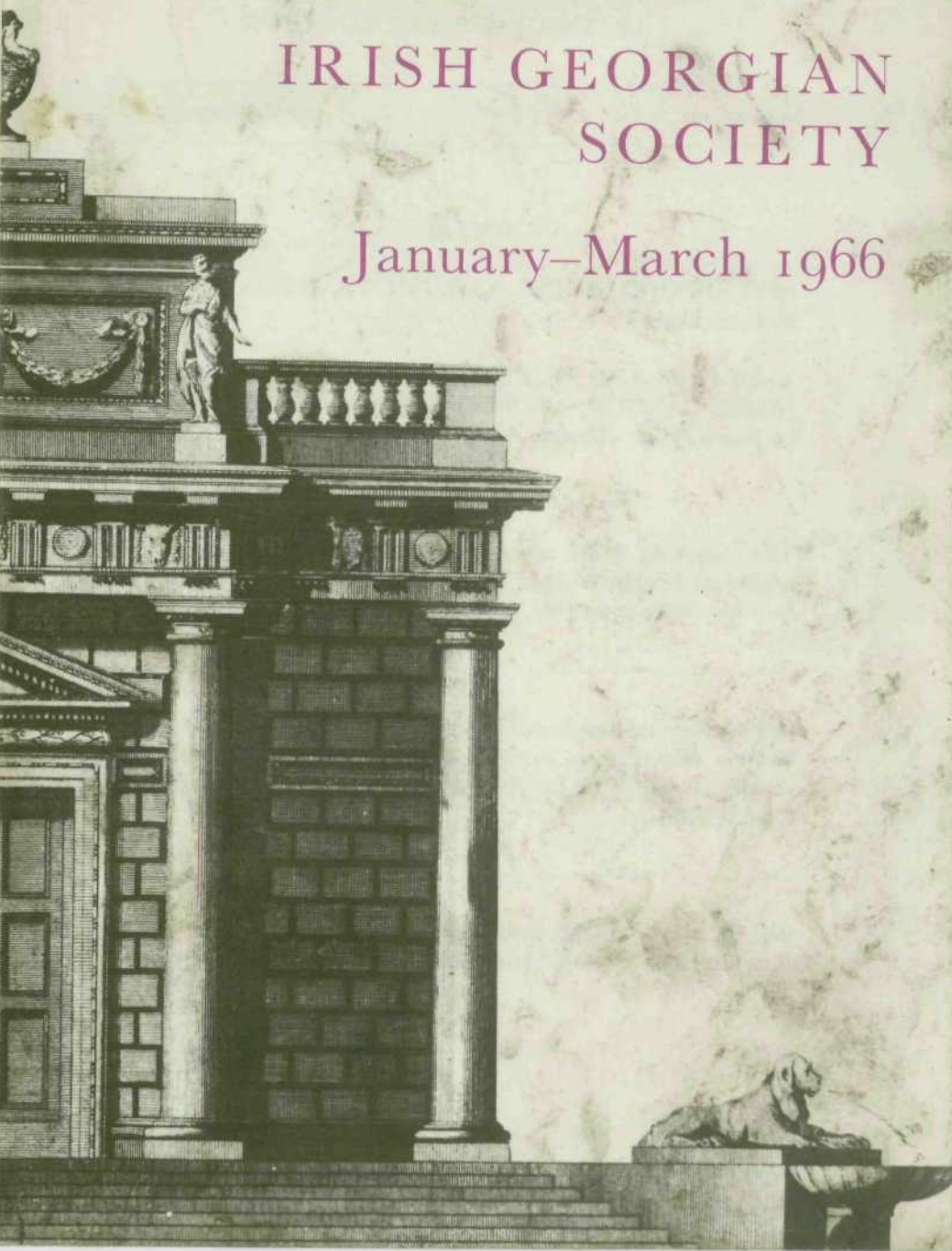


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The engraving on the cover of the Marino Casino at Clontarf was published by Sir William Chambers in 1759. Although in State care for thirty years, the exquisite interior has yet to be restored.

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PRICE FIVE SHILLINGS

# RIVERSTOWN HOUSE, CO. CORK, AND THE FRANCINI

by C. P. Curran

The earliest reference to Riverstown House is in Smith's *History of Co. Cork, 1750*. Smith was contemporary with Dr. Jemmett Browne who re-built it and he refers briefly to it as "the pleasant seat of the Lord Bishop of Cork ... a "house beautified with several curious pieces of stucco performed by the Francini brothers." Brewer *Beauties of Ireland* (Vol. 2, p. 375) writing in 1826 says "This mansion was formerly the residence of Dr. Jemmett Browne, Bishop of Cork under whose care the house and grounds received their principal ornaments." He refers to Smith's mention of the stucco enrichments and adds "The river of Glanmire runs through the gardens banked with serpentine canals which are well stocked with carp, tench, etc. A pleasant park stocked with deer, comes close to the garden walls. The grounds of this **very respectable** seal abound in aged timber and the whole demesne wears an air of dignified seclusion." The house is also mentioned by Derrick and Luckombe and in Webster's *History of the Diocese of Cork*. In recent years it has been the subject of an article by Dr. Philip G. Lee in the *Cork Archaeological Journal* (1927, Vol. 32, p. 103) and of reference by the present writer in the *J.R.S.A.I.* (March, 1940). The present illustrations supplement those already published and more adequately represent its decorations.

Dr. Jemmett Browne succeeded Dr. Clayton in the See of Cork and Ross in 1745. Son of a Mayor of Cork he was kinsman, perhaps nephew, of Dr. Peter Browne, Dr. Clayton's predecessor, Provost of T.C.D., the critic of Locke and Berkeley. He was an amiable man of no great distinction though he occupied two sees before





Cork and two others before his death in 1782. A friend and neighbour of Dr. Berkeley, when Dean of Ross, he bought bas viols for the Bishop's wife and took on his confirmations when he was himself a Bishop and when Berkeley had retired to Oxford. His house is evidence that he shared some at least of the tastes of the great Bishop of Cloyne and of Dr. Clayton, lover of the arts and of singular beliefs.

The house which was long in the possession of the Browne family—Dr. Lee says from Charles II—was enlarged in the first half of the eighteenth century. The date 1753 appears on a hopper-head, but Webster says that Jemmett Browne was in residence here during his tenure of the prebend of Killaspugmullane, i.e., between 1733 and 1743 and that five of his children were born here. Whether the later portion of the house was built and the decoration carried out during that period or c. 1745 when he became bishop or c. 1753 I do not know. In either event, in its agreeable way, it takes its place in the series of houses built by improving landlords from 1730 and in the period of fifteen years of which Lord Orrery of Cork wrote in 1747 "more improvements I have visibly observed of all kinds could not have been effected in that space of time." In courtier fashion Orrery attributed this advance to Chesterfield's influence but with greater justice it might be accredited to much earlier and obviously concerted propaganda in favour of finer building and nobler furnishing carried on by Berkeley, Prior and Madden. This propaganda beneficially affected the whole country. It had one focus in Dublin with Madden and with Thomas Prior in the Dublin Society but Cork was another centre of light and it is in more than mere conjecture that I would link together the names of Burlington, Berkeley and Madden in regarding Riverstown as one example of this beginning of our finer domestic building. Dr. Clayton made another in the same stream of tendency—"a Bishop" Orrery said, "who eats, drinks and sleeps in Taste, who travelled beyond the Alps and brought home to Cork to the amazement of our mercantile fraternity the Arts and Sciences that are the Ornament of Italy and the Admiration of the European World." He had been Berkeley's colleague in Trinity College and his lieutenant in Berkeley's Bermuda project until in 1730 he abandoned it to become Bishop



of Killala, passing in 1735 to the See of Cork and Ross and in 1745 to Clogher. In or about 1730 he was building his Dublin town house, now No. 80 St. Stephen's Green with Castle as his architect, a house decorated in the new rococo taste, "furnished" as Mrs. Delany wrote "with vertues and busts and pictures that the Bishop brought with him from Italy" and, to quote Orrery "with a Great Room will probably bring the Earl of Burlington over to this Kingdom". With Jemmett Browne and Prior, Clayton was also an early Governor of the Rotunda Hospital built by Castle and decorated in the new style by Robert West and, as to the Chapel, by Cramillion. In Orrery's sense, Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington and Cork, was another important innovator in both kingdoms. Devoted to Palladio but alive to the contemporary European **movement in art**, his influence was widespread. He had great estates in County Cork as in Yorkshire and like Jemmett Browne he was Berkeley's friend and neighbour. Pope had introduced Berkeley to Burlington and a friendship grew up between them by reason Warton says, "not only of Dr. Berkeley's true politeness and the peculiar charm of his conversation, which was exquisite but by his profound and perfect skill in architecture".\* Here is, therefore, a circle of French-Italian taste linking up the Francini, Cramillion and West; St. Stephen's Green and Cork.

Dr. Browne came to Riverstown just when Berkeley in his *Querist* (1735-1737) and Madden in his *Reflections and Resolutions Proper to the Gentlemen of Ireland* (1738) were prosecuting their campaign for a finer way of living. Each in his own manner, by insinuation or exhortation, was deriding "the mean houses of men of estates in Ireland" and their "sordid provision in furniture, gardens and plantations." At least fourteen of Berkeley's queries are levelled in this direction. They correspond exactly with Madden's *Resolutions* and include suggestions for the establishment of a School of Design; they were probably instrumental in the foundation of the school which was presently set up by the Dublin Society guided by Madden and Prior. The Berkeley-Madden programme enters into details of which one concerns us. Both advocate the substitution of stucco

\* Warton *Essay on Pope* 1782, Vol. 2, p. 200.





for wainscot,\* and it is precisely Jemmett Browne's consequent adoption of stucco for his new house that gives Riverstown its chief interest. Berkeley and Madden were mainly concerned with the economic welfare of their country and had in mind building styles and methods that would involve local labour and material. But Berkeley was Italianate in addition and realised the advantage to craftsmen that came from full schemes of decoration. In commissioning the Francini to carry through this Riverstown stucco decoration on a scale unusual in a house of its moderate size, Browne was reflecting the ideas of Berkeley and Madden in the new taste fostered also by Burlington and, thanks to Clayton and his like, not quite unknown to the merchants of Cork.† Concerning it Berkeley might have repeated an old description of his, "The house is small but of a very pretty gusto, well furnished with relievos".

This stucco decoration consists of an historiated ceiling in the dining-room with a series of panels on its walls, eight of them with figures, and the two between the windows unfigured but elaborately framed. Another panel with figure is in an adjoining room. The figures are allegorical as on Roman coins but there is no sequence in the scheme sufficient to justify anything but a mere description with some attempt to suggest their origin. We begin with the panel over the mantelpiece.

*Plate i. Marcus Curtius or Perseus*

An unarmed soldier in cuirass and flying cloak is mounted on a horse. It rears towards flames and smoke which occupy the right of the panel; on the left top corner a palace and tower in low relief. The subject is Marcus Curtius and, I suggest, personifies *Heroic*

\* Madden: *Resolution II*: Berkeley: *Queries* 117, 118, 399.

† The finest example of stucco I know, in Co. Cork, is the superb figured decoration of Kilshannig House near **Rathcormac** by the Francini, whose work that existed in Castle Saffron, near **Doneraile**, has now disappeared. Compare also the somewhat later work in the Mercy Hospital c. 1765 formerly the Lord Mayor's House, and designed by Ducart, the same architect as Kilshannig. The Kilshannig decoration ranks in the highest class of such extremely rare figure work of the Irish mid-eighteenth century and is considered to be by the Francini brothers also.



*Virtue*. A similar figure but springing clear of the ground over the flames and smoke occurs in a composition by Tempesta 1555-1630 reproduced (No. 102) in Guilmard's *Les Maitres Ornemanistes*. Perseus is another such personification of Heroic Virtue in renaissance iconography, c.p. Bernini's Statue at Versailles\* and the Italianate Ben Jonson's stage direction in *The Masque of Queens* for a character "in the furniture of Perseus and expressing heroic and masculine virtue".

*Plate 2. Aeneas*

The pious Aeneas carries on his shoulders Anchises,† with a vase enclosing his household gods, and draws towards him the reluctant Ascanius *non passibus aequis*. Allegory of filial piety. Aeneas' face has been disfigured.

*Plate 3. Grammar*

A figure in classical drapery stands facing the spectator. With her right hand she inverts a pot over an urn from which a plant is projecting. The interpretation of this figure long baffled me but its meaning, though obscure, is demonstrable. In 1663 Sebastien Bourdon painted *Les Arts* in series for the Hotel de Bretonvilliers. The set now exists only in engravings. One subject is represented in this Riverstown fashion, but water flows from her jug and she carries a scroll, the letters on which do not appear in the engraving. Another seventeenth century French painter, Laurent de la Hyde, painted the same subject in the same manner (the picture was shown at the Paris Exhibition of 1937 and is illustrated in its catalogue). The lady carries a scroll over her left arm with the words: *Vox litterata et articulata debito modo pronunciata*. Both these pictures derive from a once well-known source-book for artists and designers, Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, a French version of which by Baudoin appeared in 1636 and 1644. Ripa and Baudoin, under the heading *Grammar*, illustrate this figure pouring water from an amphora upon growing plants and supply the words for the scroll. The words

\* Originally of the King who did not like it, Girardon added flames and turned it into Heroic Virtue.

† c.f. Bernini's group *Aeneas and Anchises* (1618) in the Borghese Palace, Rome.





define Grammar and the plant they say represents "young spirits, still tender, who will bear exquisite fruit". Ripa's *Iconologia* remained a text-book for artists to the end of the eighteenth century and this formula and explanation were repeated long after the execution of this panel by Petity and others, including Richardson's English version of Ripa-Baudoin. From our panel both scroll and water are omitted but the significant gesture remains and the subject is certainly *Grammar*.

*Plate 4. Pax or Ceres*

A draped figure seated on a globe starred and divided into quarters. She holds in her extended right hand a trifold cluster of wheat stalks and on her left arm a cornucopia. This figure resembling Ceres or Abundance occurs on a coin of Vespasian representing *Pax*.

*Plate 5. Fides Publica*

A standing figure holding in her left hand ears of corn extends in her right a dish with fruits of the earth over a burning altar. This figure is *Fides Publica* common on Roman coins of the early Empire and is identical with one occurring in an Italian eighteenth century edition of engravings from cameos, gems and coins (Plate 5a). The plate is inscribed: Fede Publica, In pasta di Topazio. Dal Museo del Sig.<sup>r</sup> Commend." del Pozzo. 77. My copy, purchased in Dublin, is broken with the title page and many plates missing. The watermark is A.M.G./Serafini/Fabriano in a cartouche. Traditionally Numa Pompilius was the first to erect an altar to Fides Publica and there are coins of Plotinus, Vespasian and Domitian closely resembling this panel.

*Plate 6. Fortuna*

A standing figure holds in her right hand a rudder resting on a globe and in her left a cornucopia with wheat. A figure identical with this occurs in the broken collection I have mentioned (Plate 6a). Numbered 73 it is inscribed Fortuna in Elitropia and the figure is surrounded with the letters AVZEITVXH ANTIOXE W N. Fortune is similarly represented on coins of Trajan, Hadrian and Antoninus Pius. "La Fortune estoit paincte par les Anciens tenant



FEDE' PVBBLICA  
In pasta ciiTopazio

*OX:1% MILS so ddl Sic/ • Corrunend-<sup>e</sup> del Pozzo*

d'une main un cor d'abondance et de l'autre un timon ou gouvernal de navire signifiant par cela qu'elle donnoit les richesses et si avoit le gouvernement des choses humaines et de tout le monde." (*Discours de la Religion des Anciens Romains. Seigneur Guillaume du Choul. Lyon 1606*). Lactantius: Nam simulacrum ejus cum copiae cornu et gubernaculo fingitur tanquam haec opes tribuat et humanarum rerum regimen obtineat. (Lib. 3. c. 29).

*Plate 7. Achilles*

A warrior drawing on his greaves near a column bearing an urn. *Achilles*, or *Cincinnatus*—Raponi prefers the latter identification.

*Plate 8. Roma Aeterna*

A helmeted female figure is seated near a trophy of armour—a cuirass—and two shields. She holds in her extended right hand a statuette of Victory and in her left hand a short staff. A goat paces before her and in a panel at the base there are two sheep. This is *Roma Aeterna*. The panel is of special interest inasmuch as it recurs in another eighteenth century house, the City Club, Castle-gate, York, to which we shall presently refer (Plate 8a).

*Plate 9. Providentia or Urania*

(In an adjoining room). A winged figure is bearing a starry globe; a wand is set in the ground nearby. It is *Urania* or *Divine Providence*. In a slightly different form and without wings this figure appears as a personification of *Providentia* on coins of Trajan and Pertinax.

The subjects No. 1. Curtius, No. 2. Aeneas, No. 7. Achilles, No. 8. Roma and No. 9. Urania appear in identical form in Raponi's *Recueil des Pierres Antiques Gravees Roma 1786\** (Raponi says that he can find no satisfactory explanation of the sheep accompanying Roma), and the others as we have seen may similarly be traced to classical coins. There is therefore nothing in the Francini decoration of Riverstown which shows original composition. These make up the series of panels with figures. They are set in frames of strong,

\* A copy of Raponi is in our National Library.







simple moulding, surmounted with the exception of (i) and (9), by linen-fold swags or festoons and floral bouquets suspended from a naturalistic head and looped over rosettes. These swags and heads are identical with the festoons and heads similarly arranged above the Francini panels of the Muses in the Apollo Room of No. 85 St. Stephen's Green and on the landing at Castletown, Celbridge. The panels are separated by interlaced and foliated strapwork dependent from other heads. The two empty panels with mirrors, between the windows, are richly framed with flamboyant foliation going up at the top angles into winged busts of girls. The ornament throughout is late Louis XIV in the fashion of Berain, breaking into rococo in the last mentioned frames.

The panels are in good condition throughout except No. 2 which is slightly defaced and No. 9 which is badly rubbed. Everywhere the figures are clearly conceived in moderately low relief with a just sense of their plastic value. The modelling is accomplished and the whole work displays a grave and becoming sobriety. The allegories are shown in the same style of chilly accomplishment as distinguishes the Francini Muses in 85 St. Stephen's Green and the staircase panels in the Stephen's Green Club—the frigidity of academic resurrection. At its ordinary level the work of the Francini is classical and uninspired. At its higher levels as in the Carton ceiling and the ceiling of the saloon in 85 St. Stephen's Green it shows the constructive power and the nobility in conception and design which mark the Italian character in art. But the Francini are very rarely touched by the contemporary rococo spirit which under a French influence produced the anonymous, charming work in the La Touche Bank and Mespil House from 1735 to 1751. The Francini preferred the Muses to the Graces.

*Plates 10 and 11. Poussin and the Francini Ceiling*

Characteristically, when French influence moved the Francini it was towards Poussin, the most classical and Italian of French artists, and we have here in Riverstown its evidence. The Riverstown ceiling, for all its modest dimensions, ranks with their finer work and stands high in the small group of our fully figured ceilings which, as such, should be jealously preserved. It is the translation

FORTVNA



*in Elitropia*

into plaster with only the slightest modifications of a design painted by Poussin for a ceiling for Cardinal Richelieu in 1641-1642. Its subject is *Time Rescuing Truth from the Assaults of Discord and Envy*. The vigorous and aged winged figure of Time carries the beautifully modelled form of Truth away towards the clouds from Discord who is armed with a dagger and flaming torch, and Envy entwined with snakes. Above, a winged boy displays the sickle and circle, insignia of Time and Immortality.

Some writers on Poussin have found in this subject the echo of his experience of the French court after his return from Italy. He treated it twice: once in the second of a series of allegorical pieces mentioned by Felibien of which the *Shepherds of Arcady* is famous and then in this Richelieu design. At Riverstown the Francini have adapted Poussin's circular design to an oval frame, omitted the balustrade and made other trifling changes. Their version remains substantially identical with its original. From a description of a ceiling in Smith's *Nollekens* (ed. 1920, p. 177) the same design was used in a painted ceiling which has long since disappeared from No. 3 Litchfield Street, London. Writing in 1829 Smith attributed this work to Hogarth though perhaps his father-in-law, Thornhill, would have been as likely a guess.

The history of these brothers, Paul and Philip Francini, remains still obscure. Thieme and Becker say that the stuccodores may well have belonged to the same family as Giovanni Antonio Franchini or Francini, an architect and stuccodore who worked in Modena about 1710. Another architect and sculptor of the name was born earlier in Siena. Conceivably there may have been some connection with a Florentine family of that name who settling in Paris in 1599, were engaged about the French Court at Fontainebleau and Versailles as water and garden engineers, architects and designers for six succeeding generations. Whatever their origin they represent one of the successive waves of stuccodores who from quite early periods swarmed over Europe from fertile hives in the valleys of either side of the Swiss Italian Alps. In the eighteenth century these foreign plasterers were represented in England by Artari, Bagutti, Sereno and Vassali and others. Their history in all countries





is alike. They worked in some unascertained way side by side with local guildsmen\* and introduced new motifs and methods. Their repertory of ornament was abundant and they excelled in figure work.

In Ireland at the beginning of the eighteenth century our own craftsmen had turned away, as in other countries, from the seventeenth century strap work and the naturalistic handling of flowers, fruit and foliage to a stylised Louis XIV treatment. Figure subjects, except as single figures or heads in small medallions were rare and insignificant. The Italians, here as in France and England introduced the human figure to stucco on a full scale and with complete realisation of its plastic possibilities. The Francini appear in York and c. 1729 in 15 Queen's Square, Bath, a house whose staircase decoration resembles that of the St. Stephen's Green Club and these Riverstown panels. In 1739 they carried out the superb ceiling at Carton at a cost of £501. In 1740 they executed the fine variant of this Carton ceiling in Clanwilliam House, 85 St. Stephen's Green, and the panel decoration of the Apollo room in the same house, which in one respect is identical with Riverstown work. In the following year it is quite likely that they had some share in the decoration of Tyrone House, Dublin. Wright and Brewer writing eighty years after so state. The complete absence of full figure work leaves the matter open to some doubt. But on the other hand since consoles supporting busts once occupied a place in the scheme (though now missing) and since this form of decoration occurs prominently in Francini work on the staircase of the City Club, Castlegate, York, I incline to Wright's view so far at least as the staircase is concerned. This work on the staircase is described in Stratton's *English Interiors* as consisting of "wall-brackets supporting busts and surrounded by devices measuring ten feet across". It is illustrated in Stratton as well as the Francini *Roma Aeterna* panel (Plate 8a). In this undated, but, according to Stratton, late eighteenth century house in York there is therefore a recurrence of the Riverstown panel. Burlington may be the link between Cork and York. He was

\* See article (on Stuccodores in Belgium) by Simone Ansiaux in the *Revue Beige d'Archeologie* IX, 1939.

† I am told that the house is in fact pre-1750.

Plate 8



Plate 8a



Lord Lieutenant in Yorkshire from 1715 to 1733. He may have brought the Francini to both places. If Webster's statement implies that the present Riverstown House was built sometime between 1733 and 1743 we may have in Riverstown the earliest known example of their work in Ireland. Its tight, formal and derivative character would fit in with an early date. Accomplished as it is, it has not the freedom in handling or the invention or the constructive power shown in Carton or in No. 85 St. Stephen's Green. On the other hand one remembers that we are in an episcopal residence where the *amorini* may not play too wantonly. But if it is a work of the early thirties there is a wide gap to be filled. Did they go back to England between Riverstown and Carton? When did they decorate Castle Saffron, Co. Cork? \* And when did they finally leave Ireland?

I am not unwilling to believe that they did all the work in the St. Stephen's Green Club of 1755-1" The panels there resemble the work in Riverstown and Bath and as in Riverstown and in No. 85 St. Stephen's Green the classical severity of the wall treatment is deliberately subordinate to the animated ceilings in these houses and if the jolly bacchanals and playful mythologies of the St. Stephen's Green Club seem at variance with the gravity of early Francini work one must make allowance for the later prevalent rococo gaiety of the 1750's and for the unbuttoned ease of middle age. In the present state of our information in regard to all this kind of craftwork these questions remain matter for pleasing conjecture, not the less pleasing because they are minute and of slight importance.

We are on sure ground in attributing the elaborate staircase decoration at Castletown, Celbridge to the Francini. This great house was built in 1722 by Speaker Conolly but the main staircase was never put in until Lady Louisa Conolly married the Speaker's great nephew, "Squire" Tom Conolly, in 1758. She had lived with

\* Smyth's *History of Co. Cork*, 1750, "several rooms are handsomely stuccoed by the Franchinis Italians". The original house is undated and was demolished in 1816, to be replaced by Creagh Castle.

† The staircase panels resemble those at Castletown (D. Guinness, *Irish Rococo Plasterwork*, 1963).



her sister Lady Kildare at Carton nearby since 1750 when her father, the Duke of Richmond, suddenly died, so she was acquainted with the Franchini work in the saloon there. In a letter relating to mantel-pieces and to decoration she was having done at Castletown in May 1759, she writes:\*

*"Mr. Conolly and I are excessively diverted at Franchini's impertinence, and if he charges anything of that sort to Mr. Conolly, there is a fine scold in store for his honour."*

Ignorance is the dry-nurse of myths and there is no myth more common amongst our people than the myth that attributes all this fine stucco-work to the Italians. Too many people identify a foreign style with foreign craftsmen. A style may be Italian or French and yet be practised by Irish craftsmen. So far as the Dublin Guild of Plasterers is concerned we have existing lists of some hundreds in continued practice from the sixteenth to the end of the eighteenth century, and these lists do not include some of the most accomplished, who were barred from membership by reason of penal sectarian

\* Irish Manuscripts Commission *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, Vol. III, Page 19.





Le Temps  
soustrait  
la Vérité aux  
atteintes de la Discorde  
et de l'Envie, Poussin.



Plate 11

legislation. These men followed the prevailing style which differed every few decades. There is evidence, still insufficiently explored, pointing to similar flourishing groups in the provinces and I have little doubt that one could find the Cork equivalent of Dublin's Wests and Stapletons and Waterford's Osborne. But in all these lists or in the literature of the subject I have found only four Italian names. This is not to derogate from the value and high importance of the Italian contribution to our practice of an art which the Italians made peculiarly their own, nor from the value of the French contribution to our arts which flowed in great measure from the Dublin Society's school of design under the direction of the Frenchman, Mannin. This fertilisation from foreign sources had the happiest results. The popular misconception I have mentioned is the homage we pay to its worth; a mistaken homage, which can be more justly rendered when a full examination of all our local crafts has been undertaken.

Under the direction of Mr. Raymond McGrath of the Office of Public Works, moulds have been made of all this Francini work at Riverstown, with the exception of the *PROVIDEJVITIA* panel, and facsimiles made and erected in Arus an Uachtarain in 1955-6. Arus an Uachtarain, built by Nathaniel Clements when Park Ranger in 1751, is a house of approximately equal date with Riverstown and Mespil House whose finest ceiling was recently transferred here also. These circumstances and the association both in Cork and Dublin of Edward Barry of Mespil House, Dr. Jemmett Browne, Nathaniel Clements and Burlington make the present siting of these copies of the Riverstown stucco-work peculiarly appropriate.

#### APPEAL

RIVERSTOWN HOUSE was used as a potato store until March 1965, and the restoration and furnishing has cost £1,777 to date. Please help by sending a contribution to the Irish Georgian Society, Leixlip Castle, Co. Kildare. Riverstown will be open to the public daily from May 1st to September 30th 1966, 10.0-6.0.

# TILLY KETTLE (1735-1786) and WILLIAM CUMING'S (1769-1852) PORTRAIT OF JAMES GANDON, ARCHITECT (1743-1823)

by James White

A portrait of James Gandon, perhaps the most distinguished architect to work in Dublin in the eighteenth century, came up for auction in Sothebys last June. It was advertised as a work of James Barry but on examination this attribution was seen to be incorrect. At the same time it posed a problem since the firm modelling and calm distinction of the head was different in style to the remainder of the picture. The hands and the landscape were marked by thin passages of paint overlaid on deeper colours. An inspired guess was made and the name of Tilly Kettle was suggested; but this would have been impossible since the Four Courts which appear in the painting were not completed until after Kettle's death. The picture was fortunately purchased for the National Gallery of Ireland and has come to Dublin where it is now on view.

The Gallery already owns a miniature by Horace Hone of Gandon which was used as a frontispiece to his biography by T. J. Mulvany, published in 1846, and this was confirmation, if any was needed, that the portrait really represented the architect. In fact when the old darkened varnish had been removed in the Gallery's restoration laboratory the whole subject became clear. Gandon is shown standing on a balustrade above the city with to the right the Custom House and to the extreme left the Four Courts. In the foreground, the facade presumably of Dame Street or the backs of the houses on the south side of the river, and in the middle distance, also on the right, can be seen the Rotunda Hospital lantern. The right foreground of the picture is closed by the stick, gloves and top hat of the artist laid on the balustrade, whilst the



Portrait of James Gandon by Tilly Kettle and William Cuming (Courtesy National Gallery of Ireland).



architect holds a pen in his right hand, and the sheaf of plans for the Four Courts in his left hand. He wears a fur trimmed coat, a red waistcoat and a white cravat. His eyes are warm and lively and his greying hair is painted in with most delicate and vigorous brush strokes. He looks about 40 years of age which would place the picture as having been painted in 1783. The artist has made it appear that Gandon was standing on the roof of the Parliament House (now the Bank of Ireland) and he has romantically compressed the quaysides to bring the Four Courts, the Custom House and the Rotunda into focus. He thus includes the principal Dublin buildings on which Gandon worked prior to the building of the Kings Inns.

There remained the problem of the attribution. Irish painters like Shee, Catterson Smith and so on were closely studied and a survey of the dates of the buildings represented all led to further confusion. Finally a member of the Gallery staff, Mr. Michael Wynne, came on a footnote in the *Life of Gandon* by T. J. Mulvany as follows:

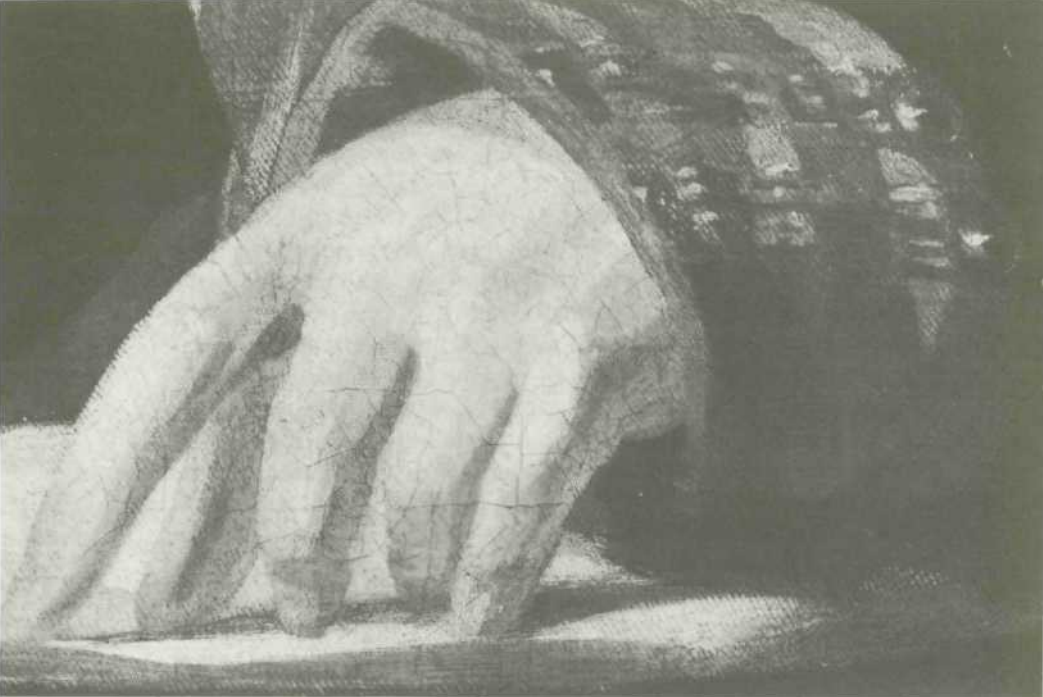
*"Mr. Gandon has in his possession a portrait of his father in oil, half length, painted by Kettle, during his limited visit to Dublin. The head is finely painted, and an excellent likeness, as Mr. Gandon, Sen., appeared at that time. The head only was painted by Kettle: he had not sufficient time, during his short visit to Dublin, to finish the picture; but Mr. Gandon's valuable friend, Mr. Cuming, has made it a desirable painting by adding the draperies and accompaniments."*

Later we found an entry in Strickland's *Dictionary of Irish Artists* under William Cuming:

*"James Gandon, architect. Begun by Tilly Kettle, who painted the head only, during his short stay in Dublin, and finished by Cuming."*

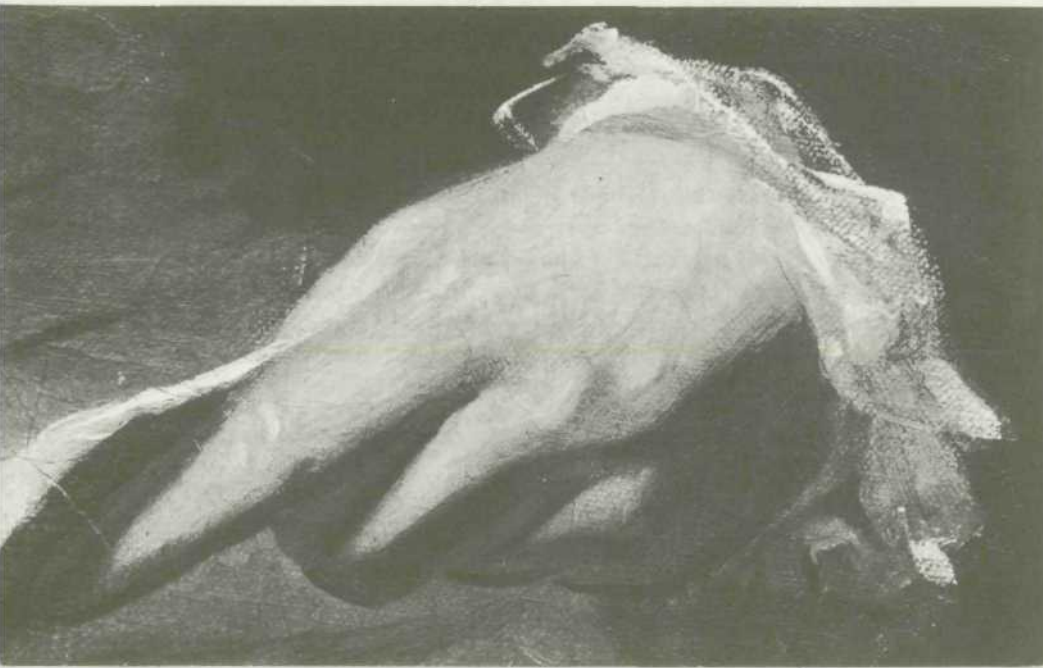
*{Tilly Kettle, an English portrait painter, born about 1740, who, becoming bankrupt in London about 1783, sought an asylum in Dublin, and spent a short time there. In 1786 he started on a visit to India where he had previously been—from 1770 to 1777—but died on his way to Aleppo}."*

The William Cuming style is clearly defined in several works in

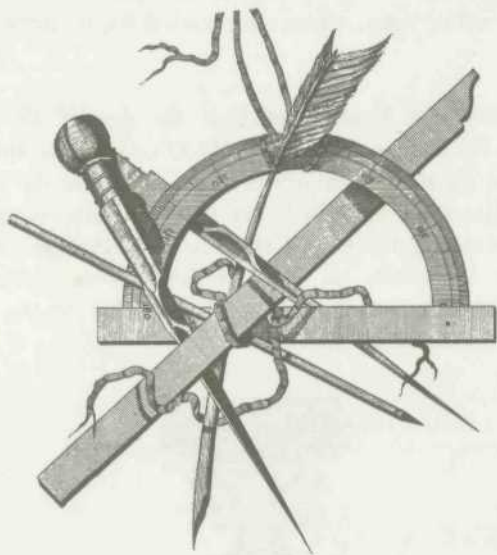


The Earl of Charlemont's left hand. Detail from the portrait by William Cuming  
(*Courtesy National Gallery of Ireland*).

James Gandon's left hand. Detail from the portrait by Tilly Kettle and William  
Cuming (*Courtesy National Gallery of Ireland*).



the Gallery's collection and indeed the portrait by him of the 1st Earl of Charlemont contains identical paint treatment both of hands and architectural details. Once we had documentary evidence we could be sure, but there still remained the problem of deciding how much was by Kettle and how much by Cuming. One thing seemed certain. The pose of the head was so confidently set in the body that Kettle must have made at least a rough sketch of the design in charcoal or pencil. Indeed it is doubtful if any artist would attack so large a canvas without having scaled his proportions and briefly indicated background data. Presumably when Cuming started to complete the picture he was an established Dublin artist and a friend of Gandon. It is unlikely that this would have been much before 1800 when he was 31 and earning a reputation as a portrait painter. At the same time the remarkable similarity of the picture to Cuming's *Earl of Charlemont* completed in the 90's before Charlemont's death in 1799 would indicate that it could hardly have been **later than** 1800 when the Four Courts had just been completed and Gandon's fame was at its height. A further indication of the date could be inferred from the fact that there is no reference to the Kings Inns begun in 1795 and still unfinished in 1808.



# BOOKS ON IRELAND

*Bowenscourt*, by Elizabeth Bowen, is not only a detailed account of **the** building of the Georgian house of this name, but an excellent introduction to Irish history. Miss Bowen's descriptions of the Irish countryside are brilliant, and linger in the mind; throughout this sensitive and amusing book she reveals an exceptional understanding of her fellow countrymen. Out of print for many years, Longmans have now brought out a new edition (42s.) in which Miss Bowen recounts the unnecessarily tragic end of the house (see I.G.S. Bulletin, July-December 1961, when we pleaded for its preservation).

*Irish Politics and Social Conflict in the Age of the American Revolution* by Professor Maurice R. O'Connell is an account of the exciting social conflicts brought about by the emerging middle class 1775-83. There are twenty illustrations of Irish houses including three of Castletown, Celbridge. Available from the University of Pennsylvania Press, 3729 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19104, U.S.A. for \$7.50, or from the Oxford University Press.

