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(To be continued.)

NOTICE OF A RARE BOOK, ENTITLED, "BEWARE THE CAT."

BY HERBERT F. HORE, ESQ.

ABOUT twenty-four years ago, a singularly curious and interesting volume, under this quaint title, was advertised for sale in Thorpe's Catalogue, at the price of seven guineas. The book, a duodecimo, was printed in black letter, in London, by Allde, in the year 1584. Thorpe believed it to be unique. It had belonged to, among other collectors, Richard Heber, whose enormous library of rare works so well served Sir Walter Scott. Heber considered it the most curious volume in all his vast collection, as illustrative of the times, and

wrote in it—"No other copy is known, I believe." It contains so much that all Irish archæologists must long to read, respecting our country, that I venture to draw attention to it, by the following extracts:—

"Grimalkin slain in Ireland."—I cannot give even a guess in solution of this myth. "Grimalkin," the common name for a witch's cat, means "little grey Molly," and may have been the Cat we are told to beware of, in the title of the work.¹

"Account of the Civil Wars in Ireland, by Mackmorro, and all the rest of the Wild Lords."—This would be very interesting, because Mac Morrough was Prince of the Leinster Irish, and the time referred to is, probably, that when Arte Kavanagh, the Mac Morrough of the day, successfully defended his country against two great expeditions, led by Richard II. Froissart's account of the Irish kings of that day quite supports the epithet of "wild lords."

"The Fashion of the Irish Wars at that time."—This must be a curious account, since Irish strategy was almost peculiar, excepting in its resemblance to the tactics of the Scottish Gael. The Irish fought flying, and their flight, like that of the Parthians, was considered more dangerous than even their fierce assault. Like other Celtic nations, they did not stand their ground steadily, but either ran the risk of a tumultuous onslaught, or endeavoured to draw the enemy into places where they could fight them at great advantage. In Elizabeth's time, service in this country was deemed far more severe than in the Scottish Borders.

"Fitz Harris, and the Prior and Convent of the Abbey of Tintern."—The story here told was a county Wexford one, since Fitz Harris, or Fitz Henry, was Baron of Kilmacan, a parish near this abbey. These Fitz Harris's are said to have descended illegitimately from Meyler Fitz Henry—

"Domitus indomitor totius gentis Hiberniæ."

But they became "as Irish as O'Hanlon's breech," and having "matched with the Kavanaghs," they held with them, and became involved in their endless feuds. This tale about Baron Fitz Harris and the neighbouring monastery was, no doubt, a merry one; and our readers would be glad to read it, if it could be rescued from oblivion.

"The Irish Churle's Tale."—Perhaps the basis of this story may be found, like those of other Irish stories, among the tradi-

¹ In the absence of information it may, perhaps, be allowable to guess that this effusion might give some clue to the origin of the story of the world-famous "Kilkenny

Cats," who ate each other to the tails! The first promulgator of this remarkable battle of the cats has never, that we are aware of, been traced.—ED.

tional stories still current in Brittany. Churle, a term of Teutonic origin, signified a labouring rustic; so that the story-teller was, doubtless, one of the Celtic betaghs, or serfs, of the English Pale.

“The Wild Irishmen were better than we in reverencing their Religion.”—This assertion might open a highly interesting subject for investigation.

“The Old Irish Diet was to dine at night.”—Anciently, the cuddy, or supper, the chief meal, was taken after nightfall.

The remainder of the contents of this exceedingly scarce book is not of Irish interest, merely relating to such general topics as tales of witches and women, and various other subjects, which, however, are declared, in Thorpe’s Catalogue, to be treated of in an extremely curious manner. It was understood that this rare volume was purchased by a book collector in Cambridge, but all my inquiries, and even the medium of a notice in “Notes and Queries,” have failed to obtain information as to who its present possessor is. Perhaps some of our readers may be pleased to take up the chase.
