

EXTRACTS FROM THE IRISH CORRESPONDENCE IN
H. M. STATE PAPER OFFICE.

COMMUNICATED BY A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

THE details of the history of Ireland, at any period, are rather repulsive than inviting: the causes and reasons for which are so well known and obvious as to need no more than an allusion. Our business, as Irish archæologists, is merely to deal with such materials for developing the history of our country as fall in our way, and to leave the inferences to be drawn from them to others. If a close investigation into the minor occurrences of this national history is an object worthy of being pursued, it possesses, for its principal point of value, that of giving literary photographs of the actions of those men of two sections of the European races who were engaged in a fierce and deadly contest for the possession of Ireland. The native Gael were pitted against the invading Teutons in the struggle for life, and subsequently for religion. During the conflict neither Irish nor English were scrupulous. If the Celts in general were as savage and desperate as their contemporaries, the Mohawks and Cherokees, the invasive Saxons may be also said to have seized *their* prey with a high and lawless hand. Whether a veracious history in detail of such a state, not of civil society, but of civil war, is desirable or not, is a question into which we will not enter. It is remarkable that this condition of affairs was at its height during the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth—a period when, though semi-barbarous Scotland was similarly convulsed, England and the western continental nations were, if not in uninterrupted enjoyment of the blessings of peace, at least enjoying the advantages of a comparatively polished civilization.

At the period alluded to, the Gaels of our country, excepting the chieftains, were still nearly as houseless, and almost as undressed and unlettered as their progenitors who had fled, some 1500 years previously, across the British Channel before the Cymri and the Roman eagles. Against them, their *new* enemies, when united with the old foes, the feudal but recusant Strongbonians, who were still strong in the land, formed a mighty and irresistible combination. Let us remember who, and what sort of men, these new combatants were. They were, for the most part, the younger brothers of the aristocracy of England, men of high or good birth—English gentlemen, of education and courage. Now, what is all this to our theme? This much, that we desire to draw the attention of our readers to the historic value of the Irish correspondence and documents in the office of H. M. Secretary of State, some portions of which, we hope,

from time to time to place before them. This correspondence is so voluminous and abundant that it may almost be said to be inexhaustible. Four archæological societies, one for each province, such as every good Irish antiquary would be glad to see established, would find ample materials in that repository for their publications during very many years. All these Englishmen, who were striving hard to make their fortunes in this kingdom, were penmen, and some of them wrote with vigour. Almost every occurrence of the day, throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, was described, often by more than one hand, to one or other of the great men in London. Nearly all requests, all "suits," as they were termed, came into the same channel. Besides this, their opponents, the native chiefs, were by no means unready or ineloquent with the pen. Whenever O'Neill or O'Rourke wrote, his language was pithy; and the subtle divines who formed his council, who directed his political movements, and gave expression to his desires, were often more than a match in composition for Queen Elizabeth's military officers. So that this "Irish Correspondence," which extends from the reign of our Eighth Henry to, in archæologic interest, the period of the Commonwealth, is a vast collection of despatches, letters, petitions, and state papers, such as, we believe, the like does not exist relative to the history of any other country on earth. Having dipped quite at random into it (although there are no blanks in this lottery) the few ensuing copies of letters are not the best brief selection we might have made:—

[LORD JUSTICE SIR NICHOLAS ARNOLD to SIR WILLIAM CECIL, dated *Waterford, 29th January, 1564-5. Extract.*]

"O'Nele, in myne opinion can never be able to make a conquest or an overthrowe of Tyrconnell, O'Donell's contrey, or to bringe the inhabitants thereof so to his devotion as he mought thereby get either strength or profit, unless he should dispeople Tyrone, his owne contrey, which were but an evill exchange for him, and I thinke he will never attempt it. And O'Nele, thinking himself either to be assured of the freendshipp of Tyrconnell, or not to have them enimyes at his backe, may ever be the more bolde to expugne and expell the Scotts, whom otherwise he may be enforced to reteigne for his owne strength and saulgarde, the title between the Baron's sonnes and him depending, as it yet doothe.

"O'Nele, if his followers or friends of this nacyon were pulled from him, is like to imagine that he must be enforced either to lose land and lief, or to seeke ayde and reskue of straungers, Skotts or other, where he may get them; whereas if by Her Majesty's support he may be able to keep in hand all his followers, he shall not need to seek mayntenance of any straunger. And yet in my judgemen he may be the easier overthrowen, whensoever it may please Her Majesty to enter into the generall reformation of Ireland before which tyme (pardon craved for wryting playnely) it may do much more hurt than good to proffer to make conquest of any one Irishman or contrey more than is already conquered.

“ And if O’Nele may be drawn on with gentle wordes, and some title of honour, and suffred to pull in as many followers as he can by any mean gett, he will rest, I think, contented; and his followers, what with their own deceitfull and unstable nature, and with the great impositions O’Nele would daylie laye on them in the mean time, would with more ease and less chardge be drawn from him to serve the Queene, than kept from him unto the tyme of service at her highnes’ chardge. For if either his followers shall be pulled from him, or his enemye O’Donell advaunced or preferred before him, he will so plague them from tyme to tyme as the unreasonable defence or protection of them once taken into H. M. hand, would stande H. M. in greater chardge than the reformation of this whole estate in tyme convenient would doe.

“ And therefore, as I yett understand it, the making of O’Nele ryche and strong, and the assuring him of the Queene’s favour and protection, would rather overthrowe O’Nele, whenever her highnes would goe about the overthrowing of him indeed, than the keeping of him poor and doubtfull would doo. And yet in the mean time he may become so good a subject, as hereafter H. M. shall thinke meet rather to be cherished than throwen owt. . . . I think it more expedient and behoofull for H. M. (as the estate of this realm now standeth) rather to bear something with the weakness of O’Nele than with the renewing of the rebellion of the O’Connors and O’Mores (now almost utterly subdued) to styrre up the Brenye, which is O’Reiglie’s contry, the Tooles, the Byrnes, the Dempseys, and a number of others already bent to do whatsoever mischief they may be able to do, yf they either might understand that they might put their cattell back into or toward O’Nele’s contry, when we should goe about to plague them, or that O’Nele would not joyn with us in H. M. service when they were to be plagued; which opynion of O’Nele’s obedience hath bene and yet is the chief cause of staye of them all this doubtful tyme from extremities: although they cease not daylie to do some myschief in one place or other of the Pale, as Cahir O’Reigly hath lately done in Meath, which I doubt not shall be recompensed shortly well enough.

“(26th) Now that I have (as I trust dewtifullye) declared myne oppynion, I will with all humble diligence according my bounden dewtie, execute to the uttermost of my power whatsoever the Queen’s Majesty or your honor will commaunde. Assuring your honor I am with all the wilde Irishe at the same point I am at with beares and banddogs when I se them fight; so that they fight earnestly indeede, and tugge the other well, I care not who have the woorsse.”

[SIR WILLIAM CECIL (LORD BURLEIGH) *in reply*. 28th Feb., 1564-5.
Extract.]

“SIR,—I see good cawse to judge my good will well bestowed upon you, for that although I wrote to you of certen matters that had some unpleasantnes in them, yet you have conceived well of my intention, and answered me therein to my contentation, as I thinke also to induce others to remayne free from any like evill opinion, as I have perceaved was ment by the report made. Herein, Mr. Arnold, you are not to consider what

the world only will judg, but what the everlasting God seeth, from whose eyes no covering can kepe our offences. . . .

“Concerning the making of O’Nele great, I dare not enter into any judgment therein, finding my ignorance of that contry an impediment to my judgment. Although I can make report of arguments of the other side, and show a good tale in the sight of as ignorant as myself is. But that I think therein is this, I think good to stirr no sleeping doggs in Ireland, untill a staff be provided to chastise them if they will byte. Many things in common weales are suffered that are not liked. . . .

“The 26th [paragraph of your letter] sheweth you to be of that opinion that many wise men are, from the which I do not dissent, being as an Englishman. But being as a Christian man, I cannot without some perplexity enjoy of such cruelties.”

Sir Nicholas Arnold, the writer of the first letter, was of a Gaelic-Welsh family, and resided, when in England, at Hyneham, in Gloucestershire. He had been sent to this country, in 1562, as one of two commissioners for taking musters of the garrisons. Upon the retirement of the Earl of Sussex from the viceroyalty, Arnold was appointed Lord Justice. He did not wield the sword of state vigorously, having accomplished nothing of note. It appears by the heraldic visitation made of the county of Wexford in 1618, that he married one of the co-heiresses of John Isham, Esq., an English gentleman, and seneschal of that palatinate: she was widow of Nicholas Hore, Esq., of Harperstown. Although Arnold seems to have been in favour with the writer of the reply, Sir William Cecil (best known as the powerful minister, Burleigh), his government proved so unsatisfactory to the Queen, that he held it but a short time. Her Majesty desired that sharper measures should be used against the formidable rebel, Shane O’Neill, than this knight was either willing or, perhaps, able to employ. Previous complaints had been made against Arnold, to which Cecil refers in his characteristic and admirable letter. The Lord Justice had recommended that a conciliatory and amending policy should be used towards the Gaelic chieftains. There can be no question but that, had such a propitious policy been adopted, much treasure and life would have been spared, and that the conciliated chiefs would have proved as loyal subjects as did the first Lords of Upper Ossory, Thomond, &c. who became firmly bound to state interests by grants of peerages and hereditary estates. Such a peaceful and Christian proceeding, however, was not acceptable to those who expected to carve out estates for themselves from the confiscations that would result from rebellion. Though fully according in the better spirit of Sir William Cecil’s reply, we cannot still forget that he himself had exhibited hypocrisy in religion—a far more heinous crime than the so common sin of doing wrong for the sake of state expediency. We allude, of course, to his well-known adoption of the old creed during the reign of Queen Mary.

[CAPTAIN LAURENCE ESMONDE to the EARL OF SHREWSBURY.
6th March, 1601-2. *Extract.*]

“RT. HON:—Having the oportunity of this gentleman, Mr. Crowe, going into England, and being well assured of his honest caryage, makes me presume to writt the more att large unto your honor. About six weeks past I lett my Lord Deputy understand of some factions, which I in the time of my imprysonment, found discontented against Tirone; and wrought so far with them as I made them swear to undertake the killing of Tirone, or, att least, to banish him out of his contry; so they might have good conditions of peace from Her Majesty, both for themselves and their followers. My Lord Deputy, after giving me many thanks, employed me presently about that busynes, his Lordship being then at Cork; I posted away with as much speed as possible I could. But by the time that I came to the northern border, and sent to those gentlemen that were to undertake and perform the matter, Captain George Blount was sent to Tirone to treatt of peace; which they seeing, that had undertaken to executt the longe desired service, wold nott in anywise seem to deal in it, and were exseedng sorry that ever they made any such offer, assuring themselves that if ever Tirone could learn of it, he wold be throwly revenged of them and theirs.

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“My Lord Deputy employed me soon after to deal with Laynester traitors, and break their factions, which I did in that sort that I caused Donell Spaniogh, with all them of Low Leinster, to submitt themselves upon their knees, they were then able to make five hundreth foot and fifty horse, and have continued loyal since that time.”

Laurence Esmonde was a younger son of Esmonde, of Johnstown, in the county of Wexford, an old Strongbonian family that owned a small property around the little tower which forms a portion of the magnificent chateau, now the residence of the relict of H. K. G. Morgan, Esq., and lady of Sir Thomas Esmonde, Bart. The writer, a cadet of a Roman Catholic family, had embraced the reformed creed, and he served the Crown, long and loyally, until the troubles of 1641, when he unhappily adopted the parliamentary side. He was created a peer by James I. It is somewhat startling to find a captain in H. M. service vaunting of his endeavour to procure the assassination of any one; and whether the proposed victim was that perilous rebel, the Earl of Tyrone, or merely some obscure but desperate robber, makes little difference as to the moral guilt of the atrocity of such an intention. Dr. Paley had not written his chapter to show that assassination, however expedient, is wrong. State expediency had in those days invented the principle that evil might be done for the sake of prospective good; and all conversant with the history of the period are aware that there are too many instances of attempts, both successful and futile, to remove dangerous individuals by the foulest methods. The first and most notorious of these

designs in Ireland was the Earl of Sussex's attempt to have the indomitable rebel, Shane O'Neill, poisoned. Some of the details are given in a late number of the "Ulster Journal of Archæology;" to which we may add that (as appears by Sir John Perrott's vindication of his conduct in attempts of a similar character, which he tried to justify by the atrocious precedent set by Lord Sussex) this governor of the realm induced one Thomas Smith, the only English physician in the metropolis, to prepare the poison, which was given to the dreaded Ultonian chief in a "double-drinking-bottle," by a servant of the Lord Deputy, one John Smith, who was afterwards stigmatized by the nickname of "Bottle Smith." There appears to have been several attempts to "cut off" the Earl of Tyrone by foul means. It is gratifying, however, to be able to quote Moryson, to the effect, that such was the reverence felt by the clansmen of this daring and patriotic chieftain, that not one of those who could approach his person was induced to betray him. Captain Esmonde obtained a grant of lands near Gorey, at the time when the Gaelic districts in the neighbourhood were allotted to undertakers of colonization. His family connexion, which included the Irish families of southern Leinster, enabled him to exert the useful influence over their leaders to which he alludes. Donell Spaniagh, or Donnell the Spaniard, was so called from having been educated in Spain with his kinsman, the historically celebrated Tom Stukeley, and was the popular head of the clan Kavanagh. It is not from his issue, but from another and more loyal line, that the present representative of the kings of Leinster, Kavanagh of Borris, descends. In some future number of the proposed "Annuary" of the Society we may turn to the interesting personal story of the writer of the above letter, Laurence Lord Esmonde.

[GERALD BYRNE TO SIR JOHN PERROTT. 18th April, 1590.]

"IT MAY PLEASE YOUR HONOR.

"Whereas you asked me whether Fergus O'Ferral's son had been with that traytour, Feaghe M'Hughe, and what I did know concerning the said young O'Ferral's repair to Leynster at that tyme; it may please you to understand that I being from home, the said Fergus his son came to my howse in harvest last, and not finding me there, went away presently, and staid baiting his horses in my way as I should return homewardes; and when I saw the company of horsemen in my way, I made toward them to see what they were, and there I found him and another horseman, well furnished with horse and armour, and a harper riding upon a hacney with them; and asking them from whence they came, and whither they wolde, they said that then they came from my howse, and wolde that night lie at Morgh M'Edmond's howse, a neighbour of mine, whose daughter was married to Feagh M'Hugh's son. From thence they would go to Feagh M'Hugh's howse. There they tarried certain days, and, at their departure, as I was informed, the said Feagh gave the same Fergus his son a horse, which was taken by Feagh a litill befor from Hugh Duffe M'Donell, one

of the Lord of Ormond's tenants in a prey. All which I thought it my dutie to advertize you of. And so, &c. 18 April, 1590.

“Your honor's &c.

“GERALD BYRN.”

Probably the writer of the foregoing letter was a gentleman of the race of the senior clan O'Byrne, who were hostile to the Gaval-Ranall, the tribe of whom the celebrated warrior-rebel, Fiach MacHugh, was chief. As the O'Byrnes were subject, and, perhaps, also allied, to the house of Kildare, the Christian name borne by the writer was frequent among them. Morgh M'Edmond probably was one of the sept of Mac-Edmond-Duff, the title of the chief of the Kinshelaghs. M'Donnell was captain of a small sept of galloglasses, and resided in Arklow Castle, which belonged to the Earl of Ormonde. The chief point of interest in the letter consists in the mention of the harper, who rode on horseback in company with the two young Gaelic cavaliers. We should like to have seen and heard him! Let us recall from memory a passage in a graceful poem on the Dargle, in which that romantic glen is described as the resort of Celtic sons of song, who came thither from all parts of Ireland to seek protection and patronage from the renowned Fiach MacHugh:—

“To such a scene, to such a shade,
 Condemn'd, proscrib'd, the poet strayed;
 The warrior raised his buckler high
 To shield the son of harmony;
 And, as he sang with skill profound,
 A grove of lances bristled round!”

Many spirited odes, indited by “Fiach MacHugh's bards,” remain still in a state of MS., from which we hope to transfer them some day to less perishable print. The site of his house at Ballinacor is still to be seen. His rude but hospitable hall stood on the hill-side, over the ground now occupied by the house and beautiful demesne of Mr. Kemmis, the solicitor to the Crown. It commanded the vale of Glenmalure, the O'Byrne's securest fastness, “where,” it was said, in Queen Elizabeth's time, “law never approached.” In Queen Victoria's days, however, this law officer of the Crown finds in this secluded valley a peaceful and agreeable retreat from the cares of his important functions. Farther up the wild and deep glen lies Farrancerin, rich in old wood and wild land, clothed with fern and heather, growing between its picturesque cliffs, rocks, and caves, which once delighted our eyes when in quest of the cavern where the brave Fiach was hunted down and slain by the English soldiery. Let us, antiquaries, honour the memory of this bold O'Byrne, despite the poet Spenser's contemporary vilification of him. Though of little power, he made a patriotic and noble struggle to defend his country from confiscators.

[LORD UPPER OSSORY to CECIL, *May*, 1604.]

“RIGHT HON: AND VERY SINGULAR GOOD LORD, MAY IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIP,—This gentleman, Charles Duinne, son to O’Duinne, and one of the Masters of H. M. Courtte of Chancery in this realme, was noe meane comforte unto me to withstand the often combinations of Conne O’Neyll, sonne to the Earll of Tyrone, and the most partt of Leinster rebels, as often as they assaulted and destroyed my land, and thought to wyn my castells. Hee came in the last rebellion to this realme from his studies in Oxenford, whear he contynued xvii years, to perswade his name and neighbours not to shrink in their loyaltie, with whom he much prevayled, to the advancement of Her Majesty’s service. If it stand with your honourable lycking to further his reasonable suite to his highness, I am persuaded your Lordship may make good use of hym in this realme, and will extend your honourable favour to such an one as may and will faithfully serve his highness under your Lordship’s honourable patronadge. Thus beseeching the Almighty longe to preserve your Lordship, I humbly take my leave. Dublin, the 1st of May, 1604.

“Your Lordship’s humbly to command,

“F. UPPER OSSORY.”

The preceding letter is commendatory of a learned scion of the ancient Gaelic family of O’Duinne, chieftains of the O’Duinnes of Iregan, in the Queen’s County, from whom the highly respectable family of Doyne, of Wells, in the county of Wexford, and others of the name, are sprung. These chieftains are still represented, and this instance of a distinguished Celtic race preserving its social position to the present day is almost a singular one.

[SIR THOMAS COLCLOUGH to MR. NICHOLAS WALSH, *Second Justice of the King’s Bench. Dated Tintern, Co. Wexford, 3rd May, 1594.*]

“MY GOOD BROTHER,—I heartelie comend me unto you. There is a Spaniard in the bay of Greenore which is a spie (as it is here thought). And upon Thursday night last, in the evening, sent xxth of his men ashoare, and did take Mr. Whittye of Ballyteige as prisoner, and carried him aboard with themselves, and there doe keepe him; and doe saie that they will carrie him with them into Spain. And besides that, they have done many mischiefes hereabouts. And therefore I thought it my duty to signify this much unto you, and doe thinke very necessary that you would procure the Mayor of Waterford to man oute a shipp to take him, which would noe doubt be very great service unto her Majestie, and well thought of. I did write to Wexford of it, and have sent their answer hereinclosed to you. And thus, with my hartie comendations unto you and my sister, I comitt you to God. Tinterne, the 3 of May, 1594.

“Your loving brother,

“THOMAS COLCLOUGH.”

In another letter, of the 1st June, the manner in which the Spanish pirates took Mr. Whittey prisoner is described. The captor would not accept a ransom, merely desiring to have "the credit in Spain of having taken a great gentleman prisoner." The vessel was but of 20 tons burden, and carried 30 musketeers, and two pieces of brass ordnance. The writer of the foregoing letter was son of Sir Anthony Colclough, a Staffordshire gentleman, who purchased a crown lease of Tintern Abbey and its estate. From 1579 to 1600, the seaboard of Ireland was kept in a state of constant alarm by apprehensions of descents of Spaniards. The captive gentleman was Richard Whittey, Esq., of Ballyteige, head of a Strongbonian family, among whom Sir Richard de Whyttey had been summoned to Parliament as a baron by Edward III. There is a handsome marble monumental stone over the grave of Whittey, of Ballyteige, in Kilmore church.

[MR. PATRICK FURLONGE to his nephew MR. CHRISTOPHER CHEVERS, in DUBLIN.]

"DEAR SIR,—My Lord of Fearnese is sonne, Mr. John Allen, showed me a letter his father sent him at 8 of the clock at night, wishing him to repair home with all speed, and letting him to witt that the Vice President of Munster and the Mayor of Waterford had sent to the Fort of Duncannon that they should be in all readines, and that the Spaniards were upon the coast. Whereupon I have maid stay of all our shipping and men, that none shall depart the town untill we hear farther. This much I would have written to Mr. William Usher in a letter I sent him, if I had heard thereof at the writing of the same, and sens I have not, I pray you acquaint him therewith, and such others as you shall think most meet. And even so with my loving commendation doth leave you. Wexford, the 29 of June, 1593.

"Your loving uncle,
"PATRICK FURLONGE."

Probably the writer was Mayor of Wexford, and his nephew the owner of Killiane Castle, where a branch of the Chevers family, of whom a member was created Lord Mount Leinster by James II., resided. Our extracts from the State Paper Office may be resumed at some future time.
