

The passing of the Clan Uilliam [1]

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THE GAEL

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THE opening scene in this history is laid on the quay in the Dano-Irish town of Wexford on a Summer's day in 1176. Strongbow was dead and had been succeeded by his brother-in-law, Raymond the Fat, who was now the recognized head of the Anglo-Norman colony in Ireland. He had just received a missive written by King Henry II. of England from Valognes in Normandy. It ran as follows :

“ I now send to you, Guillaume Fitz Adelm, my seneschal, whom I have entrusted with the management and arrangement of affairs in my stead and as my viceroy ; wherefore I enjoin and command that you shall attend to him as to myself, and that you shall obey all his commands on my behalf, as you value my good will, and on the allegiance which you owe unto me. I shall confirm his proceedings as if executed by myself, and all your transactions with him shall be ratified by me.”

Such was the royal missive, written by King Henry II. of England, from Valognes, in Normandy, which Raymond the Fat, brother-in-law of the late Earl Strongbow and his successor as head of the new Anglo-Norman colony in Ireland, perused one day in the Summer of 1176 on the quay of the Dano-Irish town of Wexford.

Raymond recognized in the bearer a previous acquaintance, about as fat as himself, large, florid, corpulent William Fitz Adelm de Burgo, who six years before accompanied King Henry to Ireland. De Burgo gazed on Raymond and on the retinue of knights, glittering in ringed mail, with the crimson saltire or St Andrew's cross of the Geraldines blazoned on nearly every pointed shield and fluttering pennon, and there and then, says a hostile account, vowed—with the typical jealousy of the Anglo-Norman fillbusters towards one another—to humble the plumes and scatter the shields of that proud family.

Much ado has been made of the antiquity and patriotism of the Fitzgeralds, especially since Davis belauded them to glowing excess in his splendid oft-quoted poem ; but, discounting the story of descent from Aneas of Troy through the Gherardini of Florence, with which some ingenious seanachies complimented the progeny of Maurice, son of Gerald of Windsor and the infamous Nesta, founder of the race in Ireland, the antiquity somewhat shrivels, and, leaving out Lord Edward Fitzgerald and a few others, the patriotism is not very prominent. Comparison is, of course, odious, but it is about the most effective way of gaining some idea of the antiquity of the Bourkes, once, under the auspices of the famous Red Earl, the most powerful family in Ireland, and now one of the most numerous in Christendom.

The Bourkes came originally from the imperial loins of Charlemagne. Baldwin II. of the House of Blois, grandson of Charles, fifth son of the great emperor, had a son John, who was warden or governor of his father's towns and was thence styled “ de Bourg,” or “ of the towns.” From John of the Towns comes this numerous surname of erratic orthography, variously De Burgh, De Burgo, Bourke, Burke, and in Irish Burcaidhe or Burcagh. John's descendant, Harlowen de Burgo of Normandy, married Harlette, relict of Robert the Devil and mother of William the Conqueror ; and third in descent from Harlowen was Adelm, who married Agnes, daughter of King Louis VII. of France. Their son was the William Fitz Adelm de Burgo, who stepped ashore at Wexford with King Henry's credential letter in his hand.

Stout William's thirty-one years' career in Ireland was a lurid one. The monk historian of the invasion, Gerald Barry of Cambridge (Strongbow's secretary), describes De Burgo, whom he heartily disliked, with a pen of gall ; a gross and sensual man of large and powerful frame ; a crafty, wily man, smooth and sweet-tongued even to his foes and concealing enmity under a bland face ; a man corruptible by gold and fond of wine and women.

De Burgo's unpopularity with the English colonists, whom he debarred from plundering the Irish, caused his removal from office. The Irish, on the other hand, objected to his wasting raids—although with some of the spoils taken in Connacht he piously built religious houses in Munster—and to his abduction of their women. One night the Connachtmen arose and put all his soldiers, billeted among them, to the sword. Some years after, in furious revenge, he came back and made a trail of fire over the province, making special pyres of churches and abbeys. For this the outraged clergy solemnly cursed him with bell, book and candle, and under that black malediction in the same year (1204) he died. Some accounts say that he was buried in the Augustinian abbey he had founded at Athassel, or Asses' Ford, in Tipperary ; others that, excommunicate, abandoned by his men under the dread ban of the church, he died of a hideous disease, miserably and alone, amid the ruins of a village whose people he had massacred, and that his remains were thrown into a well, from which they were never afterwards taken.

By his wife Isabella, natural daughter of King Richard the Lion Heart and widow of Llewelyn, Prince of Wales, William de Burgo left a son Richard, whom the Irish called from his mother Mac an Cundaoise Sasanaighe, son of the English countess. This, the first Mac-William Bourke and as great a freebooter and plunderer as his father, married Una, daughter of Hugh O'Connor, King of Connacht, through whom he audaciously claimed the title of Lord of Connacht. He had two sons, namely, Walter, who married Maud, daughter of Hugh de Lacy, Earl of Ulster, and thus obtained the latter title, and William Og, or young William, whose Christian name, contracted to Uliog, or Ulick, thenceforth became a favorite one in the De Burgo family.

Walter de Burgo's eldest son, Richard, second Earl of Ulster, is known in Irish history as the Red Earl. This active and aggressive peer, florid of face and sanguine of temperament, whose regime ran from 1272 to 1326, made himself the most powerful man in Ireland, extended his sway far and wide, riding roughshod over English and Irish alike and planting his red-cross banner on many a castle. An account, probably exaggerated, gives his possessions as extending from Luchud in Thomond, now Lughid bridge, in the barony of Inchiquin, Co. Clare ; to Ballyshannon, and from Forbagh, six miles west to Galway, to Ballymacscanlan, near Dundalk.

His daughter, the Lady Ellen, married King Robert Bruce. One of her sisters became Countess of Kildare, and another Countess of Desmond, thus forming family alliance with the Bourkes' old enemies, the Geraldines.

During the Pentecost of 1326 the Red Earl entertained at a magnificent banquet the Anglo-Irish nobles attending a parliament which was held at Kilkenny. Then, bidding warlike pomp farewell, he entered the monastery of Athassel, founded by his great grandfather, and exchanged his steel and velvet for the habit of an Augustinian friar, in which he tranquilly ended his stormy career June 28th following.

The first Ulick Bourke, younger brother of Walter, Earl of Ulster, and ancestor of the Bourkes of Connacht, was executed in 1271 by the fiery Hugh O'Connor, King of Connacht ; but his death was bloodily avenged, forty-five years later, by his son William Liath Bourke, or Sir William the Grey, at the great slaughter of Athenry, where the white and yellow waves

of linen-clad Irish clansmen went up against the steel-clad ranks of Anglo-Norman archers and men-at-arms as vainly as a host of dervishes against a park of Gatlings, and 8,000 corpses lay around the fallen oak-tree banner of the O'Connors.

Sir William the Grey, titled Lord Warden of Ireland and one of the greatest history-makers of his day, founded the Dominican abbey of Rathfran, in North Mayo, in 1274, and the Franciscan monastery of Galway in 1296. In the latter house he was interred, he dying February 12th, 1324, and there, in June, 1779, the tomb of this grim and grey old veteran was discovered about four feet underground, carved with his family arms and a very long broadsword. By his wife Finola Ny Jordan, of the family of the Barons of Athleathan, or Broad Ford, on the River Moy, he left several sons, including Ulick, whom the "Four Masters" call "the most distinguished young nobleman of the English in Ireland for hospitality and generosity," and whose castle of Annakeen still stands in good preservation on the eastern shore of Lough Corrib ; Sir Edmond the Scot, one of the most war-like and turbulent men of his day ; Richard, whose descendant Walter was ancestor of the MacWalters ; John, ancestor of MacSeonin or MacShoneen (son of little John) twisted into Jennings ; and Philip, from whose four sons, Gibbon, Philip, Theobald or Tibbot and Meyler descend respectively the families of Gibbons, Philbin, MacTibbet or Tibbett and Moyles. David Bourke was ancestor of the MacDavids, now Daveys and Davitts. So went scattering wide the seed of this prolific filibustering family.

But now Ireland was startled by a quick series of monumental domestic crimes, as those fierce and ambitious De Burgos began to imbrue their hands in one another's blood. The Red Earl's young grandson, William, called the Dun Earl of Ulster, seized his kinsman Walter, who ambitioned to be King of Connacht, and starved him to death in the Green Castle of Inishowen. Gyle, the murdered man's sister, incited her husband's people, the Mandevilles of Ulster, to avenge him, and the Dun Earl fell beneath their daggers while on his way of Carrickfergus church on Sunday morning, June 6th, 1333. The people of the neighborhood arose and slew all implicated in the Earl's assassination to the number of 300 ; but the Earl's wife, who was Maud, daughter of Henry Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster, fled in terror to England, bearing with her her only child, her one-year-old daughter Elizabeth.

Great was the alarm amongst the Connacht Bourkes ; the Dun Earl's heiress, they considered, would in course of time marry, and the Earl's vast possessions be transferred into the hands of strangers. So they seized the dead Earl's lands for themselves. Furthermore, they renounced English laws, language and dress and adopted those of the Milesian Irish. They divided themselves into two great clans, under the headship of the first and second sons of Sir Walter the Grey.

Ulick of Annakeen received the Irish title of MacWilliam Uachtar, or the Upper MacWilliam, because his clan and lands lay in "Upper" or Southern Connacht, represented by the present County of Galway ; Sir Edmond the Scot that of MacWilliam Iachtar, or the Lower MacWilliam, he being situated in "Lower" or Northern Connacht, represented by the present County of Mayo and the counties adjoining. The Upper MacWilliam was better known as MacWilliam of Clanrickard. The surname of the clan was also spelt differently in the two territories, and is to the present day: in Galway Burke, in Mayo, Bourke.

Among the Bourkes one crime was often the parent of another, sometimes of many. Edmond-na-Feisoge Bourke, or the Bearded, younger son of the Red Earl and uncle of the Dun Earl, was appointed with Archbishop Malachy MacHugh of Tuam to administer English government in Connacht. Evil was the day when this poor bearded Bourke started on his mission. Low Sunday, April 19th, 1838, fierce Edmond the Scot and his brothers, with a party of armed followers, beset the friars' house at Ballinrobe, where their kinsman the royal com-

missioner was staying. In vain the companions of the latter tried to protect him, Roger de Flet, seneschal of Connacht ; Nicholas Lynott and others losing their lives in his defence.

That night the Bourkes brought their noble captive to Lough Mask Castle, the next night to Ballindeonagh Castle, and the third night to a lonely islet in the southern arm which the lake pushes far amid the rocky hills of Partry. Hither, after hard riding from Tuam, came Archbishop MacHugh, praying and pleading hard for a reconciliation between the kinsmen. But, while the negotiations were pending the bearded Edmond's guards, who were a party of the Stauntons, fearing for their own safety if he were released, enveloped him in a sack, which they weighted with stones, and flung him to a miserable death in the lake.

The islet was called from the tragedy *Oilean-an-Iarla*, the Earl's Island. The posterity of those who perpetrated the deed were called the Clan Ulkin, or Clan of Evil (*olcainn*). Many of the Stauntons, some say through shame at this infamy, Celticized their name to Mac-an-Mhileadh, (from their ancestor Miley Staunton), now MacEvily. From the drowned Edmond descend most of the Burkes of Munster.

Sir Edmond the Scot—so-called from long hostageship in Scotland—experienced the wrath of the Connacht chieftains for his part in the doom of Edmond the Bearded. However, having married Sabina O'Malley, he obtained protection and assistance from her clan of mariners and with additional help from Scotland he managed to reinstate himself in his possessions. He made peace with the King of England and broke it again, warred upon and humbled his nephew, MacWilliam of Clanrickard, gave lands to the abbey of Cong, and died at an advanced age in 1375, “ after the victory of repentance.”

For the Bourkes were pious in their way. Sir Edmond's son Thomas, whom Richard II. appointed chief and governor of the English in Connacht, also granted lands to historic Cong ; and the latter's son, Thomas the Red, founded in 1460 the stately Franciscan monastery of Moyne, whose lofty campanile looks out on the Atlantic over the yellow dunes of Bartra, and at the gospel side of whose altar may still be seen the escutcheoned tomb of the noble founder. Sir Richard of the Curved Shield, who established the Bourkes' power in Tirawley, granted land for the foundation of the Dominican abbey at Burrishoole, on Clew Bay, in 1484. And so abbeys, as well as castles, became numerous in MacWilliam's country.

For more than sixty miles, as the crow flies, from where the lofty rock of Dunbrista towers over the Atlantic billows, on the Tirawlian coast, to where the Black River meanders past the castles of Shrule and Moyne into Lough Corrib, in that remote west of Ireland, extends what was known for many centuries as the country of Mac-William—about conterminous with the present County of Mayo. The district is about as wide as it is long, running east from the misty cliffs of Achill to the fat green lands of the O'Connors' country. The clan lands proper of the MacWilliam and his people ran north and south, about ten miles wide, through the central and most fertile portion of it, rich in pasture and arable, waving with woods, spangled with lakes, sprinkled with the square, grey, feudal castles of the lords of the soil. The borders of the MacWilliam's country had in the main strong natural defences of thick forests and wild bogs, through which ran difficult passes.

It was in the middle of the thirteenth century that the place first became an English or Anglo-Norman feudal colony, which grew up and spread out around the old monastery of “ Mayo of the Saxons,” magnet, in the old pious days, of another and a milder English colony, the hundreds of monks and students—the latter including Alfred the Great—who were attracted to this great fane of religion and learning by the fame of the Irish St. Colman and his disciple, the Saxon St Gerald. Truth to tell, the newcomers did not show much respect for the venerable monastery, whence of yore the torch of knowledge had gone forth to

Britain ; the freebooter Guillaume de Burgo plundered and burned it in 1204 just as ruthlessly as the Norseman, Turgesius, had done three centuries before ; and twenty-two years later his son, Richard, “ left not a rick or measure of corn in the great church of Mayo, or in the church of St Michael the Archangel, and his troops carried oft from these churches eighty measures of corn.”

In later years, however, having seized and settled in the country, the barons of the English colony exercised a kind of protectorate over this ancient house, and by way of ironical return of the generosity of the old Irish chieftain who had given the “ field of the yews” (*Magh-eo*) for the purposes of Anglo-Saxon education, they decreed, in the conservatism of their colonial piety, that no “ mere Irishman,” that is, any Milesian Mac or O, should be allowed to make his profession as monk in the monastery of Mayo.

Among the chiefs of the English colony were the Stantons, who held Kinturk and other castles, west of Mayo abbey ; the D’Exeters, whose crimson banner, with its yellow lion and three cross crosslets, flew over the towers of Ballylahan and eleven other strongholds to the eastward, built circuitously to guard against the Incursions of the “ Irishry” ; the Prendergasts, whose white and blue pennant of “ vair” (or furs) and oak leaves streamed from the ramparts of Brieze and Castle Mac Garrett, in the district south of the D’Exeters’ ; and the Nangles, whose yellow flag, with its three azure lozenges, flamed over many a strong tower guarding the passes in the most easterly section of the colony. In the northern portion of the territory, or Tirawley, was the numerous and powerful Welsh tribe of Barrett.

And now these western Anglo-Irish threw off all allegiance to the English Crown and established a clan government of their own. The Judges of their courts gave way to the Brehon with his scroll ; the legal Norman-French was abandoned for the Gaelic. Anglo-Norman gallants married apple-cheeked Milesian girls. Children were exchanged between the races to be brought up in the strong, combining bonds of fosterage. At the baptismal font, standing sponsor for one another’s children, Celt and Anglo-Norman contracted the sacred ties of gossipred. The land was gaveled or divided among the members of the clan, whose “ gentlemen swordsmen” had the province of electing the head chief or ruler and also his successor in case of death, a kind of vice-president called from his position the tanist, from tanaiste, the Irish for the heir apparent, or next in command. The English king’s writ became as waste paper in Connacht.

The chief Bourke was called Mac-William, from William de Burgo. The various families of the clan took surnames in the Irish style by adopting the father’s Christian name with Mac (son of) before it ; and thus came MacGibbon (from Gibbon Bourke), MacPhil or Philbin, MacHugh or Moyles, MacDavid, MacHubert, Mac-Hugh, MacSeonin or Jennings, and others. As for the vassal or semi-vassal clans, promptly following the example set them the D’Exeters became MacJordans, from their founder Jordan D’Exeter ; the Prendergasts Mac-Morris, from Maurice or Morris De Prendergast, the Nangles or D’Angulos MacCostello, from Gilbert De Nangle or Costello ; the Stantons MacEvelly, meaning son of the soldier (Mac an Mhileadh) ; and the Barretts Clan Wattin and Clan Padden, from their forbears.

Between these various clans and branches of clans of this large, isolated, independent Anglo-Irish colony, governed by Irish laws, there often occurred differences and quarrels, sometimes accompanied by bloodletting and cattle-lifting. In that day of hot blood and ready sword, red murder, fratricidal, sacrilegious, stained the annals of the Bourkes. Two sons of Sir Richard of the Curved Shield and his wife Sighle or Sheelah Ny Jordan, “ the most exalted woman in Connacht,” were foully slain even within the sanctuary of abbeys ; John of Tirawley, “ one of the most worthy young men of the English in Ireland,” in Ballintubber, by the treacherous sons of his uncle Ulick, in 1506, and seven years later (February 6th, 1513),

in the sacred precincts of Rathfran, by his evil nephews, the sons of his brother Walter. Even some of the women of the family are said to have worn the crimson stain. David Bourke, son of one of the fore-mentioned homicides, had by his first wife a son named Walter the Tall and by his second, who was Finola O'Flaherty, Iron Rickard and William Caoch, the Blind Abbot. To make way for her son Rickard the step-mother instigated her brother Donal to murder Walter the Tall (ancestor of the Bourkes of Partry). The foul deed was perpetrated in the castle of Iveran, near Minna, Co. Galway. In due course Iron Rickard became Mac-William.

A very war-like and restless individual was this stern man in iron, who owed to the murderer's Skene his presentation with the white wand of chieftaincy. He was called Risdard-an-Iarainn from his continually going in armor. The "Four Masters" describe him as "a man noted for depredations, conflicts, marches and valorous deeds, who often forced the dangerous pass against his enemies, and who was also often defeated." Such a man looking around for a helpmate, naturally found a most suitable one in the daring sea-queen Graine O'Malley, who, after marrying him, continued to practice what she called her "trade of maintenance" as Irish buccaneer :

She left the close-air'd land of trees
And proud MacWilliam's palace,
For clear, bare Clare's health-salted
breeze.
Her oarsmen and her galleys ;
And where, beside the bending strand
The rock and billow wrestle.
Between the deep sea and the land
She built her Island Castle.

The Spanish captains, sailing by
For Newport, with amazement
Beheld the cannon'd longship lie
Moor'd to the lady's casement ;
And covering coin and cup of gold
In haste their hatches under
They whis'per'd, "'Tis a pirate's hold ;
She sails the seas for plunder !"

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Next year, 1590, Bingham established at Cong "a numerous and clamorous camp of kernes," and made a fresh invasion. He was strategically opposed by MacWilliam, now the Blind Abbot, and his forces, who marched parallel to him, harassing him, until they reached the Lagan, in north Mayo (where the French landed in 1798). Here MacWilliam, when charging the Queen's kerne, who were setting fire to the cornfields, lost his foot by the stroke of an enemy's ax. He was afterwards carried in a litter through the country and lay for some time on an Island in Lough Conn. This brave fighter was probably one of the lay abbots, or vicars, who appropriated church lands when religion was paralyzed by civil war and the suppression of the monasteries. A fierce opponent of the invader, he lived to hear of O'Neills great victory over the Sassenach at the Yellow Ford, and died a lone wanderer from his native territory in September, 1598. His dust reposes in the ruined Franciscan monastery of Quin, in Clare.

Other MacWilliams succeeded, best of whom—twelfth in descent from the original old William de Burgo, and therefore the thirteenth or unlucky member of the family series in

Ireland—was the gallant young Tibbot or Theobald Bourke, cousin of Red Hugh O'Donnell and one of his ablest lieutenants in conducting his Connacht campaigns. He recaptured the castle of Belleek on the Moy, from the English, in 1595, took part with his clansmen in the victory of the Yellow Ford, and combated English influence in Mayo, which was represented by *Tibbot-na-Long* Bourke or Theobald of the Ships, erratic and ambitious son of Iron Richard and *Grainne Ni Malley*—who sometimes championed the Irish when it looked like the winning side. At length. In 1601, all hope gone, this last MacWilllam departed for Spain, where Philip II. bestowed upon him the empty title of Marquis of Mayo and granted him a liberal pension. In hopes there might be a return and a day of reckoning. This title and pension passed to his son, Walter *Kittogh*, or the left-handed, who, dying without issue, says Lodge, “left it in custody of his half brother. Colonel Plunket, until it should be claimed by some of his heirs general.”

It does not appear that it was ever claimed : no pictured Spanish sails ever bore back the exiles, and the waterfalls over the ledges of Belleek murmur an endless dirge for the past and gone MacWilllam Bourkes and the now landless MacWattin Barretts.

Theobald of the Ships (born on sea during one of his mother's piratical excursions) was created, for his services to the English, Viscount of Mayo In 1626, which titular honor he enjoyed only three years, dying June 18, 1629 — killed, says Mayo tradition, by an idiot brother-in-law, near Ballintubber abbey, where he was Interred, the affair originating a Mayo peasant curse, that of “*Tibbot-na-Long's* journey to BallIntubber,” meaning no returning, or sudden violent death. His remains were interred in the old abbey, where his tomb was discovered some sixteen years ago, and where also lies the dust of the notorious priest-hunter of the eighteenth century, *Shawn-na Soggarth* Malowney.

“There are more able men of the surname of the Burkes than of any name in Europe,” wrote Sir John Davies, the English solicitor-general for Ireland, In 1606. But, broken and landless, their ability now availed them but little. The arrangement by which they signed away their ancient rights and possessions in return for being granted in perpetuity certain large estates was scouted as waste paper : the English Crown lawyers claimed and maintained that Lord Deputy Perrot had not been authorized to grant any estate whatever and that the arrangement was merely intended to be a composition of taxes. In 1635 came the able, unscrupulous Deputy, the Earl of Strafford, and with bribe and threat made out the title and ownership of King Charles I. to all the land of Connacht.

The title Was claimed through Elizabeth, daughter of the Dun Earl (assassinated in 1333, Earl of Ulster and Lord of Connacht), who married Lionel, Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III., whose descendant Margaret married James IV. of Scotland, great grandfather of Charles I. Elizabeth, sister of Charles, married Frederick, King of Bohemia, through whom the title again passed to the English reigning family, the Guelphs, so that the present King of England's brother is Duke of Connacht.

During the Insurrection which commenced in 1641 Colonel John Bourke of Mayo commanded the Irish forces in Connacht. *Tibbot-na Long's* son, Miles Bourke, second Viscount Mayo, did what he could to preserve the peace and remained practically neutral ; nevertheless he was one of those whom Cromwell “exempted from pardon of life or estate.” His son and successor Theobald, did his utmost to prevent the massacre of Protestants at Shrulce, February 13, 1642, and had to be carried struggling, sword in hand, across the bridge, to save his own life, by Sheriff John Garvey.

However, he was tried in Galway by a jury of Cromwellian officers for alleged complicity in the crime, convicted with what even Froude admits to have been a mockery of the

forms of justice, and sentenced to death. His end was a sickening scene of bungle and butchery. Thrice the platoon drawn up to shoot him fired, and thrice missed him. At length a corporal blind of one eye hit him, and the blood of the unfortunate Lord Mayo smoked upon the stones. His estates of fifty thousand acres and five manors were then seized by the government, and his orphan child allowed a pittance of £30 a year.

To him succeeded five other Viscounts Mayo, the family retaining part of their estates by turning Protestant. They kept hospitable house at Castle Bourke, now in ruins, on Lough Carra, maintaining bards and harpers, and were mostly buried in Ballintubber. The line became extinct when John, eighth viscount, died in London in 1767.

The title was revived in 1781 in favor of John Bourke, M.P., for Naas, who was created Viscount Mayo, of Moneycrower, near Ballinrobe, where the family still retains a remnant of their former possessions. In 1785 he was made Earl of Mayo. He was a descendant of a Mac-William, John of the Termon, who died in 1550. The seat of the Earl of Mayo is Palmerston House, Straftan, Co. Kildare. The present Earl's father, Richard Southwell Bourke, Viceroy of India, was assassinated in the Andaman Islands, February 8, 1872. Probably the present Viscount Mayo has never seen the county from which he takes his title.

Sir Richard Bingham, the Bourkes' old enemy and almost exterminator, died in Dublin in 1599, aged 70, "with an assured faith in Christ," says the grim adventurer's monument, in the south aisle of Westminster Abbey. He left only a daughter. His brother John landgrabbed extensively in Mayo, obtaining in particular the fine estate of the Bourkes of Castlebar, which the Bingham family still retains.

One of John Bingham's descendants married Anne Vesey, grandniece of the celebrated Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan; hence the latter title was revived for Sir Charles Bingham of Castlebar in 1775, ancestor of the late Earl of Lucan, of Balaklava charge-the-guns celebrity, one of the greatest exterminators in Ireland in the famine days. Another branch of the Bingham, also occupying lands formerly owned by the Bourkes, at Ballyglass and Foxford, is that of Lord Clanmorris. The first lord got his title in 1800, with an immense sum of money, for voting for the Union with England.

In north Mayo the forfeited lands of the Bourkes were granted to Sir Arthur Gore, ancestor of the Earl of Arran (whose seat is Deel Castle, now Castle Gore), also to the Jacksons, Vaughans, Watts, Webbs and other Cromwellian troopers. The forfeitures in Mayo amounted to 19,294 acres of land, valued at £87,598 3s.

One of the last of the famous fighting Bourkes of Mayo was Walter Bourke of Turlough. He was member of parliament for Mayo and raised a regiment for King James in 1690. At the battle of Aughrim he held the old castle on the Irish left and lost nearly all his men, they being by mistake or treachery supplied with bullets that would not fit their muskets. On the Continent he commanded the celebrated Regiment of Bourke, which won special distinction at Cremona :

“ Would you read our name in honor's
roll.

Look not for royal grant ;

It is written in Cassano

Alcoy and Aliante.

Saragossa, Barcelona,

Wherever dangers lurk

You will find in the van the blue and

the buff
Of the Regiment of Bourke.”

This gallant commander died a field marshal at Barcelona in 1175. His brother, Captain Thomas, proved a traitor to King James and betrayed Galway to the enemy. Captain William Bourke, of the Ballinrobe branch, besieged in the castle of Grange, Co. Sligo, in 1691, blew up the place and died with all his men rather than surrender to the Williamites. The Bourkes' estate of Turlough was granted to the Fitzgeralds, one of whom was the celebrated duellist, George Robert, “fighting Fitzgerald,” who was hanged at Castlebar in 1786.

In the Irish army of James II. there were about eighty commissioned officers of the surname of Bourke or Burke, including five noblemen ; hence the ax of confiscation struck heavily for the third time at the clan—root, trunk and branch—involving general attainment and exodus, so that when more than a century later the French landed in Ireland, at Kilmummin, in the extreme north of the old territory of the Clan Uilliam, there was but one Bourke of prominence to join them in that desperate effort to free Ireland from English rule. He was Richard Bourke of Ballina, and he paid with his life for his patriotism, being hanged by the English at Killala in September, 1798.

Shawn More's brother, David Bourke of Rathroe Castle, slain at Shrule battle in 1570, left as posterity the Bourkes of Rathroe, Iniscoe and Carrowkeel (west of Lough Conn). Of this line was “big Walter,” the counsellor, famed as a Mayo lawyer and wit half a century ago, also the late Canon Ulick Bourke, a good Irish scholar and author of many excellent works on Irish history. Nephew of the counsellor was the late ill-fated Walter M. Bourke, of Curra-leagh, near Claremorris, himself a counsellor, who after a brilliant and successful career in India, returned to Ireland in the Land League days, made a losing race as candidate for M.P. of Mayo, had various disputes with his tenantry, and was unfortunately shot to death, with a soldier escort, near his residence in Rahassane Park, near Gort, Co. Galway, June 8, 1882, the last Bourke of prominence in the affairs of Mayo.

In all the extensive territory once occupied by the clan and still thickly strewn with the grey or ivied ruins of the castles of the chief Bourkes, vain now to search for a representative man of the surname. A few petty landlords and lawyers, a sprinkling of farmers and shopkeepers, this is the amazing little that is left of the once numerous descendants of Willam de Burgo in Lower Connacht, the able, war-like, powerful race that for centuries Independently owned the soil, with their own laws and customs, their own flag and army. Few or none of the name may be found on the present public boards or bodies of the county. Rapid and brilliant was the rise of the Burcagh chieftains ; marvelous and melancholy their fall. Not a bard has raised a lament over their departed glory ; from Ballycastle to Shrule the wild birds nestle. In their dismantled towers, the grass springs unkempt over their forgotten graves.

And so, under the relentless law of phantasmagorian Irish change, passed the Clan Uilliam.

[1] Uilliam, the Irish of William or Gulllaume, pronounced “ul-yeem”—accent on second syllable.

Irish History in American Schools

THERE is a growing demand for books (In English) relating to Irish history and literature. The study of Irish history is being introduced into many American parochial schools, and in consequence, a new interest in Irish literary matters has become apparent and is being felt

When a demand arose for books on Irish history which could be placed in the hands of Irish-American school children, there were few to select from, but after considerable research it was found that the series of books written by Dr. P. W. Joyce came nearer to filling the requirements than any other works, and they were eventually approved and are now in general use in all American schools where Irish history is taught

Dr. P. W. Joyce, the eminent Irish scholar and historian, is a prominent figure in Irish literature. His contributions to Irish history and literature are many. Among his best known works are "A Short History of Ireland from the Earliest Times to 1608"; "A Concise History of Ireland, from the Earliest Times to 1837"; "The Origin and History of Irish Names of Places"; "Old Celtic Romances"; "Ancient Irish Music," and his especially popular and latest books, "Child's History of Ireland" and "A Reading Book In Irish History," etc.

It is interesting to note that Dr. Joyce's "Child's History of Ireland" was adopted not long since as a supplementary reading in the public schools of the city of Chicago. There seems to be quite a tendency in schools throughout the country to recognize the subject of Irish history in the schools.

"A Reading Book in Irish History" contains a mixture of Irish history, biography and romance. A knowledge of the history of the country is conveyed partly in special historical sketches, partly in notes under the illustrations, and partly through the biography of important personages, who flourished at various periods, from St Bridget down to the great Earl of Kildare.

The following extracts showing the manner in which Irish music and musicians were appreciated by our ancestors, are taken from that work :

ANCIENT IRISH MUSIC.

From the most remote times the Irish took great pleasure in music, they studied and cultivated it so successfully that they became celebrated everywhere for their musical skill. Irish teachers of this art were thought so highly of that from about the seventh to the eleventh century, or later, they were employed in colleges and schools in Great Britain and on the Continent, like Irish professors of other branches of learning. Many of the early missionaries took great delight in playing on the harp, so that some brought a small harp with them on their journeys through the country, which no doubt lightened many a weary hour during the time of hard missionary work. In our oldest manuscript books, music is continually mentioned ; and musicians are spoken of with respect and admiration.

The two chief instruments used in Ireland were the harp and the bagpipe. The harp was the favorite with the higher classes, many of whom played it as an accomplishment, as people now play the piano. The professional Irish harpers were more skilful, and could play better than those of any other country ; so that for hundreds of years it was the custom for the musicians of Great Britain to visit Ireland in order to finish their musical education, a custom which continued down to about a century and a half ago.

The bagpipe was very generally used among the lower classes of people. The form in use was what we now call the Highland or Scotch pipes—slung from the shoulder, the bag inflated by the mouth. But this form of pipes took its rise in Ireland, and it was brought to Scotland in early ages. There is another and a better kind of bagpipes, now common in Ireland, resting on the lap when in use, and having the bag inflated by a bellows, but this is a late invention.

The Irish musicians had various “ styles,” three of which are frequently mentioned in tales and other ancient Irish writings ; of these many specimens have come down to the present day. The style they called “ mirth-music” consisted of lively airs, which excited to merriment and laughter. These are represented by our present dance tunes, such as jigs, reels, hornpipes, and other such quick, spirited pieces which are known so well in every part of Ireland.

The “ sorrow-music” was slow and sad, and was always sung on the occasion of a death. We have many airs belonging to this style which are now commonly called Keens, *i.e.*, laments, or dirges. The “ sleep-music” was intended to produce sleep, and the tunes belonging to this style were plaintive and soothing. Such airs are now known as lullabies, or nurse tunes, or cradle songs, of which numerous examples are preserved in collections of Irish music. They were often sung to put children to sleep. Though there are, as has been said, many tunes belonging to these three classes, they form only a small part of the great body of Irish music.

Music entered into many of the daily occupations of the people. There were special spinning-wheel songs, which the women sang, with words, in chorus or in dialogue, when employed in spinning. At milking time the girls were in the habit of chanting a particular sort of air, in a low gentle voice. These milking songs were slow and plaintive, something like the nurse tunes, and had the effect of soothing the cows and making them submit more gently to be milked. This practice was common down to fifty or sixty years ago, and many people now living can remember seeing cows grow restless when the song was interrupted, and become again quiet and placid when it was resumed. When plowmen were at their work they whistled a sweet, slow and sad strain, which had as powerful an effect in soothing the horses at their hard work as the milking songs had on the cows, and these also were quite usual till about half a century ago.

Special airs and songs were used during working time by smiths, by weavers, and by boatmen. There were besides hymn tunes, and young people had simple airs for all sorts of games and sports. In most cases words suitable to the several occasions were sung with lullabies, laments and occupation tunes. Deirdre’s Lament for the Sons of Usna may be taken as a specimen of a lament. Examples of all the preceeding classes of melodies will be found in the collections of Irish airs by Bunting, Petrie and Joyce.

The Irish had numerous war marches which the pipers played at the head of the clansmen when marching to battle, and which inspired them with courage and dash for the fight. This custom is still kept up by the Scotch, and many fine battle-tunes are printed in Irish and Scotch collections of national music

From the preceeding statement we may see how universal was the love of music in former days among the people of Ireland. Though Irish airs, compared with the musical pieces composed in our time, are generally short and simple, they are constructed with such skill, that in regard to most of them it may be truly said, no composer of the present day can produce airs of a similar kind to equal them.

There are half a dozen original collections of Irish music, containing in all between 1,000 and 2,000 airs ; other collections are mostly copied from these. But numerous airs are still sung and played among the people all through Ireland, which have never been written down, and many have been written down which have never been printed. Thomas Moore composed his beautiful songs to old Irish airs, and his whole collection of songs and airs—well known as “ Moore’s Melodies”—is now published in one small cheap volume.

Of the entire body of Irish airs that are preserved we know the authors of not more than about one-tenth, and these were composed within the last 200 years. Most of the remaining nine-tenths have come down from old times. No one now can tell who composed the popular airs known as “ The Coolin,” “ Saviourneen Dheelish,” “ Shule Aroon,” “ Molly Asthore,” “ Garryowen,” “ The Boyne Water,” “ Patrick’s Day,” “ Langolee,” “ The Blackbird,” or “ The Girl I Left Behind Me,” and so of many other well-known and lovely airs.

The national music of Ireland and that of Scotland are very like each other, and many airs are common to both countries, but this is only what might be expected, as we know that the Irish and the Highland Scoten were originally one people.

(From Joyce’s “ Reader in Irish History,” price 50 cents. By special permission of Longmans, Green & Co., Publishers.)

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“ IRISH Reading Lessons” is the title a series of neatly printed books compiled by Miss Norma Borthwick, one of the most enthusiastic Gaelic workers in Dublin.

Parts I., II. and III. of the series have been issued by the Irish Book Co., Upper O’Connell Street, Dublin, and are sold for ninepence for the three.

Miss Borthwick has attempted to provide an easy method of learning Irish for three classes of learners—Irish-speaking children, adult Irish speakers who wish to read Irish, and English speakers of all ages who wish to learn Irish.

Miss Borthwick has based the arrangement of the lessons on her own knowledge of the difficulties confronting the student who wants to read Irish. She has submitted the lessons to the Rev. Peter O’Leary, P. P., and that eminent Irish scholar and writer has expressed his full approval of them. The books are copiously and strikingly illustrated by Mr. Jack B. Yeats.

The Gael : a monthly journal devoted to the preservation and cultivation of the Irish language and the autonomy of the Irish nation = An Gaodhal : leabhar-aithris míosamhal tabhartha chum an teanga Ghaedhilge a chosnad agus a shaorthughadh agus chum féin-riaghla cinidh na h-Éireann (1881)

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