

A Forgotten Part of Ireland

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Dedication

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The brave sons and ever-virtuous daughters of Erin in America are beautifully distinguished for their tearful remembrance of the land of their fathers across the sea. Ever in the din of business, in the flurry of excitement, in the solitude of thought, their hearts steal back where the mother sits thinking of them, where their childhood strayed. Like their own St. Columba, in exile, who, with tears in his eyes, watched the happy swallows return to his dear Eire, the children of St. Patrick love to turn their eyes to Ireland, where the “ young are so gentle and the old are so wise.” To them this book is affectionately dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

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Two years ago I was sent as a young priest to Achill Island on my first mission. Up to that time my acquaintance with the island was made through the old school geography, happily for the education of youth now discarded, and it merely enabled me to find its position in the map of Ireland, west of Mayo. There was, however, an idea abroad that its people were savage and primitive and worse ; that it was a modern Nazareth, whence nothing good might be expected to come, and I honestly feared, fresh as I was from theological studies, that these bad, incorrigible Achillmen, as they were supposed to be, could derive no benefit from the sacraments I came to administer, and ought not to be admitted to them. At the same time I had the boundless confidence and enthusiasm of youth to work a speedy reformation and felt that I had merely to blow my trumpet and the walls of Jericho should fall to the ground. I found, after two years of experience, that my hopes and fears were equally extravagant and equally groundless. With these ideas, however, I came to the island and was followed in a few days by two other fresh arrivals, the one who, for eleven years, had been my genial schoolfellow, and, like myself, recently ordained, was to be now my fellow co-operator. The other, whose Mass I served for seven years as a boy in my native parish, was to be administrator of the island. A happy and harmonious combination we proved, and when we parted it seemed the dissolution of the goodliest fellowship,

Whereof this world holds record.

After my first and hasty survey of the island, I thought it anything but interesting and groped about to see if around this dreary waste of bogland the mantle of history could not be thrown, or if, with Irving, I could not “ pass from the commonplace realities of the present and lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of the past.” I remember how I devoured the first scrap of information on its past which I found in “ The Battle of the Faith in Ireland.” “ The Dark Lady of Doona” brought to my mind the story of Grainne Uaile, one of whose castles—Kildownett—I was pleased to find in the island. One day I discovered a copy of the Achill Herald, dated October 31st, 1844. The Herald, as I learned from the “ Battle of the Faith,” was a journal printed and published in this far-off island. It was started as far back as July, 1837. Its ponderous title tells the purpose and gives a fair idea of the contents of the various numbers, and I make no apology for giving it in full :

THE ACHILL HERALD AND WESTERN WITNESS : BEING A MONTHLY JOURNAL EXHIBITING THE PRINCIPLES AND PROGRESS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM, AND EXPOSING THE ERRORS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THAT SECTION OF THE RIVAL KINGDOM OF ANTICHRIST CALLED THE PAPACY.

The paper ran into the nineties. For a long time I searched in vain for other copies, until, to my inexpressible joy, I came across a complete file in Trinity College Library, Dublin.

Meantime, however, a grand pathetic story of a famishing people I had heard from the chroniclers, the old men of the island, with whom I made an early acquaintance. It was the story of a battle won. Yes, in this Nazareth, amongst this "savage people," in this Forgotten Part of Ireland, unknown to the outside world, many, whose cries were drowned in the wail of the ocean, poured out their lives for Ireland's faith, died and were buried where they fell,

"Unwept, unhonored and unsung."

It brought a tear to my eye to think of their forgotten fate, and to my mind Oliver Wendell Holmes and his beautiful epitaph :

"Nay, grieve not for the dead alone,
Whose song has told their heart's sad story ;
Weep for the voiceless who have known
The cross, without the crown of glory."

I longed to do something towards preserving and publishing their tale. I sought every opportunity of speaking to those venerable and ancient eye-witnesses and actors of events described. It was a labor of love to hear them relate, as it is to record, all they felt and all they saw. I hastened to gather up some fragments of their story ere the grave closed over them forever, as they

"Wait on the verge of dark eternity,
Like stranded wrecks, the tide returning,
To sweep them from our sight."

The life of Edward Nangle, the Apostle of Achill, transparently prejudiced, but valuable for its historical data, as well as the "Achill Herald," enabled me to check the stories of the peasantry and give them a historical perspective, which, otherwise, I could not very easily have done.

So far a tolerably adequate view of events as far back as 1834, when Mr. Nangle came to the island, was opened up before me ; but wishing to penetrate farther and lift the veil of history I continued my search. I knew Father Manus Sweeney, a native of Achill Island, figured in the rebellion of '98, for which he paid the penalty of his young life. Weird tales of the fate of Lyghtel on Tonragee Mountain and of the concealment and betrayal of Father Manus were told with many variations that made it difficult to separate fact from fiction. I wanted written records.

Having appealed for assistance to the rector of the Irish College, Paris, where Fr. Manus Sweeney was educated and ordained, I was informed that, in the avalanche of the revolution, the records, with many other precious things, had been swept away. To my great satisfaction, however, a little book printed about the year 1800 found its way into my hands from the O'Donnell Library, Newport House. This was a record of the trial, in December, 1800, of Captain James More O'Donnell and Lieutenant Colonel Hugh O'Donnell, sons of Sir Neal of Newport, who died in 1811. This document contains some valuable references to the unfortunate young Achill priest, which will be reproduced in the following pages. In an appendix to O'Donovan's Four Masters is a family history of the O'Donnells, who were pro-

prietors of Achill Island during the first half of the century just past. I felt now, that armed with these records, I could fairly claim, at least to please myself, if not the Danes, the nineteenth century was ours. Further, the state papers, and Knox's History of Mayo gave the facts in the story of Grainne Uaile, or Grace O'Malley, a great Irish sea-queen of the sixteenth century, who came of a royal Celtic line, members of which long possessed Achill Island, and whose motto, "Terra marique potens," was won in the mists of antiquity from the warrior chieftains around them.

Wood-Martin's Stone Monuments of Ireland, as well as the "Dolmens of Ireland," showed that the archaeological curiosities of the island carry us back to a date compared with which the battle of Marathon or even the founding of Rome are modern events, and thoroughly satisfied me as to the antiquity of those hills, and stones, and bogs, which I have come to venerate, if not to love.

These, then, together with some minor pieces to be afterwards referred to, as well as the ordinary history and literature of the age, have furnished the material for the following chapters, which, save for these few garnered notes, must remain scattered in different books and different libraries,

"Till touched by some hand less unworthy than mine."

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The Ancient Kingdom of Achill and Umhall.

"Love thou thy land with love far brought
From out the distant past, and used
Within the present, but transfused
Thro' future time with light of thought."

— Tennyson.

It is an old discovery (or is it a poet's dream?) the influence of environment on one's mental, as well as one's moral character. The easy confidence of the fisherman plying his trade of peril is not independent of those rocks and cliffs, which from his boyhood he has watched beat back the surging thunders of the deep. The eternal longing for freedom of the hardy mountaineer, that comes from the depths of his being, is nurtured, if not born, of the glance of those fearless mountains that "tower and wear their caps of snow in very presence of the regal sun"; and that noble appeal in the "West's Asleep" taunts those Celts who seem to slumber in the West, the last refuge of Ireland's freedom, with their insensibility to the call of hills and rocks and lashing sea :

"Think you the great God ever planned
For slumbering slaves a home so grand?"

I know not whence comes the thought, as I stand on the threshold of this historic west, but I give expression to it, and pass in, as to a sacred temple.

In days gone by, there was in "Cruachan's land of heroic name," among its petty sub-kingdoms, one called Achill and Umhall. In the reign of Conn of the Hundred Battles Crimthán ruled in Umhall, and seems to have been in high standing with Conn, the provincial king, his sons having been sent to treat with Eoghan, Conn's rival for the throne of Ireland. Eoghan, however, hanged them both, thus precipitating the battle of Magh Lena, near Tullamore, King's County (A.D. 190), in which Conn gained a complete victory, and became high king of Ireland. As an index to the wealth and civilization of this ancient kingdom by the sea, let us refer to the Book of Rights for its tribute to the provincial king of Connaught :

“ Five score cows of lasting condition,
Five score hogs of broad sides,
Five score mantles, beautiful their texture.
From Umhall to the king of Connaught.”

The king of Connaught in turn acknowledges the nobility of the king of Umhall in gifts, recorded in the same Book of Rights thus :

“ Entitled is the king of Umhall without condition,
To five steeds in his country without heaviness,
Five polished swords of battle,
Five ships, five coats of mail.”

This ancient kingdom of Achill and Umhall comprised all that territory now designated the baronies of Burrishoole and Murrisk, which skirted Clew Bay from Achill Island in the north to Killery Harbour in the south. Achill was the name given to the mountainous portion, which included St. Patrick’s Reek, hence its ancient name of Cruachan Aigli. Umhall was the name given to the lowlands. It is, indeed, a historic spot of earth.

Nowhere, perhaps, in all Ireland, with its legends and lays, its stories and songs, is there to be found a place richer in the stirring memories of a thousand years than is this kingdom of Achill and Umhall. Here rises the sainted mountain of Ireland, associated with the glories and the shame of the men of Erin. On its lofty summit St. Patrick blessed the natural virtues of Celtic hearts and made them, for a time at least, the adopted heirs of the sanctity of the world. Hither during the long centuries came a long procession of pilgrims, which still shows no signs of ending, which wore a path to the steep summit of the mountain. Even here was O’Rourke of Breifney when the elopement of Dervorgilla, his wife, with Mac-Murrough, the fierce King of Leinster, unsheathed indignant swords in Ireland, and had not a little influence in the molding of those salt tears she has for centuries shed. To this Kingdom two roads from the East were filled with pilgrims to the Reek and merchants to Westport and Burrishoole, “ whose large lough was full of great timber, grey marble, and many other commodities.” This commerce, however, did not long survive the establishment of English government in Connaught in the sixteenth century. In this isle-gemmed Bay of Clew the ancient family of the O’Malleys ruled for centuries, and Grace, the greatest of them all, queened it on land and sea. Here in Clare Island, Murrisk, Burrishoole, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, the Carmelites, chanted by the sea, and their bells chimed in glorious symphony to the music of the waves. The ancient abbey of Burrishoole, like those of Murrisk and Clare Island, seems to have been an O’Malley foundation, dating back to that golden age in Connaught of which a weird glimpse is given in Mangan’s poem :

“ I walked entranced
Through a land of morn,
The sun, with wondrous excess of light,
Shone down and glanced
Over seas of corn
And lustrous gardens, aleft and right.
Even in the clime
Of resplendent Spain,
Beams no such sun upon such a land,
But it was the time
'Twas in the reign
Of Cathal Mor of the wine red hand.”

Here, too, in a momentous period of Ireland's history fought and fell, in defense of Celtic laws and Celtic weal, many of the Burkes of northern Connaught, "whose story is full of wild romance, but it has not yet found a sympathetic chronicler." Alas, it was all in vain, for the vandals of Elizabeth triumphed, and Bingham, during "his ten terrible years in Connaught," slaughtered the innocents, and left the footprints of tyranny there. The monks were gradually driven from their quiet haunts of prayer, and the lonely, roofless abbeys around Clew Bay mourn their fate.

" Yet still beneath the hallowed soil
The peasant rests him from his toil,
And, dying, bids his bones be laid
Where erst his simple fathers prayed."

And to add to its historic glories, Peregrine O'Clery, the historian of Tyrconnell and one of the Four Masters, was driven to Curra-na-heillte, near Burrishoole, where before breathing his last he left his beautiful will and testament : " I bequeath the property most dear to me that I ever possessed in the world, namely, my books, to my two sons, Diarmuid and John. Let them copy from them, without injuring them, whatever may be necessary for their purpose, and let them be equally seen and used by the children of my brother Cairby as by themselves." Yes, there hangs a glory over Clew Bay that will never fade, over this ancient Kingdom of Achill and Umhall.

Such was Achill and Umhall in days that are gone, but today the name, with other things peculiar to old-time Ireland, has taken refuge in the little island in the Atlantic, separated from the mainland by a narrow strip of water where the tides of Clew Bay and Blacksod boisterously commingle. But of this more in the next chapter.

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Achill Island.

" The scenes are desert now, and bare,
Where flourished once a forest fair,
When these waste glens with copse were lined
And peopled with the hart and hind."
— (Scott's Marmion.)

We come now to Achill Island, which can boast of the grandest and the wildest scenery in our Western Isles. In this island the every day language of the people, the only language of many of them, is the Gaelic. It is the first learned by the children, who may be heard chatting glibly in its liquid accents after schools hours with one another, or with their mothers and white old Irish grandmothers at home. Their isolation has enabled them to preserve the ancient Irish manners and customs, that simplicity and lively faith that won for the sons and daughters of Erin the proud title of " Children of Eternity." Many of the older inhabitants have never set foot on the mainland, have never seen a railway train or a town, but in the midst of their native hills they live and die, like those of whom the poet said :

" Along the cool, sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."

" Achill, land of moor and mountain," is supposed to derive its name from the eagles that still make their haunts around the tops of its wild and picturesque mountains. In the island itself, 35,000 acres in extent, as well as on the mainland adjoining it, there are several hills of considerable height. Four of these, Corraune, Sliabh More, Crochaun and Minan, are the

glory of Achill Island, and seem to account in a large measure for the extraordinary love of its 7,000 people for their island home.

Corraune, the only one of the four on the mainland, which is only a short distance from the island, is 1,750 feet high, and commands a magnificent view of Clew Bay, with its myriad islands, the home of Grainne Uaile. From Corraune's summit the eagles now and again swoop down to carry off fowl and young lambs from the peasants inhabiting its sides.

Sliabh More, within the island, at its northwestern extremity, justifies its name of "great mountain" by raising its head only a few feet above that of its neighbor and rival, Crochaun, which, almost 2,000 feet high, with the tips of its toes in the ocean, has some of the finest cliff scenery in Europe. The "great mountain," which presents a conical appearance when viewed from the island, impresses the spectator from the sea with the conviction that half its mass must have at one time slipped into the Atlantic, which roars and tumbles around it. This mountain shelters from the bleak Atlantic storms a beautiful village called the "Colony," or settlement, which calls for further mention.

Further inland there is a large space sacred to Irish archaeologists, containing cromlechs, a giant's grave, and one of that species of pagan cemeteries known as stone circles. This was once a group of square graves of large standing stones, surrounded by a circle of the same. These interesting curiosities are minutely described by standard archaeologists of Ireland, and Wood-Martin thus refers to them :

"The monuments reposing within the shelter of this mountain have hitherto almost escaped the notice of the archaeologists, and yet these several megalithic remains in the Island of Achill are most interesting, and present to the observation nearly every variety of ancient sepulture." Celtic scholarship has not yet been able to read the whole story of these stone monuments, but here, at any rate, it is agreed that there is to be found

"A place of tombs,
Where lie the mighty bones of ancient men."

Some years ago, while excavations were being made in the neighborhood, human bones of giant proportions were unearthed and were immediately carried off by a gentleman of antiquarian tastes, who happened to be about the place. On the evening of that day a storm, such as rarely visits even this storm-swept island, was let loose. The frightened villagers assembled in council and sent a hurried deputation after the possessor to have the bones returned and laid to rest once more.

Crochaun is memorable as the scene where, for upwards of twenty years, lived the notorious Captain Boycott, whose name has become one of the useful and expressive words of the English language. One good act is recorded of Captain Boycott.

Between Crochaun and the sea a road climbs over the shoulder of the mountain. It leads us 400 feet above and by the sea, which spreads out southward on our left ; while on the right rises to the clouds Crochaun itself, and down its sides a thousand streams babble and lose themselves in the ocean below. The road takes us to the beautiful valley of Keem. This is a verdant valley, lost between mountains, where, if anywhere in the Emerald Isle, "Angels fold their wings and rest." Boycott owned and cultivated this oasis, and he, or some one before him, cleaned it of the huts, or summer houses of the peasants. In the heart of a green park within this valley is a cairn, on top of which is fixed a rude stone cross with a holy water stand of the same rude construction and material beside it. Here in this lonely, but beautiful

spot, hidden afar between mountains, tradition says, Mass was celebrated by fugitive priests, whose hiding places, hard by, are still pointed out; and though Boycott may have laid heavy hands on many things, to his credit be it told, he left this as he found it, a sacred relic of days that are gone. We would willingly tarry here, but we must not forget Minan.

Minan cliffs are situated on the south side of that peninsular spur of the island, which points westward. The wild goats which once leaped so plentifully over these western mountains, “out of humanity’s reach,” shared them with the picturesque red deer, that even in historic times crowned the savage grandeur of these impenetrable domains, have given the cliffs a name. For Minan is the Irish name for kids or young goats. On these beetling crags, which front the Atlantic ocean and rise to a height of 1,570 feet, the wild goats may still be seen, from which indeed they sometimes topple into the sea. At the foot of these cliffs, part of which are known as the Cathedral Rocks, is the Keel strand stretching for two miles to the village of the same name, and over it a wild sea rolls with treacherous force its mountain waves.

Once upon a time the whole of this island was covered over with a thick forest, as was, indeed, all this western land ; and even today on the hills, on the plains, and even on the shores washed by the sea throughout the Island of Achill, the roots and part of the trunks or stumps of those trees that once sheltered the land are embedded in the ground as if the upper portions had been burned or cut away. The island is now absolutely bare of trees. But the absence of sheltering trees and denizens of the forest notwithstanding, at Minan, as well as everywhere in Achill Island, the companionship of the mountains and the sea may be enjoyed to the fulness of one’s heart. For one may watch,

“ When winds blow high and free
From some tall cliff or jutting land,
The white gulls poising o’er the sea —
The great waves rolling boisterously,
And bursting on the strand.”

Minan is very interesting for many reasons. Achill is divided by the natives, in accordance with a custom that seems to have come down from the fathers of the island, into upper and lower Achill ; and Minan stands between. The people of lower, or western Achill we should naturally expect to have been the original settlers, while those of the eastern, or upper part would appear to have come later.

The island historians say the former are Connaught men, while the latter are Ulster men ; and we shall see that in historic times Ulster has sent settlers to the West. However this may be, it is said by the rival sections of the population (for there is a rivalry between them) that while a certain polish and refinement is characteristic of the lower parish, large hearted generosity is claimed by the upper as being exclusively its own.

Tourists to Achill usually climb to the summit of Minan. Starting from the battered and primitive little village of Dooega, the ascent is comparatively easy. To the left is the magic of the great sea, while to the right, under Minan, in the beautiful valley of Mweelin, appears what seems like a ruined city. This was once upon a time a seat of learning which the natives called Trinity College and to which we may have occasion to return later. As we continue the ascent, a bridle path leads us over the mountain, and beside it, at regular intervals, there are little monuments of stone, the purpose of which we were unable to understand. On making inquiries, however, of our friends the ancients, we learned that this mountain was the great highway between upper and lower Achill. Marriages were sometimes contracted between

parties one of which belonged to lower Achill and the other to upper ; and as each section had its own church, so too, its own proper cemetery. Accordingly, when one of the parties died beyond the mountain his friends insisted on having him buried in the family vault. The funeral procession was then seen to wend its way over Minan Mountain by this bridle path, and these curious stone monuments were resting places for pallbearers, who, as the last tribute of affection to their dead, carried them over that wild mountain to their last long sleep in the graves of their kindred.

Such is Achill Island, where, sheltered by the mountains, that strange and interesting people whose story we wish to tell, ekes out an existence. On the eastern side of the island, at Kildownett, is the castle of the famed Grainne Uaile, who in the popular imagination is in great danger of joining the ranks of the fairies on the hillsides and valleys of the island, in which the islanders firmly believe, and of which they stand very much in dread. We shall therefore devote a chapter to the fair fame of Grace O'Malley, not to give an exhaustive account of her interesting career, but to show that she was a real historical heroine, to be remembered in Achill and in Erin.

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Grainne Uaile, Or Grace O'Malley.

Many altars are in Banba,
Many chancels hung in white,
Many schools and many Abbeys,
Glorious in our Fathers' sight;
Yet, when e'er I go a pilgrim,
Back, dear native Isle, to thee,
May my filial footsteps bear me
To that Abbey by the sea—
To that Abbey—roofless, doorless,
Shrineless, monkless, though it be.
—Thos. D'Arcy McGee.

Grace O'Malley, whose castle, "Kildownett," in Achill Island, and many other venerable monuments of a similar kind around Clew Bay, "still plead haughtily, even in their ruins, for glories that are gone," lives in story after a fashion, in the West of Ireland, as a wonderful personage who fought for her land and her country which she has come at length to personate. Her name, however, is sadly being relegated to the region of myth and oblivion among the peasantry generally. We asked an old man one day, wishing to know his ideas of her location in time, if he remembered having ever seen Grainne Uaile. "Well," he replied, after a moment of painful reflection, "I will tell you no lie ; I never did see her, but," he continued, taking courage, "I heard a great deal about her." He is a fair type of the peasant historian in the West of Ireland. How sad that it should be so ! And what a beautiful and well-merited tribute to the Four Masters, who rescued from the wreckage of time so many precious stories, is that rendered by D'Arcy McGee in the poem with which we have headed the chapter ! To participate in a small way in the same noble work by penning this brief sketch, may not be a vain ambition.

It is strange, indeed, the O'Clerys never once mention the name of Grace O'Malley in their grandest of histories. Why, we cannot tell. Her enemies, however, and Ireland's enemies, too, have not deemed her unworthy of notice. Her life sketch is told in unimpeachable history in a few brief sentences by Elizabethan Deputies and Governors of Munster and Connaught,

who found her a very troublesome rebel in their work of subduing Ireland. Let us recall a few of their notes.

In 1576 she came, with other notabilities of Connaught, to Sir Henry Sidney to Galway, having, he tells us, “ three galleys and two hundred fighting men,” and he describes her as “ a most famous feminine sea-captain.” In 1578, writing at Leighlin, Lord Justice Drury calls her “ Graine nymaille, a woman of the Province of Connaught, governing a country of the O’Flahertys, famous for her stoutness of courage and person and for sundry exploits done by her by sea.” He also adds she was then a state prisoner. Not for long, however, as we shall see. Finally, Sir Richard Bingham in the pithy character sketch he has left of this Irish sea-queen, as she appeared to the English eye, has done more for her fame than all others and has proved her, far from being a myth, to have been a formidable and consistent rebel all her life, when he declared her, in 1593, “ a notable traitress and nurse to all the rebellions in the Province for 40 years.” But a glimpse of the troubled times during which Grace was cradled into rebellion and heroism will explain to her advantage Bingham’s description of the role she played in Connaught.

Every student of Irish history knows that the first Anglo-Norman chieftains and rulers who came to Ireland were after a brief antagonism speedily absorbed by the Gael. They endeared themselves to the Irish. They practiced the same religion. They learned to speak the same language. They wore the same apparel. “ Some of them,” says Spencer, “ are degenerated and grow mere Irish, yea and more malicious to the English than the Irish themselves.” The same transformation, however, called degeneracy by the English, is otherwise beautifully explained by an old Irish chronicler : “ The old chieftains of Erin,” he says, “ prospered under English lords, who were our chief rulers and who gave up their foreignness for a pure mind, and their surliness for good manners, and their stubbornness for sweet mildness, and who gave up their perverseness for hospitality.” Such were the Earls of Kildare and Desmond and the Burkes of Connaught.

England was alarmed to find that those sent to conquer in her name fell in love with her enemies and made them stronger than before. So it was in 1367, to check this “ shameful degeneracy” of the noble English, laws were passed, but passed in vain. The absorption went on as before. The Celt was invincibly predominant. Now, however, towards the end of the sixteenth century, imperial-hearted Elizabeth, who could brook neither husband nor rebel, determined to crush the Irish utterly. Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Justice, carrying out this policy, established Governors in Munster and Connaught. Drury went to the Southern Province and Fitton to the West to carry there the civilization of English laws, “ where they had not been known for two hundred years.” Not satisfied with having the Irish under the yoke of her civil government, the Queen looked upon them as being but half conquered until they accepted her civil religion too. And now the trouble began, during which Grace O’Malley played her part, nor did she sulk in her tent.

To show that he meant business, Drury had in May, 1579, Doctor O’Hely, Bishop of Mayo, and a Franciscan priest, named O’Rourke, brought before him at Kilmallock. Being questioned, they confessed and did not deny their faith. They were first put on the rack, their arms and legs were broken with hammers, needles were thrust under their nails, after which they were hanged. Collins, a priest, at Cork, was first tortured, then hanged, and, as he yet breathed, his heart was cut out and held up, the soldiers around crying out with exultation : “ Long live the Queen.” The Irish Catholics were alarmed. The Irish chieftains rebelled. They were absolved by the Pope from allegiance to Elizabeth. The cause of religion was wedded to the cause of nationality for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer. Ireland thenceforward became one with the Catholic faith, and whom God hath joined let no man put asunder.

Submission or absolute destruction was England's ultimatum. The latter alternative Ireland preferred, and Elizabeth was soon to reign "over corpses and ashes."

In the southern province, the Earl of Desmond, a faithful subject, but a papist, was the first to go. Only two years or so before, he had committed Grace O'Malley "to Her Majesty's prison at Limerick." The English were now gathering round him. He sent letters to the Burkes of Connaught, to win their aid. The Burkes were the Anglo-Norman successors of the O'Connor Kings in the West. The Clanrickards were lords in upper Connaught; the Clanwilliams were lords in the lower portion. In 1576, Grace had already married the Mac William, as the chieftain of northern Connaught was called. He was, say the Four Masters, "a plundering, war-like, unquiet and rebellious man, who had often forced the gap of danger on his enemies, and upon whom it was frequently forced." And Grace O'Malley was, according to Sir Henry Sidney "more than Mrs. Mate for him on land and on sea." His name was Iron Dick. The Burkes received Desmond's letters and handed them over to the English—all but Iron Dick and Grace O'Malley, who called their men to arms and forced Sir Nicholas Malbie, the president of Connaught, to return from Munster, where he was helping to crush Desmond. But it was all in vain. Desmond was defeated and slain. His followers were run to death. They were outlaws in the woods, whence Spencer saw them creeping out on their hands, eating grass and watercress, and an Irish poet put their helpless cries into song :

" Through the woods let us roam,
Through the wastes, wild and barren,
We are strangers at home
We are exiles in Erin."

Very soon afterwards, in the picturesque words of the Four Masters, "the lowing of a cow, or plowman's voice, was not heard from Dingle to Cashel." Such was the fate of the once wealthy and populous Province of Munster.

Nor did Connaught fare much better. Pitton and Malbie and Bingham subdued it. Malbie, "who," according to the annals of Lough Key, "placed all Connaught under bondage," preceded Sir Richard Bingham, who, arriving in 1584, during his "ten terrible years" in the province earned for himself, rightly or wrongly, the distinction of Cromwell of Connaught. In January, 1586, he had seventy men and women hanged in Galway. The Burkes were in rebellion. Hag's Castle in Lough Mask was successfully defended against Bingham by the Devil of Corraune (he was an Achill man) and Walter Burke, the son-in-law and son of Grace O'Malley. "The Devil of Corraune" was chieftain or owner of that wild promontory or peninsula of Corraune, near Achill island. He was a fierce rebel, and called, appropriately we suppose, the "Devil of Corraune." His father never submitted to any English governor, and bore the same name. Sir Richard Bingham, in his reign of terror, now seized Edmund Burke of Castlebar, whom he had convicted of treason and hanged, "lest," he says, "his sons should make him Mac William." Iron Dick, and Richard Mac Oliver, Dick's successor in the MacWilliamship, were dead, and Edmund Burke had next claim. So it was that Bingham had him put to death, although, according to the Four Masters, "a withered grey old man without strength or vigor, and they were obliged to carry him on a bier to the gallows." And so the work of conquest went on in the West.

In the year 1586 the two sons of Grace, Tibbot, and Walter Burke, as well as the Devil of Corraune, and Teige Roe O'Malley of Kildownett Castle, are registered as rebels. Things looked bad for Grace. When Iron Dick, her husband, died, she went to live to Rockfleet

Castle, or Carrigahowley, where her son-in-law, the Devil of Corraune, seems to have been chieftain. Bingham invited her to come and live under his protection. She trusted his word, and came. All her goods and chattels were seized, and Sir Richard had erected a new gallows. Grace tells us “ she feared it was her last funeral, where she thought to end her life.” At this time, however, the Devil of Corraune happened to be on good terms with Bingham, and he succeeded in securing her a pardon. When the Devil again turned rebel, Grace had to fly to O’Neil and O’Donnell of Ulster, and later on managed to get her pardon, in Dublin, from Sir John Perrot, the lord lieutenant. After this, according to her own humble description of her life, “ she dwells as a farmer’s wife, very poor, bearing cess, and paying her Majesty’s composition rent, and utterly did give over her former trade of maintenance on land and sea.” She returned to her trade later on, and raided the English in the Arran Islands, as late as 1590 ; although she gave in 1593 the above as a description of her position in 1586.

Her name will be ever remembered in the West of Ireland. Whether Grace ever owned all those castles around Clew Bay, that are now named after her, we have some doubts. She certainly must have had a wonderful influence from Killery to Achill Island, which impressed itself on the minds of the peasantry, and their posterity, and made of Grainne Uaile another name for rebel Ireland. Speaking of the vague traditions in the West, in which this heroine of the sixteenth century still lives, a distinguished historian, quoted very appropriately the following :

“ Her spirit wraps the dusky mountain,
Her memory sparkles o’er the fountain,
The meanest rill, the mightiest river,
Rolls mingling with her fame forever.”

Enough has been said to show that she was no myth. Mr. Knox, who cannot be accused of partiality to mythical or unauthorized tradition, says of her, “ though she was not recognized in the annals, the English records show she was an imperious, courageous woman, who went plundering upon the seas, and had acquired a great reputation in the sea coasts, and who, by her abilities and strength of character, exercised a very great influence in Mayo affairs, through her husband and her relations.” That these abilities and this influence were exercised for Ireland’s sake, we have the evidence of Sir Richard Bingham himself, who described her, after he had watched her for ten years, as forty years a rebel ; which testimony, in the light of the history of her time, is a precious ruby in the crown of her immortality.

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