Clanricarde and Thomond

The
History and Antiquities
of the
Diocese of Kilmacduagh

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Sir Richard Bingham Chief Commissioner of Composition—He destroys Clonuane Castle, and executes its lord, who was regarded as the Pope’s chief champion—O’Donnell lays siege to Athenry, and wastes the country to Oranmore and Galway—Ulick, third Earl of Clanricarde, supports English interests, and opposes O’Donnell in the North—O’Donnell invades Clanricarde, and plunders Iser Kelly and Kinvara—In the following year he again enters Clanricarde, and encamps at Ruaidh Bheitheach, and invades Thomond—Is secretly supported by the discontented chiefs—In 1600 he again invades Clanricarde, and plunders the eastern districts of Kilmacduagh—He enters Thomond, and returns with his booty by Corcomroe and Kinvara—The Geraldine League—Dermot O’Connor’s connection with it—Is massacred with his men at Gort—Activity of Redmond Burke, nephew of the Earl of Clanricarde—Episcopal succession—Valuation of parishes under Elizabeth.

Sir John Perrot had powerful and willing instruments in Norris, President of Munster, and Sir Richard Bingham, President of Connaught. They accompanied him to Galway in 1584, whither he had come to receive the submission of the territorial chiefs. After a short stay he set out for Limerick; a journey which at that period was necessarily slow. On the first day after leaving Galway he reached Kilmacduagh, where he stayed for the night. The monastery and ecclesiastical establishments there were not yet destroyed; and at that period the tendency on the part of the executive to use the monasteries for secular purposes was being constantly manifested. On the following day the Deputy reached the Abbey of Quin, where Cruise, the Sheriff of Clare, had been awaiting him. Cruise had in his custody Donogh Beg O’Brien, who had been an active spirit in the recent Clanricarde troubles. But Perrot wished to inaugurate a “vigorous administration,” and therefore did not hesitate in having O’Brien executed there under circumstances of the most revolting cruelty. After being “hanged from a car, his bones were broken and smashed with the back of a larixe and heavy axe.” [1] And though life was not yet extinct, his body was then fastened with hard and tough hempen ropes to the top of the steeple of Quin, under the talons of the birds and fowls of the air.

This “vigorous policy” was naturally followed by the Deputy’s minions. In the summer of that year, Turlogh O’Loughlin of Mucinis Castle was, as we have already noticed, summarily executed at Ennis. And when Bingham came to Galway in his official capacity as governor in 1586, he marked his appreciation of his master’s policy by having as many as seventy men and women [2] executed there in the month of January of that year. Amongst the victims was another of the O’Brien chieftains,—Donald, son of Murtagh Garv, son of Brian, son of Teige. [3] But Bingham was determined that the O’Briens should have still more experience of his cruelty, and in a manner that would bear still more directly a message of terror to the clans of Kilmacduagh.

The Castle of Cluaindubhain, situated about a mile south-west of Kilmacduagh, stood on the boundary between Clare and Galway. It was then a magnificent pile, and regarded as one of the most impregnable castles in Thomond. Dowcra speaks of it in his Narrative as a
“strong pyle.” And the Four Masters have recorded that “upon dry land in Ireland” there was no stronger fortress.

The chief of Cluaindhubain Castle was a staunch supporter of Ireland’s cause and of her ancient religion. He is referred to by Dowera as “a most dangerous enemy of the State, and a chief champion of the Pope, and a great pratyzer with sforaigne Powers for the Invasion of this Realme of Ireland.” [4] On the 1st March following the Galway executions. Sir Richard Bingham proceeded, with a strong force of English troops and “somme flue Kearne of the country,” to besiege the castle. For three weeks the siege was prosecuted, with “skirmishinge, watchinge, and wardinge;” and yet during that long period of brave defence, the “chief champion of the Pope” was left by the. neighbouring chieftains to fight the cause of religion and country alone and unaided.

On the twenty-second day of the siege, Bingham directed an assault in full force on the castle, when its gallant lord, who bravely directed the defence from the battlements, was shot dead. After their chieftain had fallen, it only remained for the garrison to surrender. This they did, expecting quarter. But Bingham, true to his instincts of cruelty and bloodshed, had them all massacred in cold blood. Indeed, the memory of this cruel carnage is still preserved in local traditions. Having put the garrison of Clonuane to the sword, [5] he “razed the western side of the castle to the ground,” and completely destroyed the outworks. Only a portion of the eastern side of the castle remains to the present. The existing ruins, therefore, give no true idea of the original character or extent of the fortress. The property was confiscated. The deeds of Bingham in other parts of Connaught can have no place in these pages. It is important, however, to point out that this was the man to whom the “Plot of the Composition,” already referred to at some length, was principally entrusted. Indeed, we are distinctly informed by Dowera that the “Plot” of Composition was devised by him, and that he was its Chief Commissioner. [6] We have seen his name with that of Nicho. White, Master of the Rolls, attached to the grant made to O’Heyne in 1586. His cruelty explains the easy acceptance with which those deeds of composition were received by the chieftains of Clanricarde. He well knew he was detested by the people, by whom he was regarded as cruel and bloodthirsty, “and full dearly did he make them suffer for the imputation.” [7] So odious did he become, however, that the executive were at length obliged to yield, and send him back to England. But his name and character rendered the settlements effected generally odious, “and the successes of Hugh Roe O’Donnell, a few years later, were regarded by the people of the province as a Heaven-sent deliverance.” [8]

But the “composition” transfer of properties inaugurated in Clanricarde and Thomond was regarded both by O’Donnell and the Ulster chiefs with strong disfavour. They were able to see its purpose and bearing. When, therefore, proposals were made to the Ulster chiefs in 1576, that they too would commit themselves to the composition scheme, they rejected the proposals; and they also determined to invade Clanricarde and Thomond, and punish the Southern earls for their selfishness.

Through the representations of De Burgo and O’Brien, a large force was sent by the Lord Justice to the North, in order to engage the Northern earls at home, and so avert the threatened invasion. O’Donnell, who was well aware of the object of the expedition, was determined at any hazard to “march into the south of the province of Connaught, and plunder the districts about Slieve Echtge, in Galway, and Thomond in particular.” Evading the vigilance of the English army under Dowera, he marched southward, and in the early part of the year 1597 we find him with a large force laying siege to Athenry, and demolishing its “stone houses and strong habitations.” After plundering the town, he sent strong detachments to waste the district. On this occasion their course was mainly in the direction of Galway and
Oranmore. The annalists tell us that he had arranged to have entered the adjoining districts of Kilmacduagh, and to have proceeded on his course to “Gort in Kinel Aedh,” were it not for “the multiplicity of his plunder and the vastness of his spoils.”

But the raid on Kinel Aedh, and indeed on the entire territory of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne, was only deferred for a little time. The Earl of Clanricarde was the cause; for, like his kinsmen the Earls of Thomond, his selfishness prevented him from countenancing any movement against the Queen, and left the local chiefs without either power or sympathy. It is certain there were few of the English of Connaught—perhaps none—who gave such valuable support to the English cause as did Ulick de Burgo, who succeeded his father, Earl Richard, third Earl of Clanricarde, notwithstanding the character of his early career. Ulick married a Burke of Tullyra, near Ardrahan; and immediately on the death of his father in 1582, he repaired to Dublin, and appealed to Sir Nicholas Malbay, Governor of Connaught, against the claims of his brother John. It was then arranged between them that the barony of Leitrim should be given to John, while Ulick was to retain his father’s titles, and also his claims to the rest of Clanricarde. As a result, the brothers were “publicly at peace but privately at strife.” [9] A year later, and this private strife culminated in the revolting crime of fratricide. It was in the year 1583 that Ulick de Burgo, Earl of Clanricarde, a guest in the Castle of Leitrim, murdered his brother John, the Baron of Leitrim. He was even an honoured guest in his brother’s castle when he perpetrated this foul deed. Referring to its enormity, the annalists say, “Alas! woe to that brother who wished to slay his brother for the partition of a territory!” The murdered nobleman was popular. Hence his death “weighed upon the hearts of the people of his territory on account of his good sense, his personal form, his noble birth, his hospitality, his nobleness, and his renowned achievements.” And when, a decade later, the patriotism of the Northern earls was found to be proof against the “Plot of Composition,” and when their active hostility became a menace to English authority, it was found that Ulick, Earl of Clanricarde, went with all his forces to join Sir John Norris in “reducing all who had risen up in the confederation of the Irish in the war.”

When, in 1597, the Northern princes were able to drive back their English assailants, and were giving new hopes to the West and South, it was found that Ulick, Earl of Clanricarde, was one of the most trusted supporters of Sir Conyers Clifford, and that he had attended that gentleman in his expedition to the North, accompanied by his son Richard, Baron of Dunkellin. Later on in the same year, when the Governor of Connaught was required by Lord Borough, Lord Justice of Ireland, to proceed at once, “with all the forces he could possibly muster, to the western extremity of Ulster against O’Donnell,” we find that he immediately summoned to his assistance his friends the Earl of Thomond and the Earl of Clanricarde, with his son Richard, Baron of Dunkellin. From these events we can understand why O’Donnell thought it too long that he had left “unattacked the English of Connaught, and those Irish who had been in alliance with them,” and why he should have marked out Clanricarde for signal vengeance. A pretext for effecting his purpose was soon afforded him.

A strong complaint was made to O’Neil by Redmond, son of John Burke, the murdered Baron of Leitrim, against the injustice of Lord Clanricarde, who refused to give the son of his murdered victim even the smallest share of his father’s property. This complaint was supported by a party of Redmond Burke’s “young kinsmen, all of the first distinction.” [10] Even the terms of the earl’s refusal were as offensive as they were unjust “If,” said the earl, “Redmond would be satisfied with one mantle’s breadth of my inheritance from Strathair to Abhain da Loolgheach, I would not give him so much as a reward for war or peace.” [11] It would be difficult to realise a refusal more ungracious or unjust. Strathair is the modern Shrule. The stream which gives it its name forms the north-west boundary of Clanricarde. “Abhain da Loolgheach” is a river which forms its boundary on the extreme south-east. This also bounds the diocese of Kilmacduagh, at that side separating it from Killaloe diocese. The
river flows from Derrybrien in the Clonfert diocese, through the valleys of the Echtge Mountains, and into Lough Cutra.

O’Neirs reply was a favourable one. He promised the deputation to assist them by every means in his power. Clannricarde was at the time in England with the Earl of Thomond, and the important successes gained in that year by the Northern princes against Her Majesty's troops must have animated O’Donnell’s men for new enterprises.

It was late in December when O’Donnell set out from Ballymote. By one of those silent but rapid marches for which he was remarkable, he arrived unobserved in Clannricarde, “although the inhabitants of that country were on the alert and on their guard, such was their fear and dread of him.” [12] He had, however, taken the precaution of entering the territory in the night-time, “silently and quietly,” and thus arrived at the gate of Kilcolgan by break of day, without attracting the slightest notice.

At once and without the least delay he proceeded to execute his plans for plundering and devastating the territory. They were well conceived and boldly carried out, for Clannricarde, though absent, had “great numbers of hired soldiers” [13] quartered in the country. Though he sent out marauding parties “in every direction,” the forces were divided mainly into two parties, one of which was sent eastwards towards the Echtge Mountains, and the other southward to Kinvara. Those sent eastwards made William Mac Hubert Burke of Iser Kelly Castle prisoner. He was arrested by Manus O’Donnell, brother of the Northern chief.

The other party, sent to Dunguaire in “Coill U Fiachrach,” committed “lamentable deeds,” as the annalists tell us. Turlogh Boy and Brian O’Loughlin, sons of Ross O’Loughlin, were slain there; they seem, however, to have fought bravely. We find it recorded that Mac Donnell of the Northern army was slain by O’Loughlin before he himself fell. There were also slain on the occasion two sons of William Burke of Rinville, and the son of Theobald Burke of Derry O’Donnell. It is therefore evident that his soldiers were sent into the various districts of Southern Clannricarde. Their success must have been complete, for he seems to have succeeded in carrying off “all the immense spoils, heavy herds, and other booty and property which had been collected for him, without battle or conflict, until he arrived safe at Ballymote.” [14]

We can have little doubt that it was the absence of the Earl of Clannricarde that suggested to O’Donnell the fitness of making Kilcolgan his centre of operations on the occasion. It would be inconsistent with the narrative of his success to assume that he left the Castles of Kilcolgan and Dunkellin safe on the occasion. We think it practically certain that he left both dismantled; and we do not find that Dunkellin had been afterwards occupied by the Earls of Clannricarde, though the Marchioness of Clannricarde afterwards resided at Kilcolgan. We also find that in the following year, when O’Donnell was entering on the invasion of Thomond, he made the locality the site of his encampment.

He mustered a vast force around him at Ballymote early in February, preparatory to his descent on Thomond. His forces were indeed so numerous, that he was able to send a strong detachment to Mayo, while he himself retained command of the main army destined for Thomond.

As in the previous year, his march southward was rapid and silent, and hence he entered Clannricarde “unobserved” in 1599, as in the preceding year. He seems to have pursued the same line of march, and, having arrived at Ruaidh Bheitheach, he pitched his encampment there. The encampment was in the immediate vicinity of the Castle of Dunkellin, and only about two miles from Kilcolgan. It is referred to by the annalists as an “extensive camp of armed heroes.” They were clearly in no way apprehensive of assault. They lighted fires, and
“sat down to take refreshments, and to drink to each other in ale and Spanish wine, without fear or dread in the territory of their enemy.” [15] But the repose was not permitted to degenerate into a revel. At midnight they were summoned to resume their march. This they did without delay, so that they were able to enter Thomond before dawn. Their line of march was “straight onward” by Kilcolgan, Kinvara, and Kilmacduagh. As the morning dawned, they had arrived at the eastern extremity of O’Flancy’s Wood, now better known as Kilkeedy Wood, a distance of about twenty miles from Ruaidh Bhitheach. The wood was then a vast forest, which, in the opinion of the learned O’Donovan, extended at that time over the present districts of Bonachiopaun town, Derryowen, and Clonouane.

Here he divided his army into three columns, one of which he sent southwards by Bally O’Hogan and Dysart O’Dea, to the Castle of Ballygriffy. He despatched another north into Burren. The third, which was a strong body, he sent forward to Inchiquin. Meantime, O’Donnell himself proceeded to Killinaboy with the “flower of his army,” where he awaited the return of his detachments. It was not, however, till the following day that his soldiers were able to return and meet their chief at Kilfenora, as their march was much impeded by the rich spoils they had captured in the districts through which they had passed.

From Kilfenora he despatched some strong parties to Inagh and the confines of Mount Callan, and also to the districts of Ennistymon and Liscannor, who returned to their chief laden “with spoils and booty.” It was not till the following day that “his troops came up with him, from every quarter in which they had been dispersed.” His success was complete. [16] “When O’Donnell saw the surrounding hills covered and darkened with the herds and numerous cattle of the territories through which his troops had passed, he proceeded on his way homewards over the chain of the rugged-topped mountains of Burren.” His route was Noughville, by the Abbey of Corcomroe, over the pass of Corker Hill into Rubha, the modern Corainroo. This is a small village at the base of the Burren Hills, where a castle of the O’Heynes stood close to the sea, till A.D. 1755, when it fell at the very moment at which the Lisbon earthquake occurred. It was here he pitched his encampment after his long and weary march.

On the following day he passed through Kinvara, and, continuing his march by Kilcolgan, made his return journey safely by Athenry to Ballymote.

In estimating O’Donnell’s success on this occasion, his share in the great victory of the “Yellow Ford” in the preceding year, over Bagnall, must not be forgotten. The victory made his name famous throughout Europe, and secured for him in Ireland almost regal influence. Neither should it be forgotten that his advent into the territories of Clancarcarde and Thomond was hailed with secret pleasure by the discontented local chieftains, who in Thomond were then particularly numerous.

Amongst the discontented was Teigue, brother of the Earl of Thomond. There was also the son of Mahon O’Brien, the brave chief of Clonouane murdered by Bingham. When that chieftain was executed from the battlements of his own castle, his lands were handed over to George Cusack, son of Sir Thomas Cusack, Lord Chancellor of Ireland. This fortunate adventurer got possession of the Castle of Derryowen, and made it his residence. Derryowen is situated in the vicinity of Clonouane, and was at first, the annalists tell us, “the patrimony of the sons of Auliffe, the son of Cian O’Shaughnessy.”

Turlogh O’Brien, the plundered representative of Clonouane Castle and estates, was obliged to retire into the adjoining forest of Kilkeedy, where he anxiously watched every opportunity of recovering his patrimony, and of being avenged of his plunderers. In 1598, Turlogh O’Brien “took from George Cusack, Derryowen, at first the patrimony of the sons of Auliffe,
the son of Cian O’Shaughnessy.” [17] And in July the following year, the same George Cusack was slain by Turlogh, son of Mahon O’Brien. The annalists add: “for Sir Richard Bingham, after he put Mahon O’Brien to death, had given up his territory to the aforesaid George. And he, Turlogh, persevered in his endeavours to recover his patrimony until he slew George on this occasion.”

The Earls of Clanricarde and Thomond, finding themselves powerless to resist O’Donnell’s devastating raids on their territories, succeeded in influencing the Government to send once more strong forces northward, who would engage O’Donnell in his own territory, and so “keep him away from them,” [18] for they deemed it too often that he went into their territories.” It was early in 1600 that Dowcra proceeded to Derry, that he might engage the attention of the earl’s battalions there. O’Donnell, however, “making no account of them,” and leaving O’Doherty and his own kinsman Neal Garv O’Donnell in command, mustered his forces privately and marched southward once more, [19] “to plunder the countries that lay on both sides of Sliabh Echtge, and especially Thomond.” The march was executed with the same rapidity as in the preceding year. On this occasion his line of march through Clanricarde was farther east, and closer to the Echtge ranges, than in the preceding year. It was Saturday when he entered the Kiltartan district. The annalists do not specify exactly where; they are content with saying it was in the “Oireaght Redmon,” or eastern district of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne. Here he pitched his encampment. The scouts, who on this occasion observed his coming, naturally thought that he would allow his men to rest there on Sunday, after their long and rapid march. But early on Sunday morning his men were once more on the march eastward by Lough Cutra to Tomgraney and the Shannon.

His marauding parties swept the country southward to Kilmurry Ibrickane. [20] He returned once more by the passes of Burren, arriving at the monastery of Corcomroe with his plunder on Monday night, and fixing his encampment there.

It would seem difficult to acquit O’Donnell’s troops of inhumanity on this occasion, as they not only plundered the districts through which they passed, but also set on flames every mansion and habitation worthy of note. “All the country behind them,” say the annalists, “as far as they could see around on every side, was enveloped in one dark cloud of vapour and smoke; and during the entire of that day, the vastness of the dark clouds of smoke that rose over them aloft in every place to which they directed their course, was enough to set them astray on their route.” On the following morning O’Donnell continued his march, over the mountain pass at Corker Hill, and around the Kinvara Bay, as in the preceding year, until on the evening of that day they reached “the mansions on the smooth plain of Maedhraighe.” He encamped for that night on an elevated ground known now as then as “Knock an Gerrain Bhain.” It is situated about two miles on the Galway side of Kilcolgan, and immediately adjoins the present village of Clarinbridge.

Here O’Donnell dismissed his Connaught allies to their territories, laden with spoils, and protected by strong escorts. He retained with himself only a body of five hundred chosen and devoted men, with a small company of sixty horse. After resting at Clarinbridge till midday, he set out with this small force for Loughrea, then the Earl of Clanricarde’s chief residence, resolving to devastate the country that lay under its immediate shelter. Arriving at Loughrea by the early dawn of that midsunmier’s morning, he proceeded at once to carry out his purpose of plunder and devastation, and, meeting with no opposition, he once more effected a safe return to Ballymote, laden with spoil.

Meantime Dermot O’Connor and his men met with a tragic end at Gort, and as it was in connection with the great events of the time, it merits a passing notice here.
The Geraldine league was being completed then, and a close union was being affected between the Northern and Southern Irish, under the guidance of the Northern earls. Dermot O’Connor, chief of his tribe in Roscommon, was perhaps the most powerful of the Desmonds’ supporters in Connaught. He was married to the Lady Margaret, daughter of Gerald, the Earl of Desmond, who was beheaded by the English in 1583. Her brother was detained as an English ward in London, and soon sent over to Ireland a Protestant and the “Queen’s Earl” of Desmond. James, her uncle, was declared by O’Nei the Irish earl, and was therefore derisively styled the “Sugane Earl” by the Anglo-Irish. Her uncle’s pretensions were held in disfavour by the Lady Margaret, and she therefore strongly urged her husband to betray him. Her purpose was warmly supported by Carew, the President of Munster, who offered a bribe of £1000. He also promised to give him “wealth and property, and the freedom and profits of an estate for himself and every one who should adhere to him.” [21] O’Connor, who at the time commanded a large force of mercenaries in the service of the Sugane Earl, accepted the bribe. The plot for the earl’s arrest was also arranged by Carew.

The unsuspecting earl was invited by O’Connor to his camp in Tipperary, under pretext of consulting him on his military movements. Immediately on his arrival, O’Connor ordered his arrest, charging him with secret treachery against himself. In justification of the charge, he read a forged letter bearing Carew’s signature, in which the earl’s alleged intentions were set forth, of delivering up O’Connor “dead or alive” to the Munster president. This letter, which he stated he had himself intercepted, was at once regarded by his soldiers as conclusive evidence of guilt, and accordingly the Earl of Desmond was hurried away a prisoner to Castleishe, one of his own fortresses. As soon as intelligence of his arrest reached his followers, they at once stormed the castle, set the earl at liberty, and expelled O’Connor and his mercenaries ignominiously from Desmond. We are assured that the story of his treachery brought disgrace upon O’Connor throughout Ireland.

It was officially announced, in July of that year, that James, son of Garret, Dermot O’Connor’s brother-in-law, who had been detained in London, was sent to Ireland as the Queen’s Earl. It was also known at that time, that he had established his claim to this distinction at Her Majesty’s hands by betraying the cause of his Church and country. O’Connor resolved to return to Munster to support the pretensions and claims of his brother-in-law, the Queen’s Earl; and for this purpose he obtained from the President of Munster and of Connacht, a safe-conduct on his march. Having proceeded on his journey southward as far as Gort in the O’Shaughnessy territory, he was there fiercely attacked by Theobald Burke (Teoboid na Loing), son of the celebrated Grace O’Malley. So fierce was the assault, that O’Connor with a number of his men was obliged to fly for sanctuary to an adjoining church. But though Burke was himself an officer in Her Majesty’s army, and though the principal motive of his hostility to O’Connor was simple jealousy, he refused to recognise the right of sanctuary. [22] They set fire to the church, and forty of O’Connor’s men either lost their lives in the flames, or were slain in attempting to escape. Dermot O’Connor himself was arrested, and beheaded on the following day. Burke was immediately after deprived of Her Majesty’s commission by the Lord Deputy. The church referred to probably stood on the north side of the present town, at the place known as the “Grove.” About fifty years ago the then owner of the land excavated large quantities of human remains from a pit or cave beside the church. Its site is barely traceable at the present day.

Meantime, Redmond Burke, with his followers, continued to give active support to the Desmond league. He was supported by many of his own kindred, and by John O’Shaughnessy, who, as we have seen, was the illegitimate claimant for the title and estates of the chiefs of Kinel Aedh. Burke and his friends were encamped in O’Meagher’s country, on the confines of Tipperary and Kilkenny, in the beginning of the year 1601, when a raid was unexpectedly made upon the camp, and many were slain. The ill-fated John
O'Shaughnessy was slain, with many others, on the occasion. He was the son of Gilla Duiv, son of Dermot, who, as we have seen, was, on account of his illegitimacy, expelled from his patrimony. It appears that the attack on the camp had been secretly arranged by certain gentlemen of Tipperary and Kilkenny, chiefly the Butlers and Mac Pierces. Aided by spies, they unexpectedly attacked the camp in the early morning, leaving most of the soldiers there lifeless, “with their flesh lacerated and completely hacked.”

Redmond Burke, with as many of his followers as were fortunate enough to escape on the occasion, proceeded at once to Ulster; and there, under the patronage of the Northern earls, engaged a force sufficiently strong to attempt a raid on Clanricarde. On their march southward they entered Hy Maine without opposition. On hearing of their arrival, however, the Earl of Clanricarde endeavoured to oppose their further progress.

“But, notwithstanding all his vigilance, Redmond, on the thirteenth night of the month of March, passed by them into Clanricarde,” plundering the districts around Tynagh and Ballinakill. Pitching his encampment in Woodford district, a strong body of reinforcements sent by O'Rourke reached him; and with those combined forces the Earl of Clanricarde was obliged to fly to his castle of Loughrea. Meantime, Redmond Burke and his followers “traversed, plundered, and burned the country from Leitrim to Ardameelavane, and as far as the gate of Fedane, in the west of Kinelea.” [23] These castles were O'Shaughnessy castles, and situated on the extreme south of their territory. He encamped on the west side of Lough Cutra. The site of the encampment, which cannot now be identified with accuracy, was situated probably about midway between Ardameelavane Castle and the present town of Gort.

The dissensions amongst the O'Shaughnessy family rendered them powerless to resist those recurring ravages of their territory. At Lough Cutra, Redmond Burke was joined by Teigue O’Brien and his followers, who, the annalists say, were induced to join him “through the advice of bad and foolish men.” [24] O’Brien is described as a man who was “expert at every military weapon, and every battle engine used among the Irish.” He, it is said, was also distinguished for “gaiety with activity, feats of arms, mildness, comeliness, fame, and hospitality.” This promising young chief urged the Burkes to undertake with him an incursion into Thomond. O'Donnell’s recent successes probably suggested the idea. A large force, under O’Brien’s command, entered Clare, by the south-east of Lough Cutra, and plundered the MacNamara country around the Fergus. On the Fergus they divided their forces, leaving considerable numbers to march on either side of its banks. They were, meantime, attacked by the Earl of Thomond, and were defeated, leaving many of their bravest dead upon the field, while many of the troops on the opposite bank were forced to remain idle spectators of the engagement. Amongst the slain was the unfortunate but chivalrous Teigue O’Brien.

Meantime, Lord Clanricarde received reinforcements, who were placed under the command of his son Richard, Baron of Dunkellin. An auxiliary force was also sent him from Galway. Smarting under the shame of recent defeats, he once more took the field against his kinsman and his supporters. But Redmond Burke, believing himself unable to meet so large a force, retreated cautiously along the Echtge Mountains—probably by the passes of Derrybrien—into the woods of Leitrim, where their entrenchments still remain. They were pursued by Clanricarde’s forces under the Baron of Dunkellin, who, though not attacking the camp, simply cut off all possibility of supplies. Under the pressure of hunger the camp was soon deserted, and Redmond himself obliged to escape to the north and seek once more the protection of the earls.

Meantime, Ulick, Earl of Clanricarde, died at Loughrea, after a short illness, and was buried at Athenry. The reference to his death which we find in the annals, though seemingly cast in a strong tone of exaggeration, is sufficiently noteworthy to be quoted here: “He was a
sedate and justly judging lord; of a mild, august, and chief-becoming countenance; affable in conversation, gentle towards the people of his territory, fierce to his neighbours, and impartial in all his decisions; a man who had never been known to act a feeble part in the field of danger, from the day he had first taken up arms to the day of his death. His son Richard was appointed in his place;” [25] or, as O’Donovan more correctly puts it, Richard succeeded to his father according to the English law.

These events occurred in May 1601.

[3] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[16] Four Masters, 1599.
[17] Ibid., 1598.
[18] Four Masters.
[19] Ibid.
[22] Mac Geoghegan’s History of Ireland, p. 526.
[23] Four Masters.
[25] Ibid.

The history and antiquities of the diocese of Kilmacduagh (1893)

Author : Fahey, Jerome, 1848-
Subject : Christian antiquities
Publisher : Dublin, M. H. Gill & son
Language : English
Digitizing sponsor : Google
Book from the collections of : Harvard University
Collection : americana

Source : Internet Archive
http://www.archive.org/details/historyandantiq01fahegoog

Edited and uploaded to www.aughty.org
December 6 2010