

Law and Order in Ireland, Part 1

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I.-HOW THEY WERE INTRODUCED.

THE student of Ireland's history scarcely knows whether to pity her people for their sufferings, or scorn them for having so long endured such shameful wrongs.

Before the fifth century there is not much authentic Irish history, but up to that time there are misty records of "happier things." The people then enjoyed, if not profound peace, an easeful liberty, dwelling in tribes under the patriarchal sway of chiefs they had themselves elected. Land was held in common, or where it was specifically held, no right of primogeniture barred its redistribution. Wives equaled their husbands in dignity, and the most stringent laws were those regarding hospitality to strangers. Contests between the tribes were for the most part mere trials of strength or tests of bravery. It was not until the chiefs encroached upon the people's rights that the feuds became deadly. Up to the time of the Danish invasion, any attempt to maintain a hereditary and despotic rule was successfully resisted. And even after the Danes had, by dint of their unlimited numbers, tyrannized over the Irish of the east and south for two hundred years, the untamable Kelts broke their hateful bonds in a gallant fight on the sands near Dublin in 1014. The Danes accepted this lesson in equality and fraternity, and sank from being the dominant power in the country to be successful traders in Dublin, Wexford, and Waterford-towns that no doubt owed their commercial prosperity to this infusion of Dane with Kelt. But war had borne its usual evil fruit and given rise to authority. The victorious Irish chiefs attempted to make themselves the despotic rulers of the people. They were met in a gallant spirit of independence, and had the Irish people been left to themselves they would probably have speedily won their way to freedom.

The real work of destruction and desolation remained for the Norman to begin, his Anglicized descendant to continue, and the British government to complete. The first installment of intruders, the germ of the "English garrison" in Ireland, landed ostensibly to help back to power the dethroned seducer Dermot, tyrant of Leinster. The island was at that time split into the five kingdoms of Ulster, Munster, Leinster, Connaught, and Meath; and of five bad kings Dermot was undoubtedly the worst. Cruel, bloody, and rapacious, he had driven his people into revolt. The large trading towns on the coast closed their gates on Dermot's authority, and chose governors after the manner of the medieval German cities. In this state of affairs Dermot might naturally have appealed to his fellow kings to help him crush a rebellion that, as an example, might have been dangerous to themselves; but he had put himself outside the pale of their assistance by a base act of treachery towards O'Rorke, prince of Breffni, a kinsman of the Ulster monarch, who rivaled Dermot in the overlordship of the whole country. O'Rorke had wedded the lovely daughter of the king of Meath, who, like her prototype of Troy, was fated to bring fire and sword among men. The beauty of this princess inflamed the unscrupulous Dermot to such a degree that, despite his middle age and a marriageable daughter, he determined to play the part of Paris to this Irish Helen. O'Rorke's character was the direct opposite to Dermot's. Although reputed brave, he shrank from the clang of arms to the seclusion of his castle home in tire valleys of Breffni (now Leitrim), devoting himself to wedded love and the romantic religion of the early Irish Catholic. Alone, and in the guise of a poor hermit, he from time to time made pilgrimages to one of other of the many shrines that had sprung up throughout Ireland in the early ages of faith. During one of these pilgrimages Dermot carried off the not unwilling Dearbhorghil to share the savage luxury wrung from his groaning subjects. The poets tell of Breffni's return, is eager eye searching in vain for the little lamp, which the faithless wife had promised should shine from the battlements

until her pilgrim came back; the agony with which he flew to her chamber, thinking she was dead; the worse than death he found there. To avenge his dishonor O'Rorke appealed to the king of Connaught, and gathering their forces together they pursued the seducer. Abandoned by his subjects, sorely pursued on all sides, Dermot was forced to yield up his prize and to quit the country to save his miserable life. Thirsting for revenge he fled over the seas to Aquitaine, where Henry, king of England, duke of Normandy and Anjou, then held his court. Cravenly Dermot fell at the cold and crafty Henry's feet, entreating aid and swearing the most abject submission in return.

Now Dermot's appearance fell in wonderfully with Henry's designs upon Ireland. A short while before, Pope Adrian had given Henry a document purporting to make him and his heirs for ever a gift of Ireland and her inhabitants, all for the small charge of "an annual pension of one penny from each house" But it did not suit him to enter into possession just then. His English subjects were still chafing under the foreign yoke, and his possessions in France were so vast as to render their administration very difficult. He evaded a direct promise of aid to Dermot, but suggested his seeking recruits among some of the unemployed, discontented Normans in England.

Dermot took the hint and soon collected a fair number of filibusters. Their captains were disreputable nobles of broken fortune—Strangbow, Earl of Pembroke, for one, and a couple of the bastard sons of Henry I., all needy adventurers ready for any fray that promised plunder. The first detachment began operations at Wexford. Here the people, counseled by their priests, opened the gates, hoping to conciliate the invaders by a speedy capitulation. The noble lords, Fitzstephen and Mountmorres, made use of the town as their headquarters, whence they issued to ravage the country round about. The second gang, under Raymond le Gros, made for Waterford, where there were vast pasture-lands. They seized the grazing herds, and were driving them within the enclosure of a hastily constructed fortress when, amazed at this highhanded proceeding, the people came out en masse to demand restitution. With loud shouts and curses the Normans goaded the terrified cattle back upon the unarmed throng, who, to escape being trampled under foot, fled back into the town, leaving many of their number in the hands of the foe. With a fiendishness worthy of Dahomey warriors the Normans flung their captives from a high cliff into the sea, having first broken their limbs. Amid the smoking ruins of Waterford, Strongbow was married to Dermot's daughter, whose hand had been the promised guerdon of success in his bloody enterprise. Then followed the plundering of Dublin, and of Meath, whose king had resented his daughter's abduction; and Breffni the domain of the luckless 'Rorke, was devastated by fire and sword. Great was the triumph of these chivalrous knights, and loud their peans of victory. One knight boasted of the hundreds he had slain in battle without once rising in his stirrups. He did not add that those he slew were unarmed peasants, whose linen covered breasts offered but poor resistance to the Norman steel.

The King of England, watching his opportunity at a distance, now gave orders for the immediate return of the men who had thus thrust in the thin edge of the wedge of English tyranny. Henry's jealousy was aroused by the restored Dermot's attempt to force his unwilling subjects to acknowledge his son-in-law Strongbow as his successor. Backing the Papal Bull (since suspected of being forged) by a huge armament, Henry took possession of the Pope's gift, landing at Waterford in the autumn of 1171. Wearied and exhausted by the recent conflicts, and hoping for justice at the hands of so potent a prince, the native chieftains flocked to do him homage. Ulster alone stood aloof, secure in his mountain fastnesses. The Normans, who had seized large tracts of land, were obliged to surrender them to Henry—not that they might be restored to the former

owners, but that the thieves might receive them at the hands of the king on the conditions of feudal tenure. Henry's scheme was to colonize the island with his own followers, and by degrees to oust the native chiefs from their holdings. To this end he gave the new landlords almost regal powers. They were to be answerable to no native laws. Meath was made over to De Lacy; Ulster to De Courcy, provided he could subdue it; the Fitzgeralds and Mountmorres shared Wexford between them. Here and there a native chief was allowed to retain his land as tenant-at-will, but the least show of independence was to be accounted treason, and to entail forfeiture of estates.

Thus opened the first scene in the long and yet unended course of woe which Ireland has suffered and is still suffering at the hands of the English Government.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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