

## *James Humble: New Property at Madrid and Canterac*

Like David McDonald in 1879, James Humble unexpectedly found himself rector of the college after having been vice-rector for only six years—a much shorter time than had been anticipated. And like Fr. David, he would never have been a member of the college staff, had the first choice been willing to accept the post offered to him. But that is how things turn out. Not even John Geddes himself had been the bishops' first choice!

James Humble was born in Liverpool on 26th October 1865, the son of Andrew Humble and his wife, Agnes Edgar. He entered Blairs College on 14th August 1878 and arrived in Valladolid on 7th September 1883. After the normal course of six years under the rectorship of David McDonald, he was ordained a priest by the Archbishop of Valladolid on 2nd June 1889. On his return to Scotland, he spent seven years as a curate in Maryhill and then was appointed to be priest in charge of the mission at Newmains in Lanarkshire; it was from there that he left to return to the college as vice-rector in October 1903.

James Humble's rectorate was a long one; it lasted from 1909 until 1940. It was an eventful one in some ways, also, although, as far as the students were concerned, life went on, year after year, in an apparently unalterable fashion, impervious, it must have seemed, to events outside.

James Humble was an extremely meticulous administrator and, from his typewriter, the college archives possess a copy of the yearly reports, neatly and beautifully compiled, which he sent to the bishops on the state of the community and its finances. Unavoidably, perhaps, these reports tend to be very repetitive through the years, on such matters as the excellent health enjoyed by the students and the admirable examination results which they obtained, but they are

important in affording year by year summaries of the property ventures which engaged so much of Humble's time and energy.

His nomination was submitted by the bishops to the Spanish crown in July of 1909 and the royal appointment is dated 15th October of that year.<sup>1</sup> At the time, Humble was on his own, Canon Woods having gone to Scotland in April and Don David having died in September. But, before the end of the year, he had been sent two assistants, Fr. Peter Burns arriving late in November and Fr. Patrick McDaniel, an old alumnus, on Christmas eve; the latter was the senior and was appointed vice-rector.<sup>2</sup>

During that winter of 1909-10, D. Daniel de la Cruz, the professor of moral philosophy in the local seminary, gave some classes in Latin and Spanish in the college. At the beginning of the following scholastic year, the practice which the bishops had been urging for years was finally adopted and ten students (the whole community except for the three in their final year) were admitted for their classes to the seminary.<sup>3</sup> By this means, the shortage of teaching staff in the college, which had been a chronic cause for complaint by rectors, ceased to be a worry; moreover, the seminary had been made a pontifical university by Leo XIII and the students were being taught by professors much more qualified and experienced than the college could normally provide, as well as being permitted a little more contact with the outside world. Of course, the new arrangement (which the English College also adopted in 1910) had some drawbacks: the time spent in Valladolid had to be extended by one year since the university course was of three, not two, years of philosophy, followed by four of theology;<sup>4</sup> there was also the problem that the students arrived in Valladolid ignorant of Spanish and unaccustomed to spoken Latin (especially when pronounced in the Spanish manner), with the result that each group of newcomers found the going very difficult and disheartening for some months.<sup>5</sup> But the custom of attending classes in outside institutions, which nowadays seems to us such an integral element of the very *raison d'être* of a Scottish seminary in Spain, was, on balance, successful right from the start. "The new system ... is working very satisfactorily," wrote Humble; "the students concerned are delighted with the change and are earning golden opinions."<sup>6</sup> In his report for the session 1910-11, the rector again expressed himself very pleased with the experiment and was able to inform the bishops that eight students of the ten had received the highest mark of all: *meritissimus*.<sup>7</sup>

1. College archives 67/21.

2. Fr. McDaniel had been unwilling to accept the same post in 1899.

3. *Ibid.*, 20/34.

4. The philosophy course was reduced to two years in 1933.

5. Classes in the main subjects were given in Latin; in secondary subjects, in Spanish.

6. James Humble to Canon John Ritchie, Glasgow, 21st December 1910. (Glasgow archives, loc. cit.)

7. College archives 48/2.

One consequence of the students' attendance at the seminary was that the college had to conform to the vacation periods of the former. The result was that, from 1911, the short spell spent at Boecillo after Easter was reduced to a day's excursion and the "long vacation" comprised the three months of June, July and August, instead of September and October, as formerly.

The custom of going to classes in the Valladolid seminary continued uninterrupted throughout Humble's rectorate even when, due to new regulations from Rome, the seminary lost its university status. The students normally had three classes in the morning, from 9 until 12.30, and one in the afternoon, at 3.30. Quite frequently a Scotsman would be one of the "objectors" or even, on occasion, the "defendant" at the annual formal disputations which were held, in theology at the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas and in philosophy at the feast of St. Justin. The ordinary course of seven years did not bring, at its completion, the award of any degree and, with two exceptions in 1929-30, the Scots students did not return to do the extra year that led to the doctorate in theology; the reason for this was not any lack of ability but rather the fact that the expenses of the degree course were relatively high and no decision about whether the college or the student's bishop should bear the cost was ever concluded, or, for that matter, discussed.

During the 1910-11 scholastic year, the three senior students received their classes in the college but, with their courses completed, the need for two professors no longer existed. In fact, both Frs. Burns and McDaniel departed, within a few days of each other, in the early summer of 1911. At the end of October, Fr. Francis Cronin D. D. took up his appointment as vice-rector; his teaching duties consisted in helping the students with the subjects which they were being taught in the seminary.

The college, it will be recalled, held considerable investments in the Spanish national debt. Most of these bonds were transferable and, because of his anxiety about the future in Spain, Humble decided, early in 1912, to cash them and invest the money in Scotland. At the time, they were bringing in an annual interest of just over 10,000 pesetas (about £400). He sold the bonds, whose nominal value was 250,000 pesetas (about £10,000) for 234,000 pesetas.<sup>8</sup> This

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The Scots' marks continued to be very good, especially for the next decade, during which *meritissimi* were commonplace; even if the standards declined a little thereafter and there was the very occasional *suspensus*, most of the marks continued to be high. However, as Humble pointed out, the professors' assessments tended to err on the side of generosity.

8. Most of these bonds had been bought by the college at prices ranging between 81% and 84% of their nominal value. They were now being sold at between 84% and 87% of that value, so that, in fact, the original investments did not turn out to be as unwise as at one time appeared.

The rest of the money involved in Humble's transaction had been left to the college by two ex-alumni, Mgr. Alexander Munro (almost 50,000 ptas.) and Rev. William Dawson (7,000 ptas.) The latter sum represented investments made by James J. Dawson while he

money was transferred to Britain at a rate of 27 pesetas to the pound sterling and produced a sum of £8,660, which was lent, at 4%, to four parishes in the Archdiocese of Glasgow.<sup>9</sup>

Two years later, the rector was able, after some effort, to have the college's intransferable bonds converted into transferables.<sup>10</sup> These bonds had been given, in the middle of the nineteenth century, in place of the various state incomes and revenues the college had possessed and which had later been suppressed. At the time, no interest was being paid on them since Humble refused to comply with a government order requiring the registration of all ecclesiastical property. Of a nominal value of 70,000 ptas., he managed to sell them for 57,000, but another 10,000 was required for expenses.<sup>11</sup> However, he recovered some of the interest due and was able to transfer 50,000 ptas. to Scotland. The resultant £2,000 was given on loan at 4% to the Tranent Industrial School of the Archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh.

At this point, just before the outbreak of the first world war, the Madrid property was producing a net yearly income of about 30,000 ptas. (approximately £1,200); the sale of Boecillo wine brought in a much lower sum, which fluctuated greatly from year to year, depending on the size of the grape harvest and the price of wine; and the new Scottish investments produced an income of almost 10,000 ptas. (about £400). This last ceased to be sent to Valladolid after the outbreak of war.

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James Humble's name will always be linked with two measures of enormous importance for the economic wellbeing of the college—the construction of the building which the college owns at Madrid and the acquisition of the Canterac estate in Valladolid.

With regard to the former, David McDonald had been officially informed, as far back as 1901, of the proposal to open a wide new avenue, called the Gran Via, running in an approximately east-west direction right through the centre of Madrid. Although Col. Semple's house, which still remained college property, was just off the line of the new avenue, the huge buildings which were to be erected along it would necessitate the destruction of much existing property in the vicinity. In fact, that part of the Calle Jacometrezo where the College property was situated would disappear altogether and so, of

was on the college staff (1886-90) and later left to his brother who, in his turn, presented them to the college "for educating priests for the Scottish mission, as I have not been able to work there as I hoped to do". Cf. college archives 31.

9. Bridgeton: £3,500; Motherwell: £2,160; Garngad: £2,000; Burnbank: £1,000.

10. Cf. college archives 30/35.

11. "This sum, I regret to have to say, went entirely in influencing the officials of the Treasury Department, without which nothing could have been done". (Ibid., 48/5.)

course, would the property which stood on it. A compulsory purchase order was made and the property was officially valued in 1902 at 625,637 ptas.<sup>12</sup> which, on McDonald's appeal, was raised in July 1903 to 717,990 ptas.<sup>13</sup> He was told that the order would be carried out and the property demolished in three or four years' time. In the event, nothing more happened until 1915 when, it having become clear that the property would soon be pulled down, several of the tenants left and the rents had to be much reduced in an effort to attract new ones.<sup>14</sup>

The following year, with construction of the new avenue having reached the area where the college property was situated, Humble, acting on the advice of Don Federico de Blanco (a Madrid businessman who was to become the college's administrator as far as the new property was concerned),<sup>15</sup> proposed to take up the option which the college had, of buying back its own site. This would have cost 857,808 ptas. (966 sq.m. at 888 ptas. per sq.m.) and, as Blanco had estimated the cost of constructing a new building at 772,007 ptas., the total cost to the college would be 1,629,815 less the sum of 717,990 received for the old building; in other words, 911,825 pesetas. This sum would be borrowed from a bank at 5.6% and repayable over a period of fifty years. It was further estimated that the net annual profit to the college for the first twenty years would be well over 100,000 ptas. or about £5,000, between four and five times as much as the previous income. Thereafter, the revenue would be even greater.<sup>16</sup>

Humble was enthusiastic and foresaw that, although for a few years the college would need to have a very reduced number of students, thereafter he would be able to maintain anything up to fifty or even sixty. The bishops were somewhat sceptical of the estimate of costs and the rosy picture being painted, but gave their approval to the project, subject to a corroboratory independent estimate which, in fact, suggested that it would be wise to have something in reserve for unexpected expenses such as higher costs, later repairs etc.<sup>17</sup>

Very soon, however, difficulties about rebuilding on the existing site had arisen (the old building was not to be pulled down for another three years and there would be restrictions on the height of the new building), but an alternative site a short distance away was offered to the college. This latter site was in a more favourable position, on the corner of the Calle de la Montera (which connected

12. *Ibid.*, 30/30.31.

13. *Ibid.*, 30/32.33.

14. *Ibid.*, 48/7.

15. Da. Cristeta Mencia's administration ended with the disappearance of the old building.

16. Federico de Blanco, Madrid, to Humble, 23rd September 1916. (*Ibid.*, 32/1.)

17. Bishop Toner to Humble, 8th November 1916. (*Ibid.*, 32/3.)

the Gran Vía with the Puerta del Sol) and was already cleared and ready for building. In area, it was smaller than the old site (636 sq.m.) but this meant that the total cost would be less—an estimated 518,953 ptas.; (site 663,526 ptas. at about 1,050 per sq.m.; construction 573,417; less compensation for the old building of 717,990). Humble recommended acceptance to the bishops,<sup>18</sup> adding that the option was open only until the end of January. On 29th, a reply was received from Scotland by telegram: "Bishops approve new scheme. Bishop Toner."<sup>19</sup>

The city corporation acquired ownership of the college property in the Calle Jacometrezo on 18th October 1917<sup>20</sup> and, two days later, Humble spent most of the money he had received in order to purchase the new site.<sup>21</sup> The contract for the construction of the nine-story building, designed by the architects D. José Espetius Anduaga and D. Vicente Agusti Elguero, was signed on 1st March 1918<sup>22</sup> and building began the following month. The builder was D. Luis Navarrete, the contract was for 1,366,560 ptas. (just under two and a half times Humble's estimate) and absolutely firm undertakings were given that the building would be ready for occupancy by November 1919 (unless there were a general strike) and that in no circumstances would the final cost exceed the contracted sum.

A loan of one million pesetas from the Banco Hipotecario de España, at 6% interest, was negotiated on 4th May 1918.<sup>23</sup> In November, Humble recalled the £2,000 on loan to the Tranent Industrial School.<sup>24</sup> All went well at first, despite the difficult times, but then a series of strikes and stoppages seriously delayed completion of the building. At the end of September 1921, with the main structure complete but much work still requiring to be done in the interior of the building, the contractor went into liquidation. He was no longer able to continue, since costs had increased immensely due to strikes, reduction in the working day from nine to eight hours, and enormous increases in wages (up 135%) and the cost of materials (up 150%). Humble considered a prosecution, but decided against it since the contractor was insolvent anyway, the college would have been out of pocket, and work would have had to remain at a standstill until the case was over.<sup>25</sup> Many bills, which the contractor should have paid but did not, were presented to the college and when Humble, rightly according to Spanish law, declined to pay,

18. Humble to Bishop Toner, 9th January 1917. (*Ibid.*, 32/4.)

19. *Ibid.*, 32/4.)

20. At the time, the property had six shops and about thirty houses, half of them unoccupied. (*Ibid.*, 47/85.) Income had dropped sharply in the previous two years. (*Ibid.*, 47/86.)

21. The site cost almost 700,000 ptas., about 30,000 more than expected. (*Ibid.*, 32/5.6.)

22. *Ibid.*, 32/8.

23. *Ibid.*, 32/10. It was to be repaid in one hundred half-yearly instalments of just over 30,000 ptas., but was in fact extinguished in 1948. (*Ibid.*, 32/29.)

24. *Ibid.*, 48/8. At this time, the exchange had dropped to an unfavourable 17.60 ptas. to £1.

25. *Ibid.*, 48/13.

the official contractors' organisation refused to supply any more materials or workmen. The college therefore had to recruit workers directly through the *Casa del Pueblo* (labour exchange) and obtain its materials by an arrangement with the firm involved in supplying materials for the new Ministry of Marine building. Already, a further 400,000 ptas. had been borrowed from the bank, this time at 8½%, and, after the contractor's failure, the administrator gave Humble a loan of 500,000 ptas. at 7%.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, expenses of the community in Valladolid had exceeded the interest from the Scottish loans and so, during the years from 1917 to 1922, all but £2,000 had had to be recalled.<sup>27</sup> At last, however, in May 1922, the Madrid building was ready and began to produce income for the college. The cost of its construction, not including purchase of the site, had been just over 1,600,000 ptas. (compared with an estimated 573,417).

The process of acquiring tenants for the new building had not been without its problems either. In January 1919, Humble had announced that, apart from the shop space on the ground floor, he intended to rent the whole building to "a big hotel company in Barcelona with large establishments there, in Milan, Valencia, Paris and America."<sup>28</sup> The magnates in question were Italians, the brothers Zenatello, one of them a businessman and the other an opera artist, and their plan was to provide furnished apartments for bachelors, businessmen etc. The following month, one of the brothers suggested that he might be allowed to establish a casino on the mezzanine or *entresuelo*. Such a scheme, if permitted, would bring great discredit on the college, said the administrator, as, in all probability, the building would acquire an unsavoury reputation; indeed, he advised trying to abandon the negotiations with the brothers altogether and seeking new tenants.<sup>29</sup> Towards the end of March, a draft contract with the Zenatello brothers was drawn up, which excluded the casino project and was to bring to the college an annual rent of approximately 160,000 ptas.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the prospective tenants themselves backed out of the negotiations soon afterwards; however, by the end of 1919, all floors had been let, to a number of different tenants, but at a total rental of 264,000 ptas. (about £10,000), somewhat better than had been anticipated under the earlier arrangement.<sup>31</sup>

Expectations were fulfilled in this regard and the property produced a steady revenue until 1936. Fortunately, these years also saw

26. *Ibid.*, 32/23 and 48/13. These loans were repaid in 1932 and 1926 respectively. (*Ibid.*, 32/27.26.)

27. This £2,000 was deposited in a Dundee bank.

28. 27th January 1919. (St. Andrews and Edinburgh archives, G 10.) Cf. college archives 32/12.

29. Federico de Blanco, Madrid, to Humble, 12th February 1919. (*Ibid.*, 32/7.)

30. 25th March 1919. (*Ibid.*, 32/9.)

31. The two main tenants were D. Manuel Aleixandre, who contracted at an annual rent of 80,000 ptas. (about £3,500) for all the shop space of the ground floor; and D. Jaime Torrens, who was to pay 84,000 ptas. a year as the rent of four floors for the Hotel Metropolitano. (*Ibid.*, 32/14.15.)

a period of stability in prices, very little inflation, and a foreign exchange rate that did not fluctuate overmuch. But the debts incurred had been so much greater than anticipated that Humble limited himself to taking only 60,000 ptas. each year for expenses in Valladolid. The result was that a strict economy was observed in the college, the community lived a rather spartan existence and hardly any money was spent on repairs or maintenance in the college;<sup>32</sup> but the debts were being steadily liquidated as, after payment of expenses in Madrid and the transfer of the 60,000 ptas. to Valladolid, all the rest of the income was devoted to that purpose.

From 1923 until 1931, Humble accepted a number of loans in Scotland at 3½ % and 4% and, with this money, paid off many of his Madrid debts, which carried interest at twice the Scottish rates. Moreover, the transactions were effected at moments at which the international exchange rate was to the college's advantage. His agent in Scotland for these negotiations was Bishop Toner, whose own diocese of Dunkeld advanced £10,200, while private individuals loaned a total of £11,550.<sup>33</sup> In 1929, Bishop Toner established a trust of £3,000, whose annual income was to be used for the maintenance in Valladolid of students from Dunkeld; if not so employed, it was for general expenses in the college and, if the latter were closed, the income was to go to any other seminary.<sup>34</sup>

In 1918, shortly after having embarked on the Madrid project, Humble committed himself to another very important financial venture. There came on the market the mansion house (of about forty rooms) and grounds of Canterac,<sup>35</sup> an estate of almost two hundred acres on the south-eastern outskirts of Valladolid. Humble wrote to Scotland, informing the bishops of the opportunity and requesting their permission to raise a loan and buy the property, in spite of the Madrid undertaking. He explained that the house was in secluded grounds and was less than thirty years old, and that he already saw it as the new college once certain changes and improvements in the interior were effected. The opportunity was unique and unrepeatable for, as far as the present college was concerned, "in many respects it is most serviceable, but from its very age is fast becoming ruinous, most of the woodwork crumbling and wormeaten, and even brickwork showing unmistakable decay...

32. In his first couple of years as rector, Humble had rewired the electrical system of the college (1910) and had built an open, covered passage between the college and the church, along the line of the wall which divides the *patio* from the small garden (1911).

33. *Ibid.*, 32/25a. All of the latter were repaid between 1927 and 1933, except the biggest of all—the debt owed to Mr. John Martin of Cambuslang (£4,600), repaid with interest (about £1,400) by the Scottish bishops in November 1953. (*Ibid.*, 32/25a.)

The Dunkeld debt was not finally extinguished until 1962; in 1958, the task had been made considerably easier by Bishop Hart's cancellation of well over £1,000 of the interest due.

34. *Ibid.*, 31/6/2.

35. The name comes from Lt.-Gen. César José de Canterac who, in 1826, bought the lands from the Dominicans of S. Pablo in Valladolid. (*Ibid.*, 50/1.)





THE COMMUNITY IN THE WINTER OF 1894-95

- (Back) Desmond Scannell, Patrick McDaniel, Francis P. O'Brien, George MacConachie, John McCabe, Patrick Cush, William de Monti;  
 (Centre) John Joyce, Donald Matheson, George P. Shaw, Daniel Colvin, Peter McCarrrol, James McCormack, Joseph McHardy, Daniel Conway, John McMenemy, William McCurrach, Alexander McDonald, John Roche, John Andrew MacIntyre, Angus McInnes, Patrick Diamond, Bartholomew Flynn;  
 (Front) Cardinal's Chaplain, Canon Magistral, Fr. David McDonald (rector), Cardinal Cascajares (Archbishop of Valladolid), Fr. William J. Macmaster (vice-rector), Fr. Francis Anselm Steven (professor).



#### THE COUNTRY HOUSE AT BOECILLO

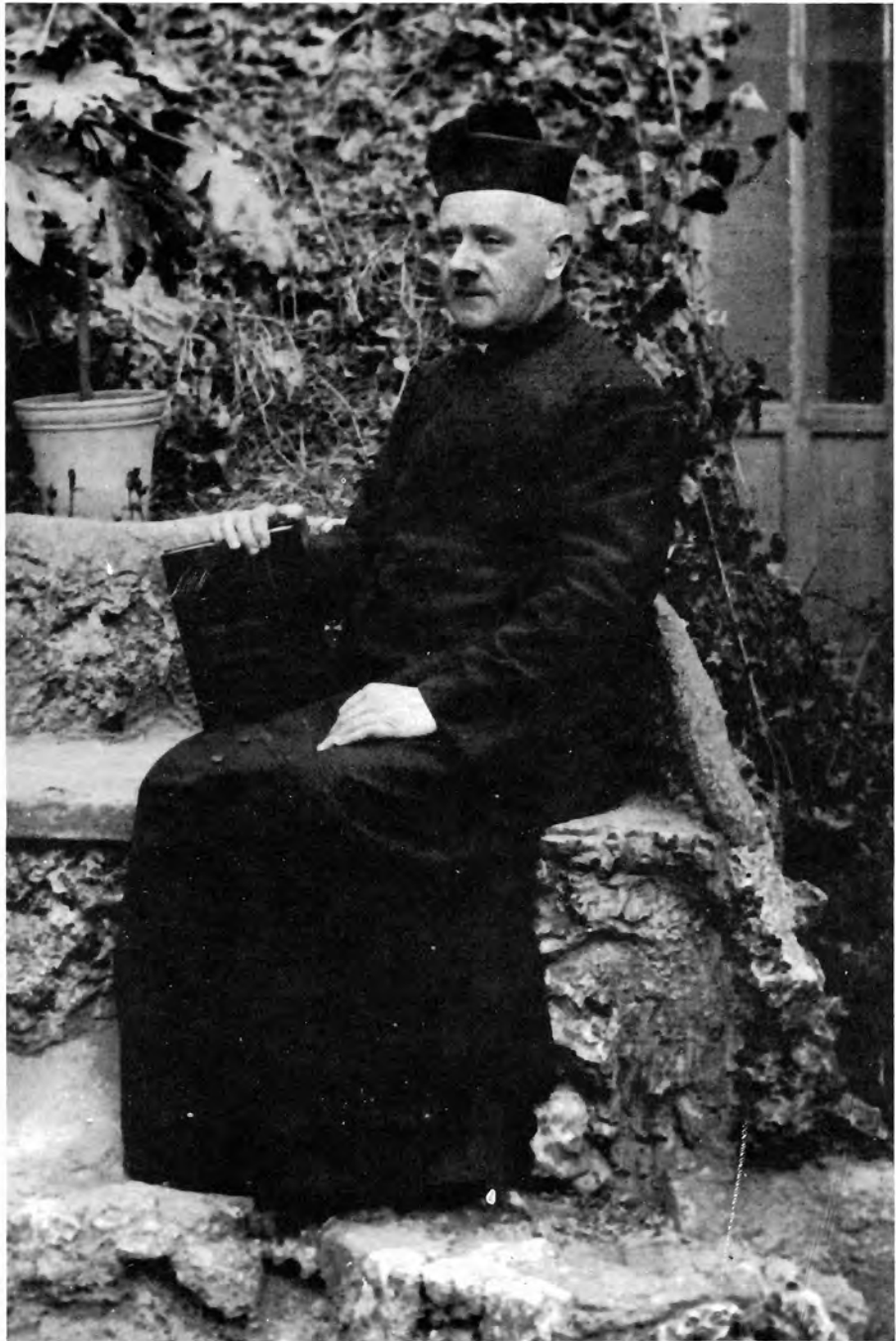
Built by Alexander Cameron I in the 1790s, the house was the personal property of each rector until 1941. The upper photograph shows the house as it was in the 1920s; the chapel is the added section on the extreme right. The lower view shows the house as it is today, with, in the foreground, the grapes being gathered in one of the college's vineyards.



THE COLLEGE PROPERTY AT CANTERAC AND IN MADRID

The estate and "castillo" of Canterac were bought in 1918, with a view to transferring the college there; but, after military occupation, the mansion (top) had to be demolished in 1946.

When the old college building in Madrid was demolished, a nearby site, at the corner of the Gran Vía and Calle Montera, was purchased by the college and a building was erected and let. The lower photograph was taken about 1919 (the adjoining property in the Gran Vía being still under construction).



RIGHT REV. MGR. JAMES HUMBLE  
Rector of the College  
1909 - 1940

The position of the College is between what are now two back streets, of very inferior grade. It is overlooked in front and on two sides, at the back, by very inferior dwelling houses, and the whole neighbourhood is gradually becoming more and more objectionable."<sup>36</sup>

At the beginning of July, a telegram arrived in Valladolid: "Purchase approved. Letter on way. Bishop Toner."<sup>37</sup> The letter of confirmation brought news that the approval had been unanimous: "a fine consensus of opinion in favour of the proposal."<sup>38</sup>

Later that month, however, a most unpleasant and public disagreement began between the rector and Canon George Ritchie, who had been his friend and correspondent for many years and who had acted as the college's agent and representative in Scotland. Ritchie bore a great affection for his old college; when he heard of the Canterac proposal, he was shocked and astounded and, in his fury, sent the following circular at the end of July to former students of Valladolid, members of the San Ambrosio Society:

St. Andrew's Cathedral House,  
52 Great Clyde Street,  
Glasgow.

Dear Rev. Sir,

There is a proposal to relinquish the old Colegio gifted by the Spanish Kings to the Scotch Mission, and to purchase in lieu of it a Lady's house and demesne, near Valladolid, for the residence of our Students.

Will you kindly enter on the enclosed card your assent or dissent and return the same to me immediately.

Yours truly,

G. W. Ritchie.

Ritchie also sent a telegram of protest directly to Valladolid and, on 17th August, Humble, strongly resentful, replied to this "unsolicited interference" and "attempt to come between me in my position as Rector of the College, and my relations with the Bishops." Veneration and love for the college must surely not mean "the adoption of every possible step and means to oppose its real and practical benefit;" he would yield to no one in his practical love for the institution, proved by his efforts over fifteen years, but the facts had to be faced—the building which, to be honest, really belonged to the Jesuits was now in a most unsavoury district and it was falling down. It "is fast nearing the end of its earthly usefulness, and no amount of sentiment can save it." And how could Ritchie

36. Humble to Bishop Toner, 12th June 1918. (St. Andrews and Edinburgh archives, G 10.)

37. College archives 50/3.

38. Bishop Toner to Humble, 4th July 1918. (Ibid., 50/4.)

criticise the new alternative when he knew nothing about it?<sup>39</sup> In similar vein, Humble also had a circular printed and sent to the members of the San Ambrosio Society. "I take this means to protest most strongly against the whole tenour and expression of that Circular [Ritchie's], both in its wording and insinuation... The Circular is malicious and treacherous; [but] if written in good faith, ... it is merely foolish."<sup>40</sup>

Ritchie was so angry that he resigned his post as the college's agent in Scotland. Humble wrote to him, regretting this step and another that he had also taken. "I am sorry to hear that you have destroyed the manuscripts you had prepared. To me it seems a very extreme measure, as the history of the College up to the date to which you could have carried it could have nothing to do with present developments. However—I have no doubt the history will come to be written some day, and if not—well, the Colegio has managed to exist some 290 years without one."<sup>41</sup>

Such opposition to his scheme was not likely to deter Humble; quite the reverse. For a sum of 150,000 pesetas (about £6,000), he bought the property for the college on 21st October 1918 from the previous owner, the Countess de la Oliva. On the same day, he accepted a loan of 175,000 ptas. (at 6% and repayable in six years) from the college's Madrid administrator, D. Federico de Blanco. The security given was the new estate and the college's new site in Madrid.<sup>42</sup>

Humble considered that he had made "an ideal investment which, owing to its situation, surroundings, retirement, etc., would provide an unsurpassable substitute for our present College when circumstances or necessity should advocate a translation."<sup>43</sup> In the meantime, efforts were put in hand to try to make the grounds productive of fruit and vegetables for the college's use. Placed in charge of this work was D. Marcelo Lázaro, who had been the Countess's coachman. He lived on the estate with his wife (who had been one of the Countess's maids) and large family, one of whom, Manolo, succeeded to his father's position on the latter's retirement in 1952. Much of the ground was poor vineyard and not very productive, but the lower section, of some twenty acres, was of good soil and supplied with irrigation ditches. Gradually this part was got back into good condition and gave enough produce to satisfy the needs of the college and even leave some over, on occasions, to be sold to the markets.

The rector had been confident that, within a year or two, he would be able to repay the loan he had taken to purchase Canterac.

39. *Ibid.*, 50/5.

40. 23rd August 1918. (*Ibid.*, 50/5.)

41. 15th November 1918. (Glasgow archives, loc. cit.)

42. College archives 50/8.

43. *Ibid.*, 48/9.

But the delays and difficulties in Madrid upset his calculations and repayment became something of a problem. Nevertheless, it had been made by the time stipulated and the debt was extinguished in 1924.<sup>44</sup>

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Shortly after the unpleasantness of the Canterac quarrel, the college survived a much more serious threat and one of which Humble may have been wholly unaware at the time.

"The Scottish Bishops have had under consideration the proposal<sup>45</sup> to suppress the Scots College, Valladolid, Spain, with a view to utilising the funds for the maintenance of the students in the Scots College, Rome.

"After mature consideration, the Bishops respectfully but unanimously and strongly express the opinion that the proposed change would not be advantageous. They believe that it could only be effected—if at all—at great financial loss: and they fear that even the attempt to effect it might result in the loss of everything.

"The desirability in other respects of an arrangement of the kind proposed was not minutely discussed ... but enough was said, at the meeting held to consider the matter, to indicate that probably on other grounds too the opinion of the Bishops would be unfavourable to the proposal..."<sup>46</sup>

In the college, meanwhile, life went on fairly uneventfully, except for the unexpected departure of Dr. Cronin, called home by the vicar capitular of his diocese in February 1918 to Humble's dismay and the regret of all. It was not until May of the following year that his successor arrived, Dr. James Connolly, of the Archdiocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. The rector had been made an honorary doctor of theology at the start of 1917 and was nominated a domestic prelate in July, 1922. In September of that year, the death occurred of Venancia Rodrigo, who had worked in the college since 1867, in the time of John Cameron, and who had continued living there after her retirement from the post of housekeeper in 1917.

The rector was interested in history and arranged the college archives in his characteristically orderly fashion;<sup>47</sup> but most of his spare time was spent in his "workshop" (which students were not allowed to enter) on interests of a more scientific nature, and especially with his microscopes and large collection of glass slides. Although he is remembered with affection by those outside the college who knew him in Valladolid, his attitude to the students was

44. *Ibid.*, 50/10.

45. Of Cardinal Bisleti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities.

46. Bishop Toner, Secretary of the Hierarchy, to Donald Mackintosh, rector of the Scots College, Rome, 3rd May 1919. (Scots College, Rome, archives. 34/200.)

47. The college archives were catalogued by Mgr. Philip Flanagan in the 1950s.

strict and, as it seemed to them, unsympathetic. They had the impression, for example, that he regarded their illnesses or indispositions as feigned. Nor were arrangements for their spiritual care particularly satisfactory. The week's retreat, each autumn, was normally conducted by Spanish Jesuits, one or two of whom attempted to give the talks in English. But the community received no regular spiritual direction or talks, and had to make do with frequent readings from *The Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtues* by Alfonso Rodriguez, S. J. For confession, the students usually called in at a Jesuit house on the way back from classes in the seminary.

They had to hand over all the money in their possession and, in turn, received a monthly allowance of five pesetas (about four shillings) and an additional "pension" of two pesetas if they were theologians and one and a half if philosophers. The general feeling among them was that they were always second-best to the English students; if the latter received a concession, the Scots were denied it; if they had something, the English would have something better. It had been found that football matches between the two colleges led to bad feeling so that the custom was, rather, that there should be games between mixed teams from both colleges or that a team selected from the best players in each college should play against other teams which, in the early days of football in Valladolid, were often composed of Basques resident in the city. Around 1920, football was only becoming popular in Valladolid and, from time to time, the students were invited to referee games between various army detachments in the area.

Until 1937, the students not only paid no fees but had all their clothing, exterior and interior, supplied by the college. The food was generally plentiful but, because of the need for economy, it did not admit of a great deal of variety. Breakfast was a small loaf and a choice of coffee or hot milk (the choice being made for a month at a time); dinner was soup, a stew of potatoes and beans (*garbanzos*—a great favourite of the students), another meat course, and fruit or cheese; supper had to be ordered for a month at a time, the choice being meat either alone, or with fried potatoes, or with potatoes and oil in a stew. The students were allowed a glass of wine at dinner and supper, drunk from silver goblets of immemorial tradition.

The rector had not a high opinion of Spaniards and refused to allow the students to speak to them. For a time, he even forbade an attempt to revive the custom of an annual visit to Avila. In later years, however, after 1924, he did let the students see something of Spain, even allowing them to be away, all together and under the guidance of Dr. Connolly, for a week or so at a time.<sup>48</sup> But such

48. On such occasions, the students would visit Lourdes, or Saragossa and Montserrat, or Compostela and Corunna, etc.



privileges were given at the rector's discretion and were subject to a condition.

"I am sorry to say there was no excursion this year, as results did not justify it. Some years ago these excursions to various ecclesiastically and historically interesting parts of Spain were instituted, partly as a reward and partly as a stimulus to genuinely hard work and depended on a fixed average of fairly high passes which *had* to be gained. The marks, or passes, of this year were not high enough to make the proposal entertainable, and this was well recognised, as no mention was made of an excursion. I am sorry in some ways but, in my opinion, a rule which is made should be either firmly enforced or left unmade. There have been other occasions when these excursions have not come off, and we have always found the effect salutary."<sup>49</sup>

Apart from such excursions, the three months spent at Boecillo were of a very routine, even humdrum, nature. Humble himself normally spent the summer in Valladolid (except that he rejoined the community on the evening of 24th July, in order to celebrate his feast day on 25th); the result was that, if the vice-rector were absent, the students were left on their own without a priest in the house and had to go to the village for Mass. They were allowed to take two books each from Valladolid for the summer at Boecillo, but some managed to get round this rule by wrapping others up with their bundles of bedding which were taken by cart to the country house. Dr. Connolly gradually organised a library for the students at Boecillo.<sup>50</sup>

Attempts were sometimes made by individual students to be allowed to spend a summer at home in Scotland but, in such cases, the rector recommended refusal to the bishops. Such holidays were unnecessary, he held; they usually had an upsetting effect on the student, were burdensome for the family and caused jealousy among the other students. One or two of the students had wanted "to pass the vacation journeying through Spain—which to my mind is even more objectionable than being at home, where there could be at least some supervision and restriction... The students have a splendid country house here, almost unrestricted liberty during vacation, all kinds of games and amusements..."<sup>51</sup>

There were few visitors from Scotland in the years between the two world wars, although a number, including Canon Woods,

49. To Secretary of San Ambrosio Society, 14th September 1935. (College archives 65/3/69.)

50. There was a tragedy at Boecillo in 1954 about a week after the students had arrived for their summer vacation. Duncan Kennedy, who had just completed his first year in the college, was drowned in the Duero on 22nd June. (It was at this occasion that the college bought a grave in the Boecillo cemetery. *Ibid.*, 29/51.)

51. To Mgr. John Ritchie, 19th May 1916. (Glasgow archives, loc. cit.) Cf. letter to id., 28th April 1919. (*Ibid.*)

the former rector, made the journey in June 1927 to celebrate the tercentenary of the college's foundation. On that occasion, the celebrations were extended over three days, the main events of the first day (8th June) being a high Mass and the jubilee dinner.<sup>52</sup> The company spent the afternoon of the second day at Canterac (a "garden party", it was called) and the whole of the third day at Boecillo, enjoying an *al fresco* lunch and athletic sports.<sup>53</sup>

Archbishop Mackintosh of Glasgow made two visits to Spain, each of them on important business. During the first, in May 1925, he conducted an official and formal visitation of the college on behalf of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities (who, six years earlier, had sought to suppress it). Humble was indignant at what he considered an unwarranted intrusion, which had been decided without the knowledge or agreement of the rest of the hierarchy, and he was of a mind to complain to the Spanish crown, since the college was under royal patronage.<sup>54</sup> In the event, however, he cooperated with the archbishop and gave very full and frank answers to the long written questionnaire which was submitted to him.<sup>55</sup>

Of particular interest is his reply to the question:

"Have the Bishops of Scotland any authoritative or decisive voice in the management of the College?"

"Answer: ... Administrative measures, financial dealings and the temporalities generally are subject to the one authority of the Patron of the College, and those whom he has appointed to act in his name. (*Real Cédula*, nos. X and XI).

"In practice, the Superiors of the College have always recognised the moral right of the Bishops of Scotland to the fullest and most complete information on all that concerns the Scots College in Spain and, for this reason, although not contemplated nor enjoined by the Constitutions, a precise and detailed account of the College is sent to the General Meeting of the Scottish Hierarchy every year..."<sup>56</sup>

Archbishop Mackintosh was accompanied on that visit by Bishop McCarthy of Galloway. When he returned three years later, he had with him another former Valladolid student, Bishop Toner, (who had been a not infrequent visitor over the previous twelve or thirteen years). Their mission on this occasion was to arrange for the sale

52. The menu included "*orubres variados*", "*solomillo al risol*" and "*flan imperial*".

53. The following month, that part of the old college of San Ambrosio which adjoined the Scots College and was used as a barracks (the "new part" of Geddes' day) was destroyed by fire. Fortunately, very little damage was caused to the Scots College.

54. Humble to Federico de Blanco, Madrid, 18th January 1925. (College archives 48/29a.)

55. *Ibid.*, 48/31.

The following year, the rector was made an honorary canon of the Glasgow cathedral chapter.

56. *Ibid.*, 48/31, pp. 18-19.

of the college building in Valladolid and the transfer of the community to the Canterac house. In this connection, Alfonso XIII received the two bishops and Archbishop Gandásegui of Valladolid in audience at Salamanca. The two Scottish representatives presented a letter to the king in which they noted that the Spanish ecclesiastical authorities were most anxious to acquire possession of the historic building so closely connected with devotion to the Sacred Heart in Spain and that they had offered to purchase it at a sum of 300,000 ptas. (around £12,000); the Scottish bishops declared themselves satisfied with this proposal and asked the king to authorise the sale and the transfer of the college to Canterac.<sup>57</sup>

About a year later the Ministry of Justice and Worship issued a decree addressed to the Archbishop of Valladolid and in the following terms:

"In view of the communication made to H. M. the King by the Archbishop of Glasgow and the Bishop of Dunkeld on behalf of the bishops of Scotland, requesting authorisation to sell to the Spanish hierarchy, as represented by Your Grace, the building and grounds of the college of St. Ambrose and to transfer the said college to a new building to be erected at Canterac: since the aforementioned Scots College is a private foundation with its own property, under the protection of the royal patronage in accordance with the royal charter of Charles III of 18th October 1778, and since it is a question of selling the property to the Spanish bishops in such a way that the college does not cease to exist but is merely transferred to another site in the same town of Valladolid, H. M. the King has agreed to grant the authorisation requested for the sale and transfer referred to above.

"By royal command I hereby bring this to the notice of Your Grace and of the Archbishop of Glasgow and the Bishop of Dunkeld.  
"Madrid, 6th March 1929."<sup>58</sup>

It appears, therefore, that the Scottish bishops asked for, and received, royal leave to make the sale and transfer, but there is no documentary evidence that the bishops committed themselves to make use of the permission granted. At any rate, and despite the hopes of the local archbishop and the rector, the plans were left in abeyance. A few years later, Mgr. Humble was of the opinion that the times were very unpropitious for the projected move. His ambition to leave San Ambrosio and move to Canterac was never realised; nor is it ever likely to be, since the prospect of having the college there is a much less appealing one today; not only is "the old Colegio" in much better material shape than Humble would admit,

57. 17th June 1928. (*Ibid.*, 71/2: copy.)

58. *Ibid.*, 30/44: copy.

but the area in which it is located is now one of the better districts of the city; and remoteness and seclusion are no longer regarded as indispensable for a seminary.

In April 1931, Alfonso XIII left the country and Spain was declared a republic. In case of any hostile demonstrations, two civil guards were stationed in the college, but the precaution was unnecessary and they were withdrawn after a week. The city remained quiet and the community completely unmolested, although letters from the college are full of indignation against the increasing inefficiency, anticlericalism and atheism of the politicians.<sup>59</sup> At the time, Humble was still finding it necessary to run the college with strict economy and, of the party of ten students who arrived in 1933, four were regarded as "boarders" for a year, i. e., their fees (£80 p. a.) were paid by their bishops and not from the college revenues.

During the winter of 1934-35, Humble was able to execute one of the few major repairs that he did during his rectorate—the country house being given what was practically a new roof.<sup>60</sup> At about the same time, there was bad news from Madrid. The college administrator there, since the death of Don Federico de Blanco in 1927, was Don Rafael Muñoz y López and, early in 1935, he wrote to say that, during some violence the previous October, the property had suffered a certain amount of damage. There were many bullet marks on the outside of the building, some windows had been shattered and the water tanks holed. One person, attempting to close the shutters, had been shot dead. Moreover, some of the tenants, including the hotel owner, were badly in arrears with their rent payments.<sup>61</sup> These were some of Humble's preoccupations as conditions in Spain deteriorated and the country moved closer and closer to civil war.

59. In 1933 and 1935, the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts sent forms for completion to Humble, but he refused to give exhaustive answers, claiming that the college was exempt from such enquiries. (*Ibid.*, 30/45.47.)

60. Electric light was installed there in the spring of 1936.

61. 5th February 1935. (*Ibid.*, 55/15/1.)