

The Red Gate

By Richard Sutton

Excerpt from the Prologue...

© 2009, Huntington, NY All Rights Reserved by the Author

“He was... quite a piece of odd work ... wasn't he?” Professor Declan Broghan remarked quietly amid conflicted thoughts to his associate, Williams, as their carriage bumped along the street.

Williams, concerned about speaking ill of the dead, replied, “He certainly was willing to work hard in the field.”

Broghan nodded, adding “...supervise...at the very least.”

For a moment, he let the memory of his first meeting with O'Meara flood back. The occasion had been the unveiling of a new addition to the Trinity College Antiquities Library. It had been some years ago and it had been a long time since any fine, old illuminations of any appreciable age had been found in restorable condition. Until the find.

That find, his own find, had occurred South of Newtown, Co. Down. Under the largest hearth stone inside a partially ruined abbey being restored for use as a local school, the parchments had been found in a copper lined wooden box. Several had been damaged by water and contact with the rotted wooden casing, but in the center of the package were four fine pages documenting the founding of the abbey and the Irish Saints whose work had directed its construction.

The monastery dated back to 1030 or so and had not seen any excavation, beyond the typical looting of stonework, since it fell into disuse, long before the famine. One of those monks who had prepared the illuminations had been recognized as an important historian of his time, so the discovery of work in his own, or his scribe's hand, was thrilling.

That fortunate discovery and subsequent restoration was the first recognition Broghan had received as a new member and research fellow of the Dept. of Archaeology, at the College. It had led him to a regular lecture series and travel to Cambridge twice each year.

O'Meara, also a new faculty member, hired directly from Cambridge as a field assistant, had attended the unveiling. Broghan chuckled to himself as he remembered the intense young man, who had never spoken to him beyond the requirements of polite society or on collegiate matters, suddenly appearing almost at his elbow during the entire reception.

O'Meara had smiled broadly every single time a question had been asked of Broghan - especially from the press or any of the College administrative deans, often physically insinuating himself between Broghan and the interested party.

At one point, during a lull, he asked him what he was trying to accomplish. O'Meara replied, confidently, that he was learning what would be expected of him when he made his own breakthrough.

"I expect that I'll be getting used to this level of attention, myself. You handle yourself very well with the press and the politicians." O'Meara added confidently

Broghan thought of the "compliment" and decided he would keep a watch on this O'Meara - there was something about his aggressive confidence that made Broghan wary. That decision, among others, led him to eventually take a new faculty position leading to the chairmanship of the Archaeology department at the relatively new University of Dublin.