

FERNS, a bishop's see in the archdiocese of Dublin, in Ireland. The chapter consists of a dean, precentor, chancellor, treasurer, archdeacon, and ten prebendaries. This diocese occupies the whole of the county of Wexford, and a small part of the county of Wicklow. In 1792 it was divided into 143 parishes, constituting 40 benefices, and contained 40 churches of the establishment. In 1834 the numbers were:—parishes, 140; benefices, 57; churches of the establishment, 62; other places of worship in connection therewith, 2; Roman Catholic houses of worship, 91; Presbyterians, 1; and other Protestant dissenting do., 14. In the latter year the gross population of the diocese was 197,780, of whom there were 24,672 members of the established church, 172,780 Roman Catholics, 19 Presbyterians, and 300 other Protestant dissenters, being in the proportion of one Protestant, of whatever denomination, to seven Roman Catholics nearly. There were at the same time in this diocese 301 daily schools, educating 15,970 young persons, being in the proportion of $8\frac{1}{35}$ per cent of the entire population under daily instruction, in which respect Ferns stands fifteenth among the thirty-two dioceses of Ireland. Of the above schools, 19 were in connection with the National Board of Education in 1834.

This diocese was founded about A.D. 598 by St. Edan, otherwise Moedoc, who had received a grant of Ferns from Brandubh, king of Leinster. During the life of Edan this see ranked as an archbishopric, and was head of the ecclesiastical province of Leinster. It was united with the see of Leighlin in the year 1600, which union still subsists; and is by 3rd and 4th William IV. c. 37 farther increased by the addition of the see of Ossory when next void.

The town of Ferns is a place of considerable antiquity, but much decayed. It is situated in the parish of Ferns and barony of Scarewalsh, in the county of Wexford. The cathedral, which is also the parish church, is a mean building; but the palace, built by Dr. Cope, is handsome and commodious. There are some remains of an abbey founded by Dermot Mac Murrough, king of Leinster, and a ruined castle, said to have been his residence at the time of the English invasion. In 1831 Ferns contained 571 inhabitants. (*Beaufort's Memoir of a Map of Ireland; Reports of Commissioners, &c.*)