

NOTES ON IRISH DRESS AND ARMOUR IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. FROM HER MAJESTY'S STATE PAPER OFFICE.

BY DANIEL MAC CARTHY, ESQ.

AMONGST the various ingenious schemes devised in the days of Queen Elizabeth for civilizing the barbarous chieftains of Ireland, not the least noteworthy was that of inducing them, partly by grave admonition and partly by allurements, to adopt the English costume. Henry VIII., "of glorious memory," had already reprov'd the unsightliness of the Irish fashion of shaving the back parts of the head, and the unsuppressed luxuriance of glybbes. Queen Elizabeth directed her attention to the details of costume, limiting herself, as was becoming, to the fashions of her own sex, and leaving to her Deputies to carry the traditional reforms into effect with the ruder portion of her subjects. How the English authorities in Ireland proceeded, viz., by proclamation, and the banishing under pain of fine the rude Irish dress, whatever it was, from the precincts of their viceregal residence, has been already shown in a paper read before this Society. How these proclamations were welcomed we shall presently make known. Her Highness conducted her portion of this experiment in a manner remarkably illustrative of her own gracious disposition, and felicitously in accord with that frugality for which she was a model. Her success was, as it deserved to be, more complete than that of her Deputies. The moment chosen for the experiment shows also the sagacity of Elizabeth. In the year 1578—as in every other year since 1172—the state of Ireland was unsatisfactory, indeed somewhat critical. The Earl of Desmond troubled the repose of Munster, and Tirlogh Linogh, the O'Neill who succeeded Shane, and preceded Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, was indulging in vagaries in Ulster, which greatly embarrassed the Queen's Deputies. This moment was selected for a simultaneous attempt upon the costume of the male and female rulers of the disaffected provinces. Could they be induced to adopt the English garb, civility would surely quickly follow! Some disinclination was known to exist amongst the Irish to part with the dress of their forefathers, and a strange fastidiousness as to the adoption of that of their conquerors. The device which presented itself to the mind of the Queen for overcoming these feelings was at once most gracious and most seductive. Amongst the various treasures of her Majesty's wardrobe were certain garments of great magnificence, costly silks and cloth of gold, which had in their day excited the admiration of the ladies of England, although their splendours had

been partially eclipsed by the beauty of their royal wearer. Wishing to bestow upon a subject an especial token of regard, it will be conceived that so great a Queen could select nothing more flattering than one of these costly objects, sanctified, to use the language of the day, by their contact with her sacred Majesty. Elizabeth had chosen two Irish ladies to be thus honoured,—one was the Countess of Desmond, the other the wife of Turlogh Lynogh. The latter is described to us as “a well-bred ladie and aunt to the Earle of Argyle.” Two of the royal dresses were, accordingly, transmitted to Ireland: they were committed to the care of the Lord Deputy himself, for it was desirable that they should be presented with such ceremonial of state as should impress upon the minds of the recipients a due estimation of the gifts.

The presentation of these royal tokens was no ordinary occurrence: little less was expected from them than the pacification of Ulster and Munster; and to no less a personage than the Lord Chancellor of Ireland was it entrusted to select the mode, and the occasion, of conveying the Queen’s offering with tact and effect. The robes themselves were subjected to a respectful but minute scrutiny, for although the fact of their having been once, or occasionally, worn by her Highness should have amply compensated for any want of freshness or absolute novelty that might be incidental to them, the timidity of the Chancellor suggested that minds of a less lofty order of civility might fail to value such indications of royal use above the lustre of the unblemished material. The result of this inspection was the interesting discovery that the foreparts of these dresses bore certain marks of her Majesty’s wearing. After mature counsel, it was judged expedient that “a Memorial from Ireland” should be despatched to the Privy Council of England on the matter. The record left us of this discussion is brief. The motives of the Irish authorities had doubtless been previously laid before her Majesty, and pending fresh instructions from England the dresses remained in the hands of the Chancellor.

“October 27th 1578. A MEMORIAL from IRELAND.

“It maie please yo^r hon^r that the forepartes of the Earle of Desmondes and O’Neils wyves gownes may be sente.”

It had been deemed expedient that certain breadths in the foreparts of the Queen’s gowns should be cut out, for they were “slobbered,” and replaced by new or other material. Considerable hesitation appears to have ensued respecting this change; much delay and further correspondence followed; but at length the desired restoration was effected, and at an opportune moment, for the Earl of Desmond was becoming daily less manageable. The first experi-

ment made with these royal robes was upon the well-bred lady, the aunt of the Earl of Argyle, and, it is gratifying to perceive, with complete success.

Early in January, 1579, the Lord Chancellor Gerrarde writes to Walsingham:—

“I sente my man wth her Ma^{ties} Gowne to Turlaghe his Wyfe, who is a contynuall good instrument to continewe him quyett, I made a foreparte w^{ch} wanted to yt, his fres to me acknowledginge the receipte I send yo^r hon^r to be made knowne to her Matie; her Highnes neuer bestowed a garm^t better; the other I have not yet deliuered to the Countesse of Desmonde.”

The gown for the Countess, which was of cloth of gold, was kept back until a little bargaining between her and the Lord Chancellor was satisfactorily finished. In due time this robe was also given, and with like happy result; for we read that “the Countess of Desmond greatly disapproved of her husband’s disloyal conduct.”

That the Queen’s own share in these diplomatic transactions had met with the success it deserved is gratifying, and we may the less care to learn that the intentions of the Lord Deputy were not so readily appreciated. Sir John Perrot was a man of choleric complexion, and occasionally exceeded in his discourse the limits of propriety, which, as a loyal subject and a discreet governor, he should have respected. Even relative to his royal mistress, certain of his speeches are on record which it would have been more seemly, and far wiser for himself, to have suppressed. He at once, and abruptly, assailed the barbarous Irish usages both of male and female: “the glybbes and the great rowles” were attacked, and with what consequences to himself, in the latter instance, he readily foresaw.

“SIR JOHN PERROT to BURGHELY.

“Amonges the rest of my doings heare, I haue caused all the Irishry (in manner) w^{hin} this p^{vin}ce to forgoe theyr glybbes, and haue waded into a farder daynger, as in banishinge all the great rowles from the wearinge of ladies gentlewomen, Towneswomen, and others in all places, by which meanes I am assured to haue no wyfe in these ptes.”

Sir William Drury next presents us with a glimpse of Irish armour, as seen by some young German nobles travelling for their amusement:—

“1579. *June 26.* S^r W. DRURY to WALSYNGHAM.

“Maie it please yo^r hon^r. After I had dispatched Lodovike Briskett with those things wherof he had to enforme you, I toke my waie to Kelles, a poore decayed towne borderinge upon Orelies countrie meaninge to have spent ther foure or five daies for the determyninge of hurts done betweene that side of the pale and the said Orelies countrie (which had longe

hanged unsatisfied) being assisted with Sr Edward Fytton, and Sr Lucas Dillon. But the second daie after my cominge thether worde came to me, that certaine straungers, noble men of good howses, were come to Dublin, havinge purpose to come pzentlie to me with commendation from some of her Maties privie Councell to be courteously entertained here (as travelers), which when I hard, I both sent a young gent. called Patricke Barnewall, sonne in law to the said Sr Lucas (who had hymselfe bine a traveler) to entertaine them and convey them to me. And also hasted to fynishe my purpose at Kelles, because of the inconveniencie of that place both for diet and lodginge—neverthelesse in those three daies w^{ch} we spent at Kelles I did that which was determyned, and for performauce therof did not only take xij of the best pledgis in Orelies countrie for restitution of the pale, as well for orders heretofore past, as also for those which we presentlie ordered. But likewise on the other side I have taken assured order with the pale for satisfaction to the Oreighlies for all such hurts as I did sett downe against them. And not only so but also that their suspected children and followers should yearelie (duringe three yeares) parsonallie appere at any cessions holden within that countie, and not departe without license, and once evry yeare duringe the said three yeares to appere at Dublin in the Kings benche to answer whatsoeur could be objected against them. This devise ys thought good, not onlie to kepe peace in that borders, but also to be a meane to make those wild headed people acquainted and more familier with their more civile neighbours, and so to envye them with seinge and heringe of civilitie, lawe and iustice. I did also comitt to warde, two knightes, and two gentlemen, who havinge pledgis in formor tymes comitted to their custodies, confessed theye were escaped from them. Yf I should number the causes there determyned and hard, I should but trouble yo^r hon^r, they were so many and so old. All this beinge pfected, and proclamation made for certaine orders from henceforth to be observed upon those borders, the notts whereof I have sent to Lodovike Briskett to shewe to yo^r hono^r I retired my selfe for the better entertainment of the said straungers to Sr Lucas Dillons howse seaven miles from Kelles, and there on Whitson sondaie in the morninge they presented them selves unto me, with tres of commendations from Sr Henry Sydney, declaringe them to be two barons, and one a riche marchaunts sonne of Stronsborough, but them selves requiringe pasporte from me, entitled their names to be all three barons viz Christopher Terell baron of Gondorsdorff, George Androas of Hoffekerch, baron of Kolmenyche, and Adam Pesse baron of Kolyn, to whom I gave such honor, and entertainment, as was fitt for such psonages cominge in a convenient shewe, with a traine of sixe folowers. And upon talke with them, they disclosed their purpose to be, after they had sene Galwaie, Lymerike and some other porte townes of this land, that they would passe into Scotland. Whereuppon I tolde them, yf in the beginninge of July they made their returne to Dublin, they might possiblie have companie of me, and some pte of the Quenes forces into the north of Irland, and see within the viewe of Scotland. But Sr thoughte I see no great cause of Jelosie in respecte of their youthes, yet whether any of their companie have a further intention, or deper consideration yt cannot be amisse to doubt. And therfor do prairie yo^r hono^r yf you have harde, or understand, any parte of there

coñinge, or the cause, that it may please you to advertise me the same, with all circumstaunces, and what course you thinke fitt for me to holde therein: and havinge thus pted from them on Whitson Sondaie after supper & lodged them at Tryme, a myle of, in Lawrance Hamonds howse, sendinge the said Patrike Barnewell with them, as a companion, they cam againe the next morninge, and beinge with me at Service in the church, Orelie with his brother, Phillip, and his unkell Edmond and 30 horsemen well furnished, cam (unlocked for) to present unto me a submission, and supplication, in the behalfe as well of him selfe, as of his whole countrie. The copie wherof at lardge I have also sent unto the said Lodovike Briskett, to shewe unto yo^r hono^r, wherin when I found such humilitie, and continuance of the fydelitie, wh^h he hath of longe tyme professed, and in his owne pson performed, together with his conformytie, appearing therein, at this tyme (wh^h by reporte he hath bine moved to before and refused) to have his people, not only framed to Englishe manners, but also his contrie made shere ground, and subiecte to lawe under her Maties writt, weyinge also his gravitie in yeares, & good discession in government, I thought it good to honour hym with the title of knighthoode, which he so humblie & thankfullie received, as he vowed hym selfe to continewe, and increase by all meanes he could, his dutie and obedience unto her Ma^{tie}. But how straunge the vewe of those savadge parsonadges (most of them wearinge glibbes, and armed in maille with pesantses & skulls,¹ and ridinge upō pillions) semed to o^r straungers, I leave to yo^r wisdom to thinke of. And so my selfe, and the traine, together with theis straungers, and Oreighlie with his companie, beinge entertaigned with the said S^r Lucas, we parted. I thē toke my waie to Molingare, a towne borderinge on the Annalie, O Farall bois countrie, as well to kepe cessions, to ponishe malifactors, as to take order for all controversies, betwen those of the pale and the said O Farall, where I did execut certaine offendors, and toke sure order for the accomplishinge of such things as then were sett downe, which beinge finished I went into the Annalie, where besides the executinge of eight offendors, I caused one Rowry O Farall a nere kinsman of O Farall bois, and a notable rebell (accordinge as his deserts merited) to be executed like a traitor, notwithstandinge great sute made unto me for his pardon, the example of whose death, I hope will worke great good in that contrie. I caused his heed and quarters to be bestowed about such places, as in his life tyme, he did spoile, and burne, and then takinge good order for diūrs other good causes, as I did befor in the Kings Countie, I returned to Dublin, where I nowe remayne duringe the terme tyme, to ende the matt^r of cesse, and to refreshe & pvid o^r selves against the northeren iorneye. Thus wishinge yo^r hono^r longe and psporous health wh^h all increase of vertue I bid you hartilye ferdewell.

“Dubline the xxvj of June 1579.

“Yo^r honors all assured to

“Vse and comāde

“W. DRURY.”

¹ This was the armour of the galloglass. The “skull” was the conical iron bascinet which continued in use in Ireland from Richard II.’s time up to this period; and

the “pesanta,” or “pisan,” as it is sometimes called, was, probably, the tippet of chain-mail which, depending from the bascinet, covered the neck and shoulders.—Eds.

But, to gratify the reader as much as in us lies, and present him with the true "counterfett" of an Irish chieftain as he lived, behold a fac-simile of the portrait of the much-dreaded Turlogh Lynogh O'Neill, sent for the special delectation of Burghley, as testified by the following extract from the State Papers:—

"1574. April 7th. From BARNABE GOCHE to my Lo: (BURGHLEY).

"I haue therin inclosed y^e Counterfett off Terlowgh Lenogh rudely by mee drawn butt assuere yo^r Lo. greatly resemblyng him.

"From Drogheda."



That the portrait given above was a perfect likeness will admit of no doubt, for the artist has declared it; but who shall explain in writing the details of the costume? The glybbes are surely there, notwithstanding the vaunt of the Lord Deputy. The upper garment—is it ermine or is it sheepskin? Is it a peer's robe or an Irish cloak? Is that peculiar circle upon the collar-bone a symbol of Irish chieftainship or of English knighthood? In short, is Turlogh Lynogh in the garment of his forefathers or in the courtly dress of my Lord Deputy Perrot? The Irish chief, like other great princes, entertained upon his establishment a professional jester. A pleasant saying is on record relative to the dress urged upon the chiefs by Perrot, which it is difficult to believe had been uttered by any but this functionary. Thus does Cox relate it:—"The Irish lords were obliged to wear robes, and, the better to induce them to it, the Deputie bestowed robes upon Turlogh Lynogh, and other principal men of the Irish, which they embraced like fetters; so that one of them desired the Deputy that his chaplain might walk the streets with him in trousers, For then, said he, the Boys will laugh at him as well as at me; whereto the Deputy gravely replied, that the want of order and decency would be their ruine, and demonstrated to them the benefits of this conformity." It may be mentioned that a graver thing than an admonition ensued to Turlogh from the pleasantry of this official humorist, for we read that, in an access of high animal spirits, he let off a gun at his master's supper-table, and shot him through the body.

"And now havinge passed this," writes the Lord Deputy, "and returninge by easie journeys towards Dublin, at Sir Thomas Cusack's house I was advertised that Turlough Lenough was by a Jester, one of the Doinloughes shott throughe the body w^h ij pellets oute of a Caliuier, sitting at supper w^h his new spouse, aunte to the Earle of Argile, that the Scotts lately

arrived weare now in a mase, that all Ulster stode upon election of a new Captaine, &c. In the meane while I was aduertised of his hope of recouerie, and that he was caried into the fardest pts of his contrie.”

Although we have an “exact counterfett” before our eyes of an Irish chief and his costume, we are but feebly enabled to judge what was his precise appearance; nor can we pronounce whether it was the dress represented in the sketch before us at which “the Boys laughed.” The portrait, drawn for us by the pen of Sir William Drury, is more successful than that of Barnabe Goche. The O’Reilly of those days, to our amazement, stands before us in the panoply of Rinaldo; and if his brother chieftains were similarly arrayed, we need have little surprise at their reluctance to adopt the robes of the Lord Deputy.

THE BOOK OF MAC CARTHY REAGH.¹

BY JOHN WINDELE, ESQ.

As in all ancient nations, the sacerdotal orders, whether Pagan or Christian, were the almost sole preservers and cultivators of whatever literature existed; so it was in Ireland, where the Druid and Bard in the Heathen period, and the Priest and Monk in the Christian, were the principal guardians of letters. In the latter era the monasteries contained the chief collections of books then extant, and here, in the *scriptorium* belonging to each, their multiplication by transcribing was sedulously carried on. But this labour was not entirely monopolized in Ireland by ecclesiastics: there was another class, a relic of the old bardic system, which combined the Ollav (or professor), the Brehon (or lawyer), the Filea (or poet), the Seanachuidhe (antiquary, historian, or herald), and the Scealuidhe (or romancer), who also cultivated the national literature in its various departments. These orders, necessarily laic, formed hereditary corporations, and enjoyed lands and estates, granted for the exclusive use of the literary profession by the munificence of kings and chieftains. So late as the commencement of the seventeenth century, Camden writes of the Irish nobility:—“They have their historians who record their exploits, physicians, poets called Bards, and harpers, each of whom have lands assigned them, and each of these professions, in every territory, form distinct families, as Breahans of

¹ No greater service can be rendered to the cause of Irish historical literature than the making known, as Mr. Windele here does, the contents of ancient MSS. not easily accessible to the public. The pages of this

“Journal” afford an excellent medium for the dissemination of such information; and the Committee trust that Mr. Windele shall find many followers in this, as in his other labours in the cause of Irish literature.—Eds.