

Scarampi, PierFrancesco

by Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin

Scarampi, PierFrancesco (1596–1656), papal representative to the confederate catholics of Ireland, and provost of the Roman Oratory, was probably born on family lands near Montferrat on the Piedmont–Genovese border in northern Italy. His parents (of whom no other details are known) were of noble stock, and he had at least two siblings. His first career was as a soldier but he then replaced his recently deceased brother as the abbot of Fernanda Antico. Some years later, animated by the desire for a more ascetic life, he resigned this position to a nephew and applied to join the Roman Oratory.

Scarampi arrived in Ireland in late June or early July 1643 as the representative of Pope Urban VIII to the supreme council of the confederate catholics. He evidently brought with him a small sum of money which he offered to the council, but his initial importance lay in the extension of diplomatic recognition, which helped bolster the legitimacy of the newly founded confederate executive. Probably partly for this reason, the confederates urged Rome unsuccessfully on several occasions to raise his mission to a full nunciature. Following the death in 1645 of the archbishop of Tuam, Malachy O'Queely (qv), suggestions were also apparently made to him that he should become the next metropolitan of that province.

Although undeniably useful to the confederate government, and despite his widespread recognition as a man of exceptional holiness and extremely ascetic life (his portrait, for instance, was requested by a number of individuals), Scarampi was not particularly successful in influencing policy. He strongly but unsuccessfully objected to the year-long truce that was concluded with royalist forces in September 1643, in particular to the £30,000 which the confederates paid for the privilege. In 1645 he opposed the secret Glamorgan protocol as a basis for peace with the royalist party, on the basis that the mandate of the earl of Glamorgan (qv) was of doubtful value, that its secrecy was insulting to the papacy, and that it drove a wedge between the attainment of clerical and secular confederate demands. Nevertheless, he was unable to convince even the Irish hierarchy of his position: seven of the thirteen Irish bishops who assembled to debate the matter elected to accept the Glamorgan concessions.

The arrival of a full papal nuncio, Rinuccini (qv), in Ireland in October 1645 helped to reduce Scarampi's independent importance, although for the first time he apparently secured the right of attendance at some meetings of the supreme council. In addition, he clearly acted as an important adviser to his new and far more influential colleague, whom he greeted with extravagant humility on the occasion of their first meeting in Limerick. Scarampi's advice was probably a key factor in Rinuccini's decision to donate two-thirds of his available money to Thomas Preston (qv) and

only one-third to Owen Roe O'Neill (qv) in the first half of 1646. Scarampi had a strong relationship with Preston dating back to his independent support of the general's successful siege of Duncannon in 1645. He was also largely instrumental in organising the reconciliation between Preston and James Tuchet (qv), earl of Castlehaven, in the autumn of that year, in the wake of the fiasco of the Youghal campaign.

It was Scarampi who first warned the nuncio that the council had been deceitful concerning the conclusion of the Ormond peace in March 1646, and he evidently played a part in convincing Rinuccini to adopt a combative stance at the legatine synod in Waterford during the following August. Scarampi was one of eight clerics to whom that synod's authority was devolved after its dissolution, which probably contributed to the clergy's aggressive stance in September and October. During this period in addition he played an important role in ensuring that Preston be included as co-general in the disastrous campaign against the marquess of Ormond (qv) at Dublin.

From the moment of Rinuccini's arrival Scarampi had been eager to leave Ireland, and the nuncio's inability to grant him permission to do so was evidently a cause of some friction between the two. So too, evidently, was the difference of opinion concerning the function of Rinuccini's ecclesiastical tribunal which operated free of charge, to Scarampi's disgust, since he, unlike the Roman authorities who subsequently approved of Rinuccini's decision, considered this as compromising the rights of future papal ministers. On his return to Italy in 1647, taking with him a number of Irish youths including Oliver Plunkett (qv), the costs of whose education he helped defray, Scarampi was evidently critical of Rinuccini's behaviour in Ireland although, typically, he also bemoaned his own incompetence. In Italy he became renowned for his extraordinary care for the indigent and diseased and also as a deeply sympathetic confessor of women. He ultimately and reluctantly was made provost of the Oratory. On the outbreak of plague in Rome he requested permission to assist its victims in the *lazaretto*, where he contracted the illness and died 14 October 1656 (NS). He was subsequently declared venerable during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XIV.

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