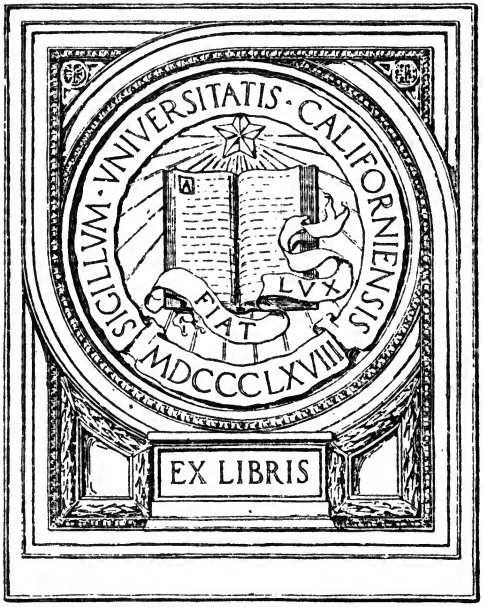
A FORGOTTEN PART OF IRELAND

P. J. JOYCE, B. D.



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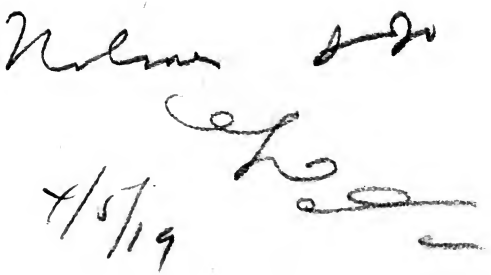


A FORGOTTEN PART OF IRELAND

BY P. J. JOYCE, B. D.

Illustrated

TUAM, IRELAND
1910

DEDICATION

The brave sons and ever-virtuous daughters of Erin in America are beautifully distinguished for their tearful remembrance of the land of their fathers across the sea. Ever in the din of business, in the flurry of excitement, in the solitude of thought, their hearts steal back where the mother sits thinking of them, where their childhood strayed. Like their own St. Columba, in exile, who, with tears in his eyes, watched the happy swallows return to his dear Eire, the children of St. Patrick love to turn their eyes to Ireland, where the "young are so gentle and the old are so wise." To them this book is affectionately dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED.

Having decided that the eye of the reader ought not be distracted by notes and references cumbered on the pages of the book, we desire to supply the want of them by taking the curious, so to say, behind the screen, and pointing out the

general sources of information embodied in the story. We have consulted the following:

Dr. Healy, "Essays and Papers," "Schools and Scholars."

Cardinal Moran, "Irish Saints in Great Britain."

E. D'Alton, "History of Ireland," Vol. II.

"Burke's Peerages."

"O'Connors of Connaught."

P. G. Smyth, "Fortunes of the House of Browne."

Stafford & Spencer on "Elizabethan Ireland."

Archdall, "Monasticon Hibernicon. "

"OHeine's Dominicans."

Mrs. Greene, "The Making of a Nation and Its Undoing."

Dubois, "Contemporary Ireland."

Francis Pressense, "Ireland Since the Union to '88."

Gordon's "History of Ireland."

Hassencamp, "Ireland, Reformation to Union."

Betham, "Irish Antiquities and Researches."

O'Donovan, "Introduction to Irish Grammar."

McCarthy, "History of Our Own Times."

T. P. O'Connor, "The Parnell Movement."

Dr. O'Dea, "Evidence Before Royal Commission."

Statistics of C. D. B. and D. A. I.

"Four Masters."

Knox's "History of Mayo."

Graham Bros., Cleveland, O., from their immense selection of Ireland views, kindly supplied the pictures which have been here reproduced.

A Forgotten Part of Ireland

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY, BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND CONFIDENTIAL.

Two years ago I was sent as a young priest to Achill Island on my first mission. Up to that time my acquaintance with the island was made through the old school geography, happily for the education of youth now discarded, and it merely enabled me to find its position in the map of Ireland, west of Mayo. There was, however, an idea abroad that its people were savage and primitive and worse; that it was a modern Nazareth, whence nothing good might be expected to come, and I honestly feared, fresh as I was from theological studies, that these bad, incorrigible Achillmen, as they were supposed to be, could derive no benefit from the sacraments I came to administer, and ought not to be admitted to them. At the same time I had the boundless confidence and enthusiasm of youth to work a speedy reforma-

tion and felt that I had merely to blow my trumpet and the walls of Jericho should fall to the ground. I found, after two years of experience, that my hopes and fears were equally extravagant and equally groundless. With these ideas, however, I came to the island and was followed in a few days by two other fresh arrivals, the one who, for eleven years, had been my genial schoolfellow, and, like myself, recently ordained, was to be now my fellow co-operator. The other, whose Mass I served for seven years as a boy in my native parish, was to be administrator of the island. A happy and harmonious combination we proved, and when we parted it seemed the dissolution of the goodliest fellowship,

Whereof this world holds record.

After my first and hasty survey of the island, I thought it anything but interesting and groped about to see if around this dreary waste of bogland the mantle of history could not be thrown, or if, with Irving, I could not "pass from the commonplace realities of the present and lose myself among the shadowy grandeurs of

the past." I remember how I devoured the first scrap of information on its past which I found in "The Battle of the Faith in Ireland." "The Dark Lady of Doona" brought to my mind the story of Grainne Uaile, one of whose castles—Kildownett —I was pleased to find in the island. One day I discovered a copy of the Achill Herald, dated October 31st, 1844. The Herald, as I learned from the "Battle of the Faith," was a journal printed and published in this far-off island. It was started as far back as July, 1837. Its ponderous title tells the purpose and gives a fair idea of the contents of the various numbers, and I make no apology for giving it in full:

THE ACHILL HERALD AND WESTERN WITNESS: BEING A MONTHLY JOURNAL EXHIBITING THE PRINCIPLES AND PROGRESS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM, AND EXPOSING THE ERRORS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THAT SECTION OF THE RIVAL KINGDOM OF ANTICHRIST COMMONLY CALLED THE PAPACY.

The paper ran into the nineties. For a long time I searched in vain for other copies, until, to my inexpressible joy, I

came across a complete file in Trinity College Library, Dublin.

Meantime, however, a grand pathetic story of a famishing people I had heard from the chroniclers, the old men of the island, with whom I made an early acquaintance. It was the story of a battle won. Yes, in this Nazareth, amongst this "savage people," in this Forgotten Part of Ireland, unknown to the outside world, many, whose cries were drowned in the wail of the ocean, poured out their lives for Ireland's faith, died and were buried where they fell,

"Unwept, unhonored and unsung."

It brought a tear to my eye to think of their forgotten fate, and to my mind Oliver Wendell Holmes and his beautiful epitaph:

"Nay, grieve not for the dead alone,
Whose song has told their heart's sad story;
Weep for the voiceless who have known
The cross, without the crown of glory."

I longed to do something towards preserving and publishing their tale. I sought every opportunity of speaking to those venerable and ancient eye-witnesses

and actors of events described. It was a labor of love to hear them relate, as it is to record, all they felt and all they saw. I hastened to gather up some fragments of their story ere the grave closed over them forever, as they

> "Wait on the verge of dark eternity,
> Like stranded wrecks, the tide returning,
> To sweep them from our sight."

The life of Edward Nangle, the Apostle of Achill, transparently prejudiced, but valuable for its historical data, as well as the "Achill Herald," enabled me to check the stories of the peasantry and give them a historical perspective, which, otherwise, I could not very easily have done.

So far a tolerably adequate view of events as far back as 1834, when Mr. Nangle came to the island, was opened up before me; but wishing to penetrate farther and lift the veil of history I continued my search. I knew Father Manus Sweeney, a native of Achill Island, figured in the rebellion of '98, for which he paid the penalty of his young life. Weird tales of the fate of Lyghtel on Tonragee Mountain and of the concealment and betrayal of

Father Manus were told with many variations that made it difficult to separate fact from fiction. I wanted written records.

Having appealed for assistance to the rector of the Irish College, Paris, where Fr. Manus Sweeney was educated and ordained, I was informed that, in the avalanche of the revolution, the records, with many other precious things, had been swept away. To my great satisfaction, however, a little book printed about the year 1800 found its way into my hands from the O'Donnell Library, Newport House. This was a record of the trial, in December, 1800, of Captain James More O'Donnell and Lieutenant Colonel Hugh O'Donnell, sons of Sir Neal of Newport, who died in 1811. This document contains some valuable references to the unfortunate young Achill priest, which will be reproduced in the following pages. In an appendix to O'Donovan's Four Masters is a family history of the O'Donnells, who were proprietors of Achill Island during the first half of the century just past. I felt now, that armed with these

records, I could fairly claim, at least to please myself, if not the Danes, the nineteenth century was ours. Further, the state papers, and Knox's History of Mayo gave the facts in the story of Grainne Uaile, or Grace O'Malley, a great Irish sea-queen of the sixteenth century, who came of a royal Celtic line, members of which long possessed Achill Island, and whose motto, "Terra marique potens," was won in the mists of antiquity from the warrior chieftains around them.

Wood-Martin's Stone Monuments of Ireland, as well as the "Dolmens of Ireland," showed that the archaeological curiosities of the island carry us back to a date compared with which the battle of Marathon or even the founding of Rome are modern events, and thoroughly satisfied me as to the antiquity of those hills, and stones, and bogs, which I have come to venerate, if not to love.

These, then, together with some minor pieces to be afterwards referred to, as as well as the ordinary history and literature of the age, have furnished the ma-

terial for the following chapters, which, save for these few garnered notes, must remain scattered in different books and different libraries,

"Till touched by some hand less unworthy than mine."

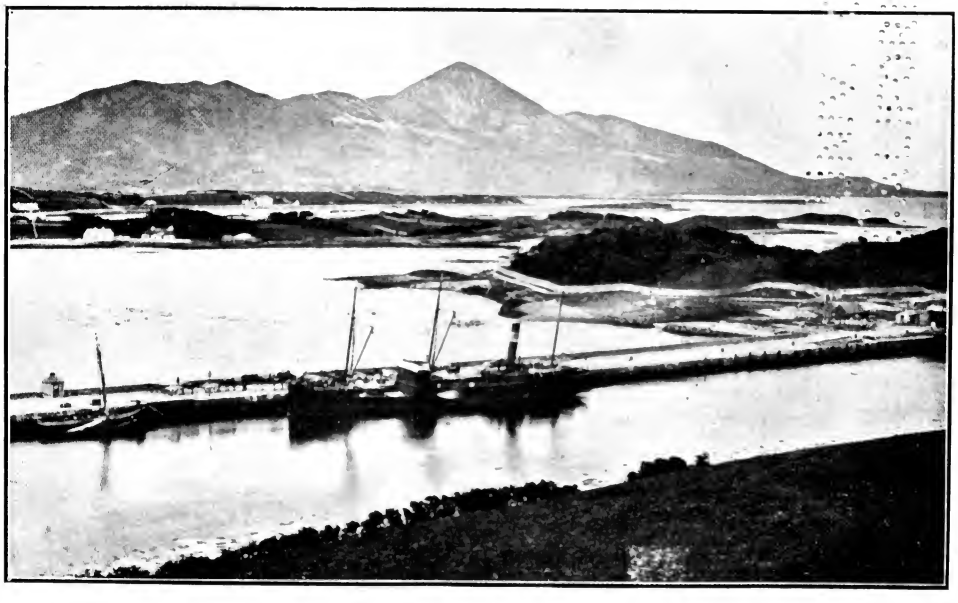
CHAPTER II.

THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF ACHILL AND UMHALL.

"Love thou thy land with love far brought
From out the distant past, and used
Within the present, but transfused
Thro' future time with light of thought."

—Tennyson.

It is an old discovery (or is it a poet's dream?) the influence of environment on one's mental, as well as one's moral character. The easy confidence of the fisherman plying his trade of peril is not independent of those rocks and cliffs, which from his boyhood he has watched beat back the surging thunders of the deep. The eternal longing for freedom of the hardy mountaineer, that comes from the



A View of Clew Bay.

depths of his being, is nurtured, if not born, of the glance of those fearless mountains that "tower and wear their caps of snow in very presence of the regal sun"; and that noble appeal in the "West's Asleep" taunts those Celts who seem to slumber in the West, the last refuge of Ireland's freedom, with their insensibility to the call of hills and rocks and lashing sea:

> "Think you the great God ever planned
> For slumbering slaves a home so grand?"

I know not whence comes the thought, as I stand on the threshold of this historic west, but I give expression to it, and pass in, as to a sacred temple.

In days gone by, there was in "Cruachan's land of heroic name," among its petty sub-kingdoms, one called Achill and Umhall. In the reign of Conn of the Hundred Battles Crimthan ruled in Umhall, and seems to have been in high standing with Conn, the provincial king, his sons having been sent to treat with Eoghan, Conn's rival for the throne of Ireland. Eoghan, however, hanged them both, thus precipitating the battle of Magh Lena,

near Tullamore, King's County (A. D. 190), in which Conn gained a complete victory, and became high king of Ireland.

As an index to the wealth and civilization of this ancient kingdom by the sea, let us refer to the Book of Rights for its tribute to the provincial king of Connaught:

"Five score cows of lasting condition,
Five score hogs of broad sides,
Five score mantles, beautiful their texture,
From Umhall to the king of Connaught."

The king of Connaught in turn acknowledges the nobility of the king of Umhall in gifts, recorded in the same Book of Rights thus:

"Entitled is the king of Umhall without condition,
To five steeds in his country without heaviness,
Five polished swords of battle,
Five ships, five coats of mail."

This ancient kingdom of Achill and Umhall comprised all that territory now designated the baronies of Burrishoole and Murrisk, which skirted Clew Bay from Achill Island in the north to Killery Harbour in the south. Achill was the name given to the mountainous portion,

which included St. Patrick's Reek, hence its ancient name of Cruachan Aigli. Umhall was the name given to the lowlands. It is, indeed, a historic spot of earth.

Nowhere, perhaps, in all Ireland, with its legends and lays, its stories and songs, is there to be found a place richer in the stirring memories of a thousand years than is this kingdom of Achill and Umhall. Here rises the sainted mountain of Ireland, associated with the glories and the shame of the men of Erin. On its lofty summit St. Patrick blessed the natural virtues of Celtic hearts and made them, for a time at least, the adopted heirs of the sanctity of the world. Hither during the long centuries came a long procession of pilgrims, which still shows no signs of ending, which wore a path to the steep summit of the mountain. Even here was O'Rourke of Breifney when the elopement of Dervorgilla, his wife, with MacMurrough, the fierce King of Leinster, unsheathed indignant swords in Ireland, and had not a little influence in the molding of those salt tears she has for centuries shed. To this Kingdom two roads from

the East were filled with pilgrims to the Reek and merchants to Westport and Burrishoole, "whose large lough was full of great timber, grey marble, and many other commodities." This commerce, however, did not long survive the establishment of English government in Connaught in the sixteenth century. In this isle-gemmed Bay of Clew the ancient family of the O'Malleys ruled for centuries, and Grace, the greatest of them all, queened it on land and sea. Here in Clare Island, Murrisk, Burrishoole, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, the Carmelites, chanted by the sea, and their bells chimed in glorious symphony to the music of the waves. The ancient abbey of Burrishoole, like those of Murrisk and Clare Island, seems to have been an O'Malley foundation, dating back to that golden age in Connaught of which a weird glimpse is given in Mangan's poem:

"I walked entranced
Through a land of morn,
The sun, with wondrous excess of light,
Shone down and glanced
Over seas of corn

And lustrous gardens, aleft and right.
Even in the clime
Of resplendent Spain,
Beams no such sun upon such a land,
But it was the time
'Twas in the reign
Of Cathal Mor of the wine red hand."

Here, too, in a momentous period of Ireland's history fought and fell, in defense of Celtic laws and Celtic weal, many of the Burkes of northern Connaught, "whose story is full of wild romance, but it has not yet found a sympathetic chronicler." Alas, it was all in vain, for the vandals of Elizabeth triumphed, and Bingham, during "his ten terrible years in Connaught," slaughtered the innocents, and left the footprints of tyranny there. The monks were gradually driven from their quiet haunts of prayer, and the lonely, roofless abbeys around Clew Bay mourn their fate.

"Yet still beneath the hallowed soil
The peasant rests him from his toil,
And, dying, bids his bones be laid
Where erst his simple fathers prayed."

And to add to its historic glories, Peregrine O'Clery, the historian of Tyrconnell and one of the Four Masters, was driven

to Curra-na-heillte, near Burrishoole, where before breathing his last he left his beautiful will and testament: "I bequeath the property most dear to me that I ever possessed in the world, namely, my books, to my two sons, Diarmuid and John. Let them copy from them, without injuring them, whatever may be necessary for their purpose, and let them be equally seen and used by the children of my brother Cairby as by themselves." Yes, there hangs a glory over Clew Bay that will never fade, over this ancient Kingdom of Achill and Umhall.

Such was Achill and Umhall in days that are gone, but today the name, with other things peculiar to old-time Ireland, has taken refuge in the little island in the Atlantic, separated from the mainland by a narrow strip of water where the tides of Clew Bay and Blacksod boisterously commingle. But of this more in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

ACHILL ISLAND.

"The scenes are desert now, and bare,
Where flourished once a forest fair,
When these waste glens with copse were lined
And peopled with the hart and hind."
—(Scott's Marmion.)

We come now to Achill Island, which can boast of the grandest and the wildest scenery in our Western Isles. In this island the every day language of the people, the only language of many of them, is the Gaelic. It is the first learned by the children, who may be heard chatting glibly in its liquid accents after schools hours with one another, or with their mothers and white old Irish grandmothers at home. Their isolation has enabled them to preserve the ancient Irish manners and customs, that simplicity and lively faith that won for the sons and daughters of Erin the proud title of "Children of Eternity." Many of the older inhabitants have never set foot on the mainland, have never seen a railway

train or a town, but in the midst of their native hills they live and die, like those of whom the poet said:

> "Along the cool, sequestered vale of life
> They kept the noiseless tenor of their way."

"Achill, land of moor and mountain," is supposed to derive its name from the eagles that still make their haunts around the tops of its wild and picturesque mountains. In the island itself, 35,000 acres in extent, as well as on the mainland adjoining it, there are several hills of considerable height. Four of these, Corraune, Sliabh More, Crochaun and Minan, are the glory of Achill Island, and seem to account in a large measure for the extraordinary love of its 7,000 people for their island home.

Corraune, the only one of the four on the mainland, which is only a short distance from the island, is 1,750 feet high, and commands a magnificent view of Clew Bay, with its myriad islands, the home of Grainne Uaile. From Corraune's summit the eagles now and again swoop down to carry off fowl and young lambs from the peasants inhabiting its sides.

Menan Cliffs, Achill Island.

Sliabh More, within the island, at its northwestern extremity, justifies its name of "great mountain" by raising its head only a few feet above that of its neighbor and rival, Crochaun, which, almost 2,000 feet high, with the tips of its toes in the ocean, has some of the finest cliff scenery in Europe. The "great mountain," which presents a conical appearance when viewed from the island, impresses the spectator from the sea with the conviction that half its mass must have at one time slipped into the Atlantic, which roars and tumbles around it. This mountain shelters from the bleak Atlantic storms a beautiful village called the "Colony," or settlement, which calls for further mention.

Further inland there is a large space sacred to Irish archaeologists, containing cromlechs, a giant's grave, and one of that species of pagan cemeteries known as stone circles. This was once a group of square graves of large standing stones, surrounded by a circle of the same. These interesting curiosities are minutely described by standard archaeologists of Ire-

land, and Wood-Martin thus refers to them:

"The monuments reposing within the shelter of this mountain have hitherto almost escaped the notice of the archaeologists, and yet these several megalithic remains in the Island of Achill are most interesting, and present to the observation nearly every variety of ancient sepulture." Celtic scholarship has not yet been able to read the whole story of these stone monuments, but here, at any rate, it is agreed that there is to be found

"A place of tombs,
Where lie the mighty bones of ancient men."

Some years ago, while excavations were being made in the neighborhood, human bones of giant proportions were unearthed and were immediately carried off by a gentleman of antiquarian tastes, who happened to be about the place. On the evening of that day a storm, such as rarely visits even this storm-swept island, was let loose. The frightened villagers assembled in council and sent a hurried deputation after the possessor to have the bones returned and laid to rest once more.

Crochaun is memorable as the scene where, for upwards of twenty years, lived the notorious Captain Boycott, whose name has become one of the useful and expressive words of the English language. One good act is recorded of Captain Boycott.

Between Crochaun and the sea a road climbs over the shoulder of the mountain. It leads us 400 feet above and by the sea, which spreads out southward on our left; while on the right rises to the clouds Crochaun itself, and down its sides a thousand streams babble and lose themselves in the ocean below. The road takes us to the beautiful valley of Keem. This is a verdant valley, lost between mountains, where, if anywhere in the Emerald Isle, "Angels fold their wings and rest." Boycott owned and cultivated this oasis, and he, or some one before him, cleaned it of the huts, or summer houses of the peasants. In the heart of a green park within this valley is a cairn, on top of which is fixed a rude stone cross with a holy water stand of the same rude construction and material beside it. Here

in this lonely, but beautiful spot, hidden afar between mountains, tradition says, Mass was celebrated by fugitive priests, whose hiding places, hard by, are still pointed out; and though Boycott may have laid heavy hands on many things, to his credit be it told, he left this as he found it, a sacred relic of days that are gone. We would willingly tarry here, but we must not forget Minan.

Minan cliffs are situated on the south side of that peninsular spur of the island, which points westward. The wild goats which once leaped so plentifully over these western mountains, "out of humanity's reach," shared them with the picturesque red deer, that even in historic times crowned the savage grandeur of these impenetrable domains, have given the cliffs a name. For Minan is the Irish name for kids or young goats. On these beetling crags, which front the Atlantic ocean and rise to a height of 1,570 feet, the wild goats may still be seen, from which indeed they sometimes topple into the sea. At the foot of these cliffs, part of which are known as the Cathedral Rocks,

is the Keel strand stretching for two miles to the village of the same name, and over it a wild sea rolls with treacherous force its mountain waves.

Once upon a time the whole of this island was covered over with a thick forest, as was, indeed, all this western land; and even today on the hills, on the plains, and even on the shores washed by the sea throughout the Island of Achill, the roots and part of the trunks or stumps of those trees that once sheltered the land are embedded in the ground as if the upper portions had been burned or cut away. The island is now absolutely bare of trees. But the absence of sheltering trees and denizens of the forest notwithstanding, at Minan, as well as everywhere in Achill Island, the companionship of the mountains and the sea may be enjoyed to the fulness of one's heart. For one may watch,

"When winds blow high and free
From some tall cliff or jutting land,
The white gulls poising o'er the sea—
The great waves rolling boisterously,
And bursting on the strand."

Minan is very interesting for many reasons. Achill is divided by the natives, in accordance with a custom that seems to have come down from the fathers of the island, into upper and lower Achill; and Minan stands between. The people of lower, or western Achill we should naturally expect to have been the original settlers, while those of the eastern, or upper part would appear to have come later. The island historians say the former are Connaught men, while the latter are Ulster men; and we shall see that in historic times Ulster has sent settlers to the West. However this may be, it is said by the rival sections of the population (for there is a rivalry between them) that while a certain polish and refinement is characteristic of the lower parish, large hearted generosity is claimed by the upper as being exclusively its own.

Tourists to Achill usually climb to the summit of Minan. Starting from the battered and primitive little village of Dooega, the ascent is comparatively easy. To the left is the magic of the great sea, while to the right, under Minan, in the

beautiful valley of Mweelin, appears what seems like a ruined city. This was once upon a time a seat of learning which the natives called Trinity College and to which we may have occasion to return later. As we continue the ascent, a bridle path leads us over the mountain, and beside it, at regular intervals, there are little monuments of stone, the purpose of which we were unable to understand. On making inquiries, however, of our friends the ancients, we learned that this mountain was the great highway between upper and lower Achill. Marriages were sometimes contracted between parties one of which belonged to lower Achill and the other to upper; and as each section had its own church, so too, its own proper cemetery. Accordingly, when one of the parties died beyond the mountain his friends insisted on having him buried in the family vault. The funeral procession was then seen to wend its way over Minan Mountain by this bridle path, and these curious stone monuments were resting places for pall-bearers, who, as the last tribute of affection to their dead, carried them over that

wild mountain to their last long sleep in the graves of their kindred.

Such is Achill Island, where, sheltered by the mountains, that strange and interesting people whose story we wish to tell, ekes out an existence. On the eastern side of the island, at Kildownett, is the castle of the famed Grainne Uaile, who in the popular imagination is in great danger of joining the ranks of the fairies on the hillsides and valleys of the island, in which the islanders firmly believe, and of which they stand very much in dread. We shall therefore devote a chapter to the fair fame of Grace O'Malley, not to give an exhaustive account of her interesting career, but to show that she was a real historical heroine, to be remembered in Achill and in Erin.

Grainne Uaile's Castle, Kildownett, Achill Island.

CHAPTER IV.

GRAINNE UAILE, OR GRACE O'MALLEY.

Many altars are in Banba,
Many chancels hung in white,
Many schools and many Abbeys,
Glorious in our Fathers' sight;
Yet, when e'er I go a pilgrim,
Back, dear native Isle, to thee,
May my filial footsteps bear me
To that Abbey by the sea—
To that Abbey—roofless, doorless,
Shrineless, monkless, though it be.
—Thos. D'Arcy McGee.

Grace O'Malley, whose castle, "Kildownett," in Achill Island, and many other venerable monuments of a similar kind around Clew Bay, "still plead haughtily, even in their ruins, for glories that are gone," lives in story after a fashion, in the West of Ireland, as a wonderful personage who fought for her land and her country which she has come at length to personate. Her name, however, is sadly being relegated to the region of myth and oblivion among the peasantry gener-

ally. We asked an old man one day, wishing to know his ideas of her location in time, if he remembered having ever seen Grainne Uaile. "Well," he replied, after a moment of painful reflection, "I will tell you no lie; I never did see her, but," he continued, taking courage, "I heard a great deal about her." He is a fair type of the peasant historian in the West of Ireland. How sad that it should be so! And what a beautiful and well-merited tribute to the Four Masters, who rescued from the wreckage of time so many precious stories, is that rendered by D'Arcy McGee in the poem with which we have headed the chapter! To participate in a small way in the same noble work by penning this brief sketch, may not be a vain ambition.

It is strange, indeed, the O'Clerys never once mention the name of Grace O'Malley in their grandest of histories. Why, we cannot tell. Her enemies, however, and Ireland's enemies, too, have not deemed her unworthy of notice. Her life sketch is told in unimpeachable history in a few brief sentences by Elizabethan Deputies

and Governors of Munster and Connaught, who found her a very troublesome rebel in their work of subduing Ireland. Let us recall a few of their notes.

In 1576 she came, with other notabilities of Connaught, to Sir Henry Sidney to Galway, having, he tells us, "three galleys and two hundred fighting men," and he describes her as "a most famous feminine sea-captain." In 1578, writing at Leighlin, Lord Justice Drury calls her "Graine nymaille, a woman of the Province of Connaught, governing a country of the O'Flahertys, famous for her stoutness of courage and person and for sundry exploits done by her by sea." He also adds she was then a state prisoner. Not for long, however, as we shall see. Finally, Sir Richard Bingham in the pithy character sketch he has left of this Irish sea-queen, as she appeared to the English eye, has done more for her fame than all others and has proved her, far from being a myth, to have been a formidable and consistent rebel all her life, when he declared her, in 1593, "a notable traitress and nurse to all the rebellions in

the Province for 40 years." But a glimpse of the troubled times during which Grace was cradled into rebellion and heroism will explain to her advantage Bingham's description of the role she played in Connaught.

Every student of Irish history knows that the first Anglo-Norman chieftains and rulers who came to Ireland were after a brief antagonism speedily absorbed by the Gael. They endeared themselves to the Irish. They practiced the same religion. They learned to speak the same language. They wore the same apparel. "Some of them," says Spencer, "are degenerated and grow mere Irish, yea and more malicious to the English than the Irish themselves." The same transformation, however, called degeneracy by the English, is otherwise beautifully explained by an old Irish chronicler: "The old chieftains of Erin," he says, "prospered under English lords, who were our chief rulers and who gave up their foreignness for a pure mind, and their surliness for good manners, and their stubbornness for sweet mildness, and who

gave up their perverseness for hospitality." Such were the Earls of Kildare and Desmond and the Burkes of Connaught.

England was alarmed to find that those sent to conquer in her name fell in love with her enemies and made them stronger than before. So it was in 1367, to check this "shameful degeneracy" of the noble English, laws were passed, but passed in vain. The absorption went on as before. The Celt was invincibly predominant. Now, however, towards the end of the sixteenth century, imperial-hearted Elizabeth, who could brook neither husband nor rebel, determined to crush the Irish utterly. Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Justice, carrying out this policy, established Governors in Munster and Connaught. Drury went to the Southern Province and Fitton to the West to carry there the civilization of English laws," where they had not been known for two hundred years." Not satisfied with having the Irish under the yoke of her civil government, the Queen looked upon them as being but half conquered until they accepted her civil religion too. And now the trouble began,

during which Grace O'Malley played her part, nor did she sulk in her tent.

To show that he meant business, Drury had in May, 1579, Doctor O'Hely, Bishop of Mayo, and a Franciscan priest, named O'Rourke, brought before him at Kilmallock. Being questioned, they confessed and did not deny their faith. They were first put on the rack, their arms and legs were broken with hammers, needles were thrust under their nails, after which they were hanged. Collins, a priest, at Cork, was first tortured, then hanged, and, as he yet breathed, his heart was cut out and held up, the soldiers around crying out with exultation: "Long live the Queen." The Irish Catholics were alarmed. The Irish chieftains rebelled. They were absolved by the Pope from allegiance to Elizabeth. The cause of religion was wedded to the cause of nationality for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer. Ireland thenceforward became one with the Catholic faith, and whom God hath joined let no man put asunder.

Submission or absolute destruction was England's ultimatum. The latter

alternative Ireland preferred, and Elizabeth was soon to reign "over corpses and ashes."

In the southern province, the Earl of Desmond, a faithful subject, but a papist, was the first to go. Only two years or so before, he had committed Grace O'Malley "to Her Majesty's prison at Limerick." The English were now gathering round him. He sent letters to the Burkes of Connaught, to win their aid. The Burkes were the Anglo-Norman successors of the O'Connor Kings in the West. The Clanrickards were lords in upper Connaught; the Clanwilliams were lords in the lower portion. In 1576, Grace had already married the MacWilliam, as the chieftain of northern Connaught was called. He was, say the Four Masters, "a plundering, warlike, unquiet and rebellious man, who had often forced the gap of danger on his enemies, and upon whom it was frequently forced." And Grace O'Malley was, according to Sir Henry Sidney "more than Mrs. Mate for him on land and on sea." His name was Iron Dick. The Burkes received Desmond's letters and handed

them over to the English—all but Iron Dick and Grace O'Malley, who called their men to arms and forced Sir Nicholas Malbie, the president of Connaught, to return from Munster, where he was helping to crush Desmond. But it was all in vain. Desmond was defeated and slain. His followers were run to death. They were outlaws in the woods, whence Spencer saw them creeping out on their hands, eating grass and watercress, and an Irish poet put their helpless cries into song:

"Through the woods let us roam,
Through the wastes, wild and barren,
We are strangers at home
We are exiles in Erin."

Very soon afterwards, in the picturesque words of the Four Masters, "the lowing of a cow, or plowman's voice, was not heard from Dingle to Cashel." Such was the fate of the once wealthy and populous Province of Munster.

Nor did Connaught fare much better. Fitton and Malbie and Bingham subdued it. Malbie, "who," according to the annals of Lough Key, "placed all Connaught under bondage," preceded Sir Richard

Bingham, who, arriving in 1584, during his "ten terrible years" in the province earned for himself, rightly or wrongly, the distinction of Cromwell of Connaught. In January, 1586, he had seventy men and women hanged in Galway. The Burkes were in rebellion. Hag's Castle in Lough Mask was successfully defended against Bingham by the Devil of Corraune (he was an Achill man) and Walter Burke, the son-in-law and son of Grace O'Malley. "The Devil of Corraune" was chieftain or owner of that wild promontory or peninsula of Corraune, near Achill island. He was a fierce rebel, and called, appropriately we suppose, the "Devil of Corraune." His father never submitted to any English governor, and bore the same name. Sir Richard Bingham, in his reign of terror, now seized Edmund Burke of Castlebar, whom he had convicted of treason and hanged, "lest," he says, "his sons should make him MacWilliam." Iron Dick, and Richard Mac Oliver, Dick's successor in the MacWilliamship, were dead, and Edmund Burke had next claim. So it was that Bingham had him

put to death, although, according to the Four Masters, "a withered grey old man without strength or vigor, and they were obliged to carry him on a bier to the gallows." And so the work of conquest went on in the West.

In the year 1586 the two sons of Grace, Tibbot, and Walter Burke, as well as the Devil of Corraune, and Teige Roe O'Malley of Kildownett Castle, are registered as rebels. Things looked bad for Grace. When Iron Dick, her husband, died, she went to live to Rockfleet Castle, or Carrigahowley, where her son-in-law, the Devil of Corraune, seems to have been chieftain. Bingham invited her to come and live under his protection. She trusted his word, and came. All her goods and chattels were seized, and Sir Richard had erected a new gallows. Grace tells us "she feared it was her last funeral, where she thought to end her life." At this time, however, the Devil of Corraune happened to be on good terms with Bingham, and he succeeded in securing her a pardon. When the Devil again turned rebel, Grace had to fly to O'Neil and O'Donnell of Ulster,

and later on managed to get her pardon, in Dublin, from Sir John Perrot, the lord lieutenant. After this, according to her own humble description of her life, "she dwells as a farmer's wife, very poor, bearing cess, and paying her Majesty's composition rent, and utterly did give over her former trade of maintenance on land and sea." She returned to her trade later on, and raided the English in the Arran Islands, as late as 1590; although she gave in 1593 the above as a description of her position in 1586.

Her name will be ever remembered in the West of Ireland. Whether Grace ever owned all those castles around Clew Bay, that are now named after her, we have some doubts. She certainly must have had a wonderful influence from Killery to Achill Island, which impressed itself on the minds of the peasantry, and their posterity, and made of Grainne Uaile another name for rebel Ireland. Speaking of the vague traditions in the West, in which this heroine of the sixteenth century still lives, a distinguished historian, quoted very appropriately the following:

"Her spirit wraps the dusky mountain,
Her memory sparkles o'er the fountain,
The meanest rill, the mightiest river,
Rolls mingling with her fame forever."

Enough has been said to show that she was no myth. Mr. Knox, who cannot be accused of partiality to mythical or unauthorized tradition, says of her, "though she was not recognized in the annals, the English records show she was an imperious, courageous woman, who went plundering upon the seas, and had acquired a great reputation in the sea coasts, and who, by her abilities and strength of character, exercised a very great influence in Mayo affairs, through her husband and her relations." That these abilities and this influence were exercised for Ireland's sake, we have the evidence of Sir Richard Bingham himself, who described her, after he had watched her for ten years, as forty years a rebel; which testimony, in the light of the history of her time, is a precious ruby in the crown of her immortality.

CHAPTER V.

SOME ACHILL LANDLORDS.

Thus shall memory often, in dreams sublime,
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over,
Thus, sighing, look through the waves of time
For the long-faded glories they cover.

From that eventful point of Irish history, when the O'Malleys and the Burkes began to lose supremacy in Achill and Umhall, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Brownes and the O'Donnells are found to occupy their seats, Ireland's long night of sorrow had fallen, the penal laws had come and gone.

"The bridal dawn of thunder peals," which usually ushered Christianity into pagan civilization, did not mark the coming of the Gospel to Erin. Contrary to the laws of radical change, princes and people, almost without a struggle, separated themselves from their national idols, and with joy and gladness yielded up the nation to the "unknown God," without that baptism of blood which was invariably de-

manded by an inscrutable Providence in other nations. All over the land the glad tidings were gladly received. Ireland received, as it were, resurrection in glory without burial in sorrow; without sowing in tears, she reaped in joy. She was dowered with the full light of the Gospel, nor did she grope through the twilight of the morning. It looked as if the Providence that watched over Christianity on the continent demanded as a refuge from troubles there the immediate submission of distant Ireland. It was only, however, a postponement of trial. The Cross must needs one day come

"Whose roots are fast within our fairest fields."

So it came to Erin, and Erin was found prepared. Her sons and daughters freely, gladly, eagerly, gave lands and life and fame, everything earthly, to preserve inviolate the priceless heritage of the faith dropped to them from Heaven. All the pure, passionate love of Celtic hearts was now called forth by the grand idea of a free and Catholic Ireland, of which they dare not speak, dare not name, except in

the disguise of love songs and poetic figures, such as Caithlin Ni Houlahan and My Dark Rosaleen. For in those penal days patriotism, as well as religion, was a criminal offense in Ireland, but her poets and patriots spoke their love all the same.

Before the storm the O'Malleys and the Anglo-Norman Burkes were supreme in Achill and Umhall. When its force was spent the Brownes and the O'Donnells had succeeded them. While, indeed, it is not our intention to enter into a long or detailed account of the struggles made against this alienation of power and privilege, a brief historical sketch, however, of the Brownes and the O'Donnells, inasmuch as their connection with Achill as landlords seems to demand it, will give us

A glimpse of the days that are over.

About the year 1583, there settled at The Neale, County Mayo, an Englishman by birth or education, named John Browne, who when, in 1584, Sir Richard Bingham commenced his work of "civilization" as president of Connaught, rendered much valuable assistance. John became Sheriff of Mayo, and received a grant of land at The

Neale, as a recompense for his labors and as an incentive to his loyalty. He marched, at the head of a few hundred men, into North Mayo, to punish the Nether Burkes, and reduce them to submission. He seems, however, to have miscalculated either their forces or his own. He was defeated in battle, probably by our friend, the Devil of Corraune, or his son, and was straightway hanged. So perished the founder of the house of Browne and the ancestor of the lords of Sligo and Kilmaine. The name, however, lived, and the original grant was confirmed to the family.

In 1636, John, grandson of the hapless invader of Erris, was created first baronet of The Neale, as Sir John Browne. Sir John's second son, also called John, settled at Westport, then called Cathair na Mart, and there founded the Sligo branch of the Browne family, with which, owing to Lord Sligo's landlord rule over part of Achill, we are chiefly concerned. A word, however, about The Neale branch.

Sir George Browne was second baronet of The Neale, and brother of Colonel John

of Westport. He sought to strengthen his English connections by marrying the sister of Sir Henry Bingham, and lived in the ancestral home at The Neale. His son, Sir John Browne, was captain in James the Second's army during the War of the Revolution and was captured at the famous siege of Derry the sixth of May, 1689. Thenceforward, however, the family seems to have taken the winning side and drifted gradually like their kindred at Westport to the "island valley" of the peerage, and their Catholic faith, proving an obstacle to easy progress in that direction, was quietly dropped by the way.

After the death of the sixth baronet of The Neale, in 1765, his brother John succeeded and was in 1789 created the first Lord Kilmaine. The present peer, Sir Francis W. Browne, succeeded in 1873 as fourth baron of Kilmaine. To return now to Colonel John of Westport.

John of Westport, as we have seen, was the great grandson of the first John Browne, who settled at The Neale. In 1680 the founder of the Sligo branch was practicing as a lawyer in Connaught. In the

perplexing times that followed, he threw in his lot with Sarsfield and James II and received his title of colonel in the army of his Catholic sovereign. When the illfated war was over John's legal skill was requisitioned in the drafting of the articles of surrender after the battle of Limerick, 30th of October, 1691, which, with Sarsfield (Earl of Lucan), Sir Toby Butler and four others, he signed on behalf of Catholic Ireland and her departing soldiery. It was the last testament of the "Wild Geese," as these brave exiles came to be called, which, with swords in hand and French ships sailing into Dingle bay, they drew up for their dear Erin, but which—alas! for Saxon faith—Erin never enjoyed.

Immediately at the signing of the treaty twelve thousand of Ireland's bravest men enlisted in the French army, two thousand returned to their homes, while one thousand went over to their conquerors. Speaking of those French exiles, the bright side of the picture is painted by Dubois in the following terms: "Who has not heard of the glory of the 'Irish Brigade,' which for

a whole century carried on to every French battlefield its banner with the brave motto, "Semper et ubique Fideles," struck the decisive blow, under Clare at Fontenoy, and on the evening of Dettingen wrung from King George II the celebrated imprecation, "God curse the laws that made these men my enemies!" Meantime, however, while Ireland's soldiers were filling Europe with the glory of their heroic deeds, the history of their kith and kin at home, whom they entrusted to England's honor, is thus told by one of our Protestant poets:

"Among the poor
Or on the moor,
Were hid the pious and the true,
While traitor knave, apostate slave,
Had riches, rank and retinue;
And, exiled in those penal days,
Our banners over Europe blaze."

So wrote the bold, generous, nobleheart-ed Young Irelander, Thomas Davis, and it was history he wrote. But to continue the Browne story.

Amongst the two thousand who returned home after the Treaty of Limerick was Colonel John Browne of West-

port. With an eye to future prospects, and the ostensible purpose of ensuring the liquidation of debts due to Protestants, lawyer Browne managed, as lawyers can, to incorporate Article XIII into the Treaty, safeguarding the estates of certain Catholics. Accordingly he was enabled to get a footing in Westport without paying for the privilege by the renunciation of the ancient faith.

Colonel John married Maud Burke, second daughter of third Viscount Burke, and their son, Peter Browne, succeeded Colonel John in 1705. Nor was he unworthy of such distinguished parentage.

Peter was a staunch Papist when to be such was high treason in Ireland. He kept in his household at Cathair na Mart a remarkable butler. This employee, who, during the light of day followed the humble avocation which gave him his name, stood, in the early dawn, ere the stars went out, a white-robed priest at an improvised altar, in loft or on hillside;

And Christ was worshiped and received with trembling haste and fear,
In field and shed, with posted scouts to warn of bloodhounds near.

However that may be, the Catholicism of the Browne family died with Peter in 1722. His son John represented Castlebar in the Irish Parliament of 1749 and became first Earl of Altamount in 1771. To reach these enviable titles, however, as well as to secure his claim to his father's property he was obliged to renounce his father's faith, and thus handed down land and religion to his successors at Cathair na Mart.

That curious piece of penal legislation, whereby a Catholic, because he was such, lost control of his own property is illustrated by an example in "Howard's Popery Cases," in which Peter Browne himself was one of the parties concerned. The case was as follows: Peter Browne of Westport became trustee in 1695 for a young Birmingham, a relative of his, and a Catholic also. Before Peter's death he made over the property to his young relative. It was the age of discoverers, and a man named Winter disputed the validity of the conveyance of title on the ground that Peter Browne was a Catholic, as was Birmingham also. The case was tried in the Court of Chancery, and not only did

Winter succeed in proving the invalidity of the conveyance, but, according to the law of the day, he received the Birmingham property in question as a reward for the "discovery." Peter died in 1722, and was buried near Westport.

The Brownes grew rich in the confiscated properties of the O'Malleys of Upper Umhall, and their ownership extended also over parts of Lower Umhall, even to Achill Island. In those days Cathair na Mart separated Upper Umhall from lower. The Brownes seem to have received a head rent from the O'Donnells of Newport in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and probably do so still, for aught we know. But who were the O'Donnells?

The great name of O'Donnell is one round which circles many historic associations, from the days of Nial of the Nine Hostages to our own. The Irish O'Donnells came from Tyrconnell to Mayo, a century after the coming of the Brownes and were followed by septs of O'Gallaghers, MacSweeneys, O'Tolands, O'Clerys, having been banished from the

hills and valleys of Donegal, where, since the days of Columba (an O'Donnell, too) their war cry "O'Donnell Aboo"

"Aroused the fearful and subdued the proud."

Towards the end of Elizabeth's reign the O'Donnell's made many hostile incursions into Connaught and made themselves generally disliked, although, it must be said, Grace O'Malley fled for protection and shelter to Ulster in 1586 or 1587, and had shelter and protection given to her.. In 1595 O'Donnell took such control over affairs in Mayo as to have elected, against the customs and wishes of the majority of its chieftains, a MacWilliam of his own choice, named Theobald Burke. William Burke of Shrule was the rightful claimant, and we may mention that Richard, son of the "Devil of Corraune," was also a competitor. Later on O'Donnell lived for a time in Ballymote Castle, and "during the time," say the Four Masters, "O'Donnell had not left a quarter, limit, wilderness, recess, in the whole Province of Connaught which he had not plundered and from which he had not taken pledges."

The O'Donnell mentioned here was Hugh Roe, whose plundering, however, was directed against the English, and not against Connaught men as such. He it was who had been treacherously seized by Sir John Perrot in 1587. He was then a stripling, not yet fifteen, but, say, the Four Masters, "The name and renown of the above mentioned youth spread throughout the five provinces of Ireland." Accordingly, lest he should call around him a dangerous following, and thwart the designs of crushing Ireland utterly, he was taken in a time of peace and imprisoned in Dublin Castle. He made good his escape, however, in 1591; and, on the resignation of his father, he was elected at Kilmacrenan, amidst the rejoicings of his people, the O'Donnell chief of his race. Nial Garv, however, Hugh Roe's cousin, was by the claims of custom the rightful chieftain. This was the beginning of much trouble between the rivals, which was not ended by the marriage of Nial Garv to Hugh Roe's sister, Nuala. Nial Garv and Nuala were ancestors of the

O'Donnells of Newport and Ballycroy, to whom we are now introduced.

When Hugh Roe became formidable to the English they supported the claims of Nial Garv, who now in 1600 used their power to recover his rights, and thus was England's policy, "divide and conquer," carried out. In 1602, Hugh Roe died, and Nial Garv, without consulting the English, had himself proclaimed the O'Donnell. Nial now showed too much independence and power in Ulster for the peace of mind of the English governors, and another rival, Rory, brother of Hugh Roe, was accordingly set up by them. In 1608 Nial Garv was arrested, and imprisoned in the Tower of London, where, after a confinement of eighteen years, he died in 1626. Nial's son, Manus, fought under Owen Roe O'Neill as captain in the confederate army in the rebellion of 1641, and was killed at the battle of Benburb, in 1646. History tells us that some time before 1664 Rory O'Donnell of Lifford, son of Manus of Benburb fame, settled in Ballycroy, in the south of the barony of Erris, "with a train of followers consisting of some of the various septs of Tyr-

connel, as O'Gallaghers, MacSweeneys, O'Clerys, O'Tolands." Thus came the Ulster men to Ballycroy and Achill Island and the O'Donnells to Mayo.

The chief and head of the O'Clerys was Cucogry, or Peregrine O'Clery, one of the Four Masters. He had property in Donegal, but because he was a mere Irishman, and not of English descent, he was dispossessed, and came with Rory O'Donnell to Ballycroy, where he died in 1664. But to pursue the history of the Nial Garv line.

Rory O'Donnell's son, Colonel Manus, settled in Newport, and left three sons, Charles of Newcastle, Lewis of Ross and Hugh More of Newport. Manus, the eldest son of Charles of Newcastle, was born in 1713, went to Austria at a very early age, and rose to the rank of Count of the empire. He died, however, in Ireland, and was buried in the little cemetery of Straide, County Mayo. To pass over the second brother, we come to Hugh More, who succeeded his father at Newport, and was himself succeeded by his more distinguished son, Sir Neal O'Donnell. Sir Neal was created baronet in 1780, lived

through the troubled period of 1798, when, according to an old document, to be referred to later, "Newport was the sink of rebellion." He was chief witness in the prosecution of Father Manus Sweeney, dying in 1811. This Sir Neal, called also Nial Garv, had four or five sons, three of whom we must try to remember. Two of these, Hugh, Lieutenant-Colonel of the South Mayo Militia and Colonel of the 110th Regiment of the line, and Captain James More O'Donnell figured in the rebellion of '98. The third son, Neal, called also Neal Beg, succeeded his father in 1811. Sir Richard O'Donnell, who was proprietor of Achill Island till relieved of his burden by the Encumbered Estates Court, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was second son of Neal Beg, and succeeded to the property in 1828, his sister Mary becoming a nun in the Presentation Order. Lady O'Donnell of Newport and her son George are also direct descendants of Sir Neal. Had we a Walter Scott in the West, he might easily have woven round these romantic figures a classic historical novel, a wealth of material for

which still floats in the memory of the peasantry.

We have spoken so far of the Brownes and the O'Donnells as landlords of Achill Island. We may now mention a few more. That portion of the mainland of Achill parish called Corraune, as well as Tonton valley and Bunnacurry within the island, was the property of a Catholic family of the MacLaughlins, whose influence, as well as that of their immediate successors, the MacCormacs, formed not an inconsiderable part in troubled times of the forces of religious conservatism. Lord Sligo owned Dunniver, which he sold some time about 1850 to a family of the name McHugh. The Achill Herald of June, 1853, complains of McHugh's refusal to give Nangle a room in his property to teach; and the same organ refers to MacCormac as having evicted the tenant in whose house one of Nangle's agents dispensed Protestant teaching, and as having declared "he should have no jumpers in his property." Ryan, too, who seems to have been an associate of MacCormac, pulled

down Corraune school over the master's head for the same reason.

We cannot well close this chapter on the landlords of Achill Island, and particularly on the O'Donnells, without referring to that ancient and interesting relic called the Cathach, or Caah, which for a time rested at O'Donnell's house at Newport, and is at present in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. This is a relic of St. Columba, who, as we have seen, was one of the O'Donnells.

This relic, Cathach, or Battler, as it is named, consists of a metal box nine and a half inches by eight, and two inches deep, containing a copy of the Psalter, supposed to have been Columba's own, which for centuries had been carried to all the battles of the O'Donnells, hence its name, Battler. We read in the Four Masters that it was wrested by the McDermotts in 1497 from the O'Donnells in a battle in which its keeper was killed. It was, however, restored in 1499.

It seems pretty certain that this copy of the Psalter dates back to Columba. O'Donovan, than whom we know of no

greater authority on the subject, says in his introduction to his Irish Grammar: "The manuscript of the Psalter preserved in the Cathach, or Caah, a beautiful reliquary, now the property of Sir Richard O'Donnell, is also very probably coeval with St. Columba, if indeed it be not in his handwriting." After the battle of Limerick it was carried to France by Colonel Daniel O'Donnell, and the box underwent, in 1723, some repairs. On the Colonel's death, the Cathach, according to the terms of his will, was to go to him to whom, according to the customs of the clan, the title of 'The O'Donnell' descended. Some one, described by O'Donovan as the Abbot of Cong, found the reliquary in a monastery in Belgium, and, having acquainted Sir Neal O'Donnell of Newport with the interesting discovery, as well as the terms of the will, the latter applied for the treasure, and through the influence of his brother, Conell, then in Belgium, had his application granted, and the Battler found its way to Newport House. Some time before 1845, Sir Richard O'Donnell placed it in the Royal Irish

Academy in Dublin, where, after its long and warlike career, it now rests in peace.

What seems a fanciful story is told about the origin of this celebrated Psalter. While Columba was visiting St. Finian at his monastery at Drimin, County Louth, the story goes that he copied in his own beautiful handwriting this Psalter from the manuscript brought from Rome by St. Finian. When the master discovered this, he demanded the copy, and, on Columba's refusal to surrender it, he appealed to the high king of Ireland. Diarmait decided the case in favor of St. Finian, according to the maxim, "To the book, its copy, as to the cow, her calf." Columba and his friends, the O'Donnells, refused to submit to what they regarded as an unjust decision, and a bloody war ensued, in which saints prayed on both sides. Of course Columba and the O'Donnells were the victors, and kept the Psalter, which remained for centuries of glory and of gloom in possession of the family. Columba is said to have condemned himself to perpetual exile for his share in the conflict

where so many of his countrymen were slain. It is certain, indeed, that Columba went to a strange land, brought Christianity to Scotland, and made Iona "the luminary of these Caledonian regions," but, according to some authorities, the story that the Psalter had anything to do with his departure is an unauthorized legend.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOLY WELLS OF ACHILL ISLAND.

"In vain they tore the altar down, in vain they flung aside
The mournful emblems of the death that our sweet Saviour died,
In vain they left no single trace of saint or angel here,
Still angel spirits haunt the ground and to the soul appear."

—Ellen Mary Downing.

We take the liberty of introducing the reader to the holy wells in Achill, which show that this storm-swept island was not untrodden by the saints of ancient Ireland.

There is a holy well at Kildownett, hard by the graveyard, which a tradition, but a very faint one, connects with a St. Damnet. It is still visited by pilgrims on the 15th of August. There is also one of more note at Sliabh More, called after St. Colman, the patron of Dukinella church. Probably St. Colman may have crossed over from Inish Boffin to Achill Island, in search of a suitable site for a monastery, wherein to segregate the Saxon monks who followed him and his Irish disciples from Lindisfarne. The Celts and Saxons seemed to have found it more difficult to practice the evangelical counsels, living under the same roof. Accordingly, their prudent founder, St. Colman, left the Celts in possession of Irish Boffin and went in search of a monastic site for the Saxon brethren. He at length succeeded in founding a monastery at Mayo, which was called Mayo of the Saxons. The old people still make pilgrimages to St. Colman's well.

The third and last, which we wish particularly to describe, is situated in a scene of solitude and beauty close by the Cathe-

dral Rocks in the Keel strand. It was, indeed, a happy thought to make it holy. The wonders of nature around, mountain majesty and thundering sea, make fitting scene for the wonders of grace; for the voice of the mountains and the voice of the sea seem to have suggested to all the sages thoughts of the "great beyond." The sea here, especially, preaches a beautiful sermon to one who may choose to listen, and:

"Wander by the pebbly beach,
Marking the sunlight at the evening hour,
And hearken to the thoughts the waters teach—
Eternity, eternity and power."

The well is situated under the shadow of the Minan cliffs, and is named St. Finan's well. The tradition is that St. Finan gave his name, not only to the well, but to the mountain also, which should be properly called Finan's cliff. Perhaps the practice of our fathers who placed a well-known prefix before the names of many of our saints, may explain the difficulty of deriving the modern name from Finan. This, however, is probably fanciful philology, and the usual explanation

of the name Minan, derives it from the Irish word, for young kids that still sport on its sides. But to return to the well.

The well is sheltered by three walls of cliff. Over one of these walls the waters from the hill, gathered into a stream which cuts its way down the incline, flow and fall from a perpendicular height of thirty feet, and pass by the well to the sea a few yards away. The well, however, is holy no more. Some unknown, described by an old woman of the place, as a "blackguard from the Colony," is said to have desecrated it. The well, she says, on that account dried up and the naughty individual "went mad." However this may be, it appears the well was once a favorite resort of pilgrims from every part of Achill. A broken stone flag with an almost illegible inscription was found among the debris that now chokes up the well. Some ribbons, votive offerings of pilgrims, were found there also, which without knowing what they were, we used to decipher the rude hieroglyphics of the flag. The inscription as far as legible, ascribed its erection to Father Thomas McManus, re-

membered by the very old people to have been parish priest of the island, and the possessor of a wonderful saddle horse, that braved every danger by night as well as by day. Not far removed from this well is the site of the old Dukinella church, where in 1835, Dr. John McHale held confirmation, "the first," according to the ancients, "ever known to be held in Achill." The present Catholic church was erected by Father O'Dwyer, the same year in which he also built Kildownett.

Pursuing the subject of these sacred ruins that speak of a Catholic past, we cannot help reverting to the altar stones at Keem. Keem is a terrestrial paradise. The road that leads to it carries us over a high cliff which, in its sheer descent to the level of the sea, shows a regularity that almost suggests architectural design. In front, as one advances, one gets a view of the rich pastures of Keem, the coastguard station (four of which until quite recently had been fully manned in this island, the sole usefulness of which seems to have been to prevent the poor islanders from taking hold of any present the winds or

the waves made them), and the cultivated fields in one of which is the stone altar. A strange old man, whose head was whitened with the snows of ninety-four winters, and the long evening of whose life was brightened by an old age pension, gave me this information. "The old people," he said, "were used to say that the priests lived in the caves by the sea in the days of Sean Na Sagarth, the priest hunter," "And," we continued, foolish and breathless with interest, "who made these caves?" "Humph," he said, " twas God made them, and they were good enough to keep out the rain but not the wind."

The view from Keem on a fine day is magnificent. One finds oneself transported suddenly from Achill surroundings of black bog and bleak mountain into a land of verdure:

"And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea."

But in the last analysis we felt after all was seen it was but the cold, unsatisfying beauty of earth, until the thoughts of the holy wells, the altar and the Priest's Rock far away at Achill Head, with their holy

memories, completed the picture and threw around it the beauty of heaven.

How these venerable-storied ruins, wells and altars and abbeys, "roofless, shrineless, monkless," with which Achill, Clew Bay, Ireland, the wide world, are ruthlessly strewn, speak to us silently of the Catholicity of that religion which created them; which the violent savage vandalism of the sixteenth century, yclept reformation, sought to banish forever from the earth. Those deluded mortals professed to seek under, what they were pleased to call, superstitious excrescences of Catholic creed and Catholic practice, the "pure faith" of the Gospel. They were not a little inspired by the confiscation and plunder of the accumulated treasures of Christian charity. They robbed the Church, enriched themselves, but made sad havoc of the faith.

Has the reader ever seen the sun go down in the western sky? For a time bright streaks of light illuminate the clouds, though the beautiful orb itself be lost to view. Soon that light fades into twilight, and twilight deepens into

darkness, and night, black night, covers the earth. Even thus did the sacred light of faith go out, to be particular, in unhappy England. The sun of the Catholic Church, which Christ set up to light His children home, drawing all her splendors round her, went down upon her. One by one the doctrines of the ancient faith, in the growing darkness, were questioned, doubted, lost. Henry VIII., Edward VI. (or his protectors), Elizabeth, Cranmer, Parker and the rest, represented the pale gradations by which the sacred light went out in Protestant England. Long afterwards when men grew calm and thoughtful, Matthew Arnold, in that wisdom which gave a characteristic sadness to his voice, expressed himself thus, seeing the full tide at his feet:

"The sea of faith
Was once, too at the full, and 'round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;
But now I only hear its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar
Retreating to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world."

How one loves to think of John Henry Newman, who saw so well the trend of Protestant thought and strove so earnestly to stay the progress of error. He was the highest product of the Anglican Church, the enthusiastic exponent of her doctrines; the most competent churchman in England. To say no more of him, he was a man, says Birrell, who could "infuse more charity into his controversies than most men can find room for in their prayers." Wedding childlike prayer to beautiful poetry, he cried, and the world listened to the cry:—

"Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom;
Lead Thou me on.
The night is dark and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!"

Over the desert of centuries of English history, he was led by the spirit of faith, as by a pillar of fire, seeking that Church "of which in old times Athanasius and Augustine were members." He found the Church of Rome, he tells us, where it is today. His own Anglican Church, the church of his youth, of all he loved in boyhood, to which he had given the service of

his bright manhood—he could not believe his eyes, but was she not in the position of the heretical Donatists? He looked again and was perplexed, and again he looked and experienced the great disillusionment of his life, and that mental anguish of a duration, to a Catholic, so surprisingly long, which he so candidly describes in his Apologia and which ended in his finding the promised land. And with the childlike confidence with which he had prayed for the light, now that it had been given him, he followed it; and with joy and gratitude he entered the Church as "one enters a port after a rough sea." He was in peace at last. He was a Catholic. Long afterwards when Protestant friends were confidently awaiting his return to Anglicanism, and reports were being daily circulated of the event, he thus, with expression and candour, gave them his mind: "I do hereby profess that Protestantism is the dreariest of possible religions; that the thought of the Anglican service makes me shiver, and the thought of the thirty-nine articles makes me shudder. Return to the

Church of England! No! 'The net is broken and we are delivered.' I should be a consummate fool if, in my old age, I left the land flowing with milk and honey, for the city of confusion and the house of bondage."

This was the bondage into which Ireland was sought to be ensnared or driven at the point of the sword. This was the shadow of Christianity carried to Achill as a substitute for the grand and ancient faith.

"But we'll have none of it," says Ireland, any time these three hundred years; "we'll have none of it," says Achill, after fifty years of battle, even though sweetened by soup, and supplemented by leases to the fat of the land. Ireland has made her choice between that religion which has no higher sanction than that of a fallen priest, and that which comes from the catacombs, from Peter, from Christ. From her valleys and rocks, defiantly Catholic Ireland's ultimatum rang out—Ellen Mary Downing has written it in song—which finds an echo in the enthusi-

astic hearts of the children of the Gael all over the earth:

"So shall the land for us be still the sainted isle
of old,
Where hymn and incense rise to heaven and holy
beads are told,
And even the land they tore from God, in years
of crime and woe,
Instinctive with His truth and love shall breathe
of long ago."

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER MANUS SWEENEY.

"Who fears to speak of '98?
Who blushes at the name?
When cowards mock the patriot's fate,
Who hangs his head for shame?"

When constitutional means of redress are exhausted and have proved unavailing, when civic grievances are just and proportionately grave, a well-grounded assurance of success is still required by the ethics of common sense to justify an appeal to arms against the powers that be. About two of these requirements for

the justice of civil war, with a knowledge of Irish history, not even the most frigid philosopher can hesitate, we believe, in pronouncing them existent in Ireland immediately before the rebellion of 1798. As to the hopes of success, however, of the revolutionary party, there seems to have been, then as now, a difference of opinion; and for that reason, if for no other, the Catholic clergy, as a body, held aloof from the revolutionary movement, and warned their Catholic subjects to do likewise.

For a time their advice was taken. Thus, in the French invasion of December, 1796, the Catholics of Ireland took little or no part, and this fact was mentioned in the next few months in Parliament to show that England ran no risk in giving them the scant justice of emancipation. Soon, however, national disappointment and that fever of excitement in which war is declared, and judgment not a little obscured, roused their martial spirit. They were no longer under control, and determined to fight.

In '97 there were in Ireland seventy-eight thousand English soldiers. This force

was increased in '98 to ninety-one thousand, and reached in '99 the grand total of one hundred and fourteen thousand. On the other hand for some years the rebel party amongst Catholics, after a slavery of one hundred years, was beginning to predominate. The rise of the Volunteers, and the consequent concession of parliamentary independence, struck terror into England, and made even the Irish Catholics raise their heads. Concessions followed in slow succession, until in 1793, when the Volunteers were disbanded, Irish Catholics were so far invested in the livery of citizenship as to be allowed a vote. The Volunteers were all Protestants, nor were Catholics qualified to join them. In 1791, however, the United Irishmen were founded in Belfast, and one of the chief aims of these, was to secure full legal recognition for outlawed papists, and these dreadful people were cordially invited to serve under the banner of the movement. They accepted the invitation, and in '97, the membership reached was half a million. Branches honeycombed the country, and all the fiery spirits of the

volunteer movement found refuge in their ranks. There was a branch in Westport, of which a man named Gibbons was secretary.

With this undercurrent of rebellion the French kept themselves in touch, and they were urged and ardently expected to land a force anywhere in Ireland. Towards the end of 1797, after casting his eagle glance on the situation, Napoleon decided against the idea of immediate invasion, and filled the Irish with keen disappointment. Moreover, to make matters worse, the United Irishmen of Ulster, were obliged immediately before the war, to surrender twenty thousand guns and seventy thousand pikes to the government. The Peep O'Day Boys, who robbed and massacred Catholics in the North, and who were now known as Orangemen, alienated more and more Catholics and Protestants, to the delight of the English; and Irish Catholics came to regard the rebellion as a fight against Orangemen and English for a free and Catholic Ireland. Thus, though the chances of success were greatly reduced, they were too far gone to re-

trace their steps, and treasured wrongs rankling in their hearts, left them but one aim:

"To strike one blow for thee, dear land—
To strike one blow for thee."

Every one knows the issue of the war. The French made several efforts to land a force in Ireland, but as at historic Limerick, one hundred years before, they succeeded in doing so, only after they were too late to be useful. On the 22nd of August, Humbert landed at Killala, with one thousand one hundred men, but the war was then over. The news of his arrival, however, roused the West, and the "Races of Castlebar" struck momentary terror into the English, who ran for their lives before the exultant Irish army.

The triumph, however, of the patriots of the West was short-lived, and the whole force, French and Irish, surrendered on the 8th of September to Cornwallis, at Ballinamuck. In their brief interval of victory, Newport was captured by the French. Sir Neal O'Donnell, the representative of English law in Newport, and the Protestant minister Heron, fled

with their lives, and "the tree of liberty was planted in the town of Newport-Pratt by a yeoman of the name of Gibbons," according to the contemporary evidence of the reverend chaplain of the Mayo militia, to whom we are about to refer. The Catholic clergyman in the little town of Newport, which we are told, was at that time "the sink of rebellion," was Father Manus Sweeney.

At this time, as we have already seen, Sir Neal O'Donnell had two sons who were engaged on the loyalist side in the rebellion:—Hugh, Lieutenant-colonel of the South Mayo Militia, and Captain James More, cavalry officer of yeomen. In 1800 these men, especially Captain James More, were charged before a commission consisting of Major Witherington, Major Graham and Major Frazer, with remissness in suppressing the rebellion in the O'Donnell estate, and with having shown favor to Catholic rebels to the detriment of Protestant loyalists. They defended themselves, however, successfully. In the minutes of the trial held in December, 1800, which I have been fortunate enough

A View of Newport, Where Father Sweeney Was Hanged.

to secure, valuable references are made to the fate of Father Manus Sweeney. They are indeed *obiter dicta,* but that seems to enhance rather than depreciate their historical value.

It would appear from an impartial examination of the minutes of the trial that the O'Donnells discouraged the growth of Orangemen in their surroundings, and prohibited them from wearing their badges; that, during the rebellion, they endeavored without needless severity to keep Catholics in subjection, and that some whom they might have brought to punishment, managed to make their escape. Father Paul Feighan was taken by Captain More O'Donnell and lodged in jail for "seditious conversation among the lower classes;" nevertheless, Rev. Hugh Benton, chaplain to the Mayo Militia, who made the above mentioned charges, was able to say: "It will appear in evidence that Newport-Pratt, the property and residence of Sir Neal O'Donnell, Bart., the father of Captain James More O'Donnell, was the sink of rebellion; and strange as it may well seem to you, it will

appear that neither Captain James More O'Donnell who is a magistrate and a yeoman officer, or any of his family, came forward as loyal men, or prosecuted to conviction one rebel leader." From this it appears that Sir Neal O'Donnell had not that responsible connection with the hanging of the patriot priest, which he is popularly supposed to have had. The minutes, however, show that he was chief crown witness against him, although they contain too an accusation against the family of having afforded Father Sweeney an opportunity to escape. It was in this connection the name of Father Sweeney, who had been hanged eighteen months previous to the trial, was introduced into it. We shall as much as possible give the exact words of the minutes, as they contain, as far as we know, the only contemporary written record of the priest's tragic story.

Amongst the chief witnesses examined was Rev. Joseph Heron, Protestant clergyman of Newport from 1790 to 1797. Heron informs the court that in the interesting flights that followed the defeat of

Lake at Castlebar, Sir Neal O'Donnell and himself had taken refuge at sea. The clergyman was taken prisoner at Tiernar and recognized, he says, some of the rebels especially Peter and Henry McGloughlin and Joseph O'Malley. The minutes continue:

Did you know the Rev. Manus Sweeney?

Heron—I did.

Was he not taken at Newport the day on which the rebels evacuated the town?

Heron—He was.

Was he not afterwards liberated?

Heron—He was through my interference.

Was not the unfortunate gentleman afterwards apprehended at an expense to the government of 50 pounds, by Major Bingham's Yeomanry Corps? Here the answer was evidently in the affirmative, but the record of it is unfortunately torn off.

What happened during the French regime in the town until its evacuation, is told by a yeoman named James Anderson, in reply to a question by Captain O'Donnell: "About eighteen or twenty of us,"

he said, "Tirawley Yeomen, went to retake Newport, under your command. Before our arrival there, Sir Neal O'Donnell had entered the town, had Sweeney, the priest, a prisoner, and the tree of liberty was aburning." James Clark, another witness, also adds, that during the same period, he himself "was taken prisoner before a French officer and Rev. Manus Sweeney read a charge against him of being a spy and an Orangeman."

Further, we are told, having recovered the town, Sir Neal O'Donnell had Father Sweeney arrested and tied a prisoner in his own house. Owing to the interference of Heron, "who said it was too bad to have a priest tied in the guardroom, that he should keep him safe in his house," Father Sweeney was handed over to the Protestant clergyman from whom he afterwards escaped. Finally Major General French, who was also examined, states very candidly, when asked if Father Sweeney deserved death, and if the O'Donnells might not have punished him so: "I do not know of myself, but have heard that they could prosecute Sweeney, the

priest, by whom they suffered considerably, as he kept possession of Newport, and also that they might prosecute others; but have nothing more than hearsay for it."

After Father Sweeney's escape until his capture by Bingham's Yeomen, the minutes show that the loyalists at Newport daily expected an attack on the town by the Tirawley rebels under command of Sweeney, the priest, and MacGuire of Crossmolina. To throw more light on the liberation of Father Sweeney by O'Donnell, we quote the words of his defense, recorded in the minutes: "It must appear," says counsel, "that after he made Sweeney, the priest, a prisoner, he was induced to let him go away, from the representation made to him and the conviction that the consequence of detaining him would have been the sacrifice of the loyal inhabitants by the rebels, and the destruction of the town of Newport-Pratt."

So far for written records. To supplement the tragic story of this young priest who died for Ireland, we are indebted to

tradition for material, from which we gleaned the following:

Father Sweeney was a native of Achill Island, and many of his kindred are still to be found there. Like all the young Levites of penal days, he was educated abroad and ordained in Paris. Some time after his return to Ireland he was sent as Catholic curate to Newport. It appears that during his sojourn abroad he made acquaintances with French officers or soldiers who afterwards came to Newport during the rebellion. There is no doubt, he was heart and soul with the rebels, and there appears to be as little doubt he associated himself with them by some bolder step than mere expression of sympathy. We have seen how his arrest was effected by Sir Neal O'Donnell, and how through the intervention of Mr. Heron, and through fear of the rebels, he was allowed an amount of freedom which enabled him to fly to his native mountains in Achill Island. Here he succeeded until the following year in eluding alike the search of the bloodhounds and the itching palm of the ubiquitous informer. For weeks, or it may

be months, he lay concealed and carefully tended by the wily and faithful natives. But alas!

"The fox must sleep sometimes, the reindeer must rest,
And treachery prey on the blood of the best."

He was at length betrayed. His hiding place was made known to Major Bingham's Yeomen, and the little house was surrounded and searched. The soldiers were baffled and were about to abandon the quest, when one of them, with a scrupulousness suggestive of a famous parallel in history, fired a shot towards a certain point in the house, taking an old woman off her guard for a moment, and stealing from her lips the fatal words: "Oh, God, the priest is killed."

The priest was rearrested. He was dragged to Castlebar, where Sir Neal O'Donnell was, according to the document above referred to, chief crown witness in the prosecution, and he was condemned to die as a rebel leader.

It was fair day in Newport, Monday, June 9th, 1799, and the people for miles around were gathered into town. A line

of soldiers drawn up in dreadful array kept the populace in subjection. As the rude scaffold was being set up—an old wooden table and the market crane—and the common rope was seen produced, a natural impulse seemed to rouse the people to violence and to attempt the rescue of their "sagarth aroon." The generous priest turned to speak and save his flock from destruction. His voice, to which they often listened, rang out. The tumult subsided, and in silence, men and women heard the last words of the priest they loved, while tears rolled down their cheeks, advising them, for the sake of their children, to stir not a hand for him, that this was the death God had willed, this was the death he wished to die. He mounted the improvised scaffold, and though every soldier offered each a pound for his ransom, he was hanged by a rope from the crane in the market square. The horror and the grief of the parishioners for what they considered an unpardonable crime, we cannot attempt to describe. They were helpless, but firmly believed a nemesis should one

day overtake the perpetrators of the deed, and all their sympathisers. The peasantry still tell how the rain which invariably falls the fair day of Newport, perpetuates the memory, and shows the divine abhorrence, of the crime. And round their winter firesides, the old chroniclers tell of the fate of Lyghtel on Tonragee Mountain, who is said to have insulted the priest as he was dying on the scaffold. A day or two afterwards, as Lyghtel went to tend his flocks in the mountain he lost his way in the darkness, and was never seen alive. A pile of stones on top of the mountain marks the spot where he is supposed to have starved and died.

His story is told. Father Sweeney was buried in the Abbey of Burrishoole, where his tombstone may still be seen—from which we learn that he was buried here, with his father and mother, at the early age of thirty-six. The epitaph runs thus:

"O Lord, have mercy on the souls of James Sweeney, who departed this life 9th Dec., 1789, aged 63 years;

Bridget Sweeney, alias Mulloy, his wife, deceased June 9th, aged 36 years;
Father Manus Sweeney, their son, who died June 9th, 1799, aged 36 years."

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN THE ANCIENTS IN ACHILL WERE YOUNG.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure,
Nor grandeur read with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor."
—Gray.

Some of the old men whom we have met in Achill Island, were born before 1820. They searched their long memories for information about penal days, or the early years of the century, which they might have received from their fathers. We have already referred to their story of the stone altar at Keem. We have also gathered from them, that several priests, natives of Achill, had been ordained in France, and returned to keep the faith alive in the land of their birth.

A Father James Barrett, whose brother was killed in Erris, went to France to escape the same fate, and returned when the danger was over. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, England began to relax her penal measures for the extirpation of Catholics in Ireland, and her protestantizing forces were about to abandon the work they had three hundred years before set themselves to perform. Our beautiful Catholic ceremonial was for years unobserved, Catholic churches were in ruins, or in Protestant hands; but Catholic faith and Catholic worship still drew the Irish outlaws, at the peril of their lives, to the caves and the mountains.

The first priest of the century about whom any traditions survive, was Rev. Thomas McManus. He it was who baptized the very old people now living, in the houses in which they were born. For, in those simple times, the custom survived from penal days of baptizing and marrying in private houses. Padruig Daeg, the poet, who composed an elegy on Father Sweeney's death, is said to have come foul of Father McManus once on a station

day. A reconciliation, however, soon followed, and the poet's *amende honorable* was a poetic effusion on the glories of his pastor's native town, Claremorris. Father McManus was alone in charge of the parish. There were then only two churches in the island. One was at Kildownett, the walls of which are still standing in the old cemetery. The other stood near the cliffs of Dukinella. The parochial residence was at Kildownett, but the appearance of an enemy later on in another part of the island rendered a change of position advisable.

In those days, here, as elsewhere in Ireland, the education of the young was committed to the tender care of the hedge-masters. When these brave fellows ceased to be outlaws, they received shelter in some village cottage, where they met their pupils and received the few coppers they could afford. There was, it may be of interest to note, a Latin school at Dukinella in Achill Island, in the early days of the nineteenth century, conducted by Father Sweeney's brother. Some of the Achill Islanders, in after years, exhibited

to the wondering priest an accurate knowledge of the Latin Litany and the Serving at Mass.

At that time, and until the awful experience of Black 1847 which taught the natives the wisdom of providing the necessaries of life by migratory labor, on which they now almost entirely rely, they were absolutely dependent on the bogs and the wild sea surrounding them. Writing about the Achill Islanders, as they lived in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Sir W. Wilde tells us: "During the spring the entire population of several of the villages we allude to in Achill close their winter dwellings, tie their infant children on their backs, carry with them their loys—and some carry potatoes with a few pots and cooking utensils—drive their cattle before them, and migrate into the hills, where they find fresh pasture for their flocks; and there they build rude huts of sods and wattles, and then cultivate or sow with corn a few fertile spots in the neighboring valleys. They thus remain for about two months of the spring and summer till the corn is sown; their

stock of provisions being exhausted, and the pasture consumed by the cattle, they return to the shore, and eke out a miserable, precarious existence by fishing."

In those days of Arcadian simplicity, the fine roads that now lead in all directions through the island, were merely footwalks or bridle paths. There were no vehicles of any description in the island. People walked or ran or rode their hardy Achill ponies, the men taking their wives or sisters behind them on the backs of their horses, where they sat with easy grace. The natives, men and women, still ride to church and to market in this fashion. No railroad reached them. They were cut off from the mainland by a narrow but dangerous strait, Achill Sound, where the tide rushes in with enormous force and velocity. "The people," says a writer in Temple Bar, 1896, "were obliged to cross in a ferry boat, very much out of repair. Often the passage was most dangerous and difficult, owing to the rapidity of the current, and the strength of the wind. On fair days, the ferry was laden, not only with passengers, but also with sheep,

pigs and young cattle. Old cattle were tied by the horns with a rope made fast to the stern of the boat, and forced to swim as best they could through the rushing tide." But notwithstanding these hardships, the people somehow managed to live and to multiply, and apparently were "as gay as larks, and damnably happy in their wretchedness."

The twenty or thirty villages with which we are now familiar in Achill Island, were in those days some of them hardly in existence at all; some have changed their sites, and some that were are wiped out of the map. There was, where St. Thomas's Protestant church now stands in Dugort settlement, and in its immediate environs, a smiling hamlet of nearly twenty cottages, and the soil in the gardens around was, unlike most parts of the island, capable of growing wheat. When the mission got possession, the villagers found they must make room for the erection of some new building, and casting many a lingering look behind, they were forced to abandon the homes of their childhood, and go into the wilderness or to America. The

old and feeble had no alternative but face the bogs and set about reclaiming them. The young and vigorous found refuge in the emigrant ship. Their houses were demolished, and today a Protestant church smiles over the ruins of these Catholic firesides. Around the southeastern side of Sliabh More there was once a very large village of perhaps a hundred families. Some of these shifted to Dooagh in famine years, some found a home beyond the sea. The neighboring fields are now the site of those summer houses mentioned above by Sir W.Wilde, which to a certain extent are still used as of old. Keel was once a much larger village of beehive huts than it is to-day, as old men and ruins around serve to show. Nangle called this village in later times "the stronghold of Popery." Dooagh was as large and primitive a village as could be found in Europe.

Passing over to the east side of the island to Kildownett, and looking over the Sound to the mainland, hard by Grainne Uaile's castle, we find Ailt, which was once perhaps the largest village in Achill, com-

Achill Sound Before the Bridge That Now Connects the Island With the Mainland Was Built.

pletely in ruins. The remains of as many as eighty cottages, which were snugly situated in the shelter of the mountain in the background, speak most feelingly—one would say with a cry for vengeance—of the cruelties of the now, happily disappearing Irish landlord. The sight of so much desolation in that deserted village, where the brave fisherman built his sheltering cot, where the roof-tree rang with the laughter of fireside meetings, where happy children once gamboled on the green, makes one's blood boil in one's veins. Could the owner of the dismantled castle yonder, wake up when these cottages were razed to the ground, and many other horrors perpetrated,

"Her corse, long dead, from its narrow bed
In anger and shame would rise again."

Old Pyke was the evictor. We learned that when the edict was published many of these peasants had hurriedly built themselves in the bogs and bleak mountainside, without lime or cement, the masonry of new houses. On the day of the eviction, when the snow was on the ground, they covered these houses with the

roofs of the old ones, and slept within them that winter's night. The evicted scattered themselves to other parts of the Pyke estate, Breanaskil or Sraheens, some to the Valley, and some across the Sound to Belfarsad. Bolingleanna, in the Corraune peninsula, by Clew Bay, and Dooega, by the stormy Atlantic, south of the island, are instances of villages that have in living memory grown from small beginnings to their present large dimensions.

The natives have long lived in congested villages. Whether this be due to the rarity of sheltered nooks, desirable sites for their habitations, or to the almost universal belief in the beings of the unseen world whom they may fear to face alone, we do not wish to take the responsibility of deciding. The islanders are extremely tenacious of old beliefs and customs handed down from generations that have long since passed to the silent land; and they are especially scrupulous in the observance of those wedding and burial customs in which ancestral reverence and jubilation have been crystallized, and

which are still preserved inviolate in Achill Island.

Whether or not there may have been an antecedent and mutual agreement between the parties themselves, every marriage settlement is arrived at in the island in the following manner: The "young boy," as he is called, sometimes by a misnomer, with a host of his friends, men, women and children, comes in the darkness of the night to the home of the young girl, whose friends are summoned together, too. The house in which they assemble supplies an abundance of tea and cake and other eatables for the night's session, while the young boy provides at his expense the "aqua vitae," and does so in no stinted manner. They sit and talk on various topics until the dawn of the morning, and are seldom known to break up without "making the match." Later, the young man, taking a friend with him, goes to the priest, and unless, as too often happens, the parties are too nearly related, the marriage is fixed for the following day—except it be on Monday, which is regarded

as an unlucky day. Friends on both sides are invited to the wedding feast and marriage ceremony. After the marriage ceremony is over, the whole company returns to the young girl's home and holds high festival till next day. They all rest for one week, when once more another festive gathering, called the "dragging home," takes place, and the bride is taken to her new residence, and the last formal entertainment is given, the expense being defrayed always as on the first night's feast. When reminded of all this useless extravagance, a poor peasant said: "'Tis only once in a lifetime, anyhow." And so the custom lives.

And if it be not harsh transition from wedding to winding sheet, one of their strange burial customs that savors of paganism, but is still interesting, is that of leaving a box of pipes and tobacco in the graves of the dead. In life the natives are certainly much given, both men and women, to consumption of tobacco, and possibly they consider this taste is not quite extinguished even in death. Another curious fact in connection with fun-

erals is explained by a strange belief still prevalent in the island. Should it ever happen that two funerals take place at the same time to the same cemetery, the friends of either dead hasten to bury their dear one first, as they imagine the last buried has to keep watch till the next arrival relieves him of duty.

A beautiful custom, one of the interesting survivals of penal days, with which the Church still privileges the island, is that of the biennial stations, when some peasant's cottage becomes for the time being the chapel of ease of the village. Some time before the great day set apart, the station is announced. The owner of the house selected makes all due preparation of house cleaning, with special lustrations to which the home may have been stranger for years.

The day at length dawns in the village, and finds men, women and children in holiday attire to receive the sacraments, and assist at Mass in the happy home that has been chosen. A blazing fire cheers the household and welcomes all the neighbors —there is no lack of fuel in Achill—and

the villagers file in until the house overflows, and kneel on the sand or stone in fasting and prayer, to the music of which Heaven listens. They kneel in turn before the priest, vested in stole and cassock, and tell their sinless sins and saintly virtues alike, not infrequently interjecting some of their neighbors' faults, too. And so they make their peace with God, and with light hearts turn to hear Mass, and to receive joyfully the Body of Christ. At the consecration the men bow down their bare heads and the women speak in native accents the beautiful prayer, "Cead mile failte a thiarna, cead mile failte."

The station is over and the peasants disperse to their homes, and for the ensuing week find topics for discussion in the events of the morning—what the priest said; what preparations were made in the house for the stations; who were there; who were asked for breakfast; how everything and everybody looked, and so on. Thus it was when the old people were young, and so it is now. Father McManus scolded Padruig Daeg, the poet, whose

rambling propensities kept him away from the station, and the roads were filled, and the houses were empty when they engaged in wordy warfare.

We mention these customs to show how these islanders lived when the ancients of to-day were boys, when their fathers lived in pastoral simplicity, and the Catholic faith poured its sunshine into their hearts. Then only Irish was spoken, and no Protestants except coast-guards could be found in the island, for "the light of divine truth had not as yet burst thereon." No policeman had yet appeared. Nor was any needed. These simple Irish people struggled manfully against the hardships of life, believed in Christ, the Catholic Church and her priests, with a faith strong as it was beautiful. But now at length their peace was to be disturbed, their simple faith was threatened, and a long fight was begun. One came to rob them of that creed that Ireland held so long against all the might of England's crown. We shall see how he fared as we proceed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COMING OF NANGLE.

"This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions; bless the accurs'd;
Make hoar leprosy ador'd; place thieves
And give them title, knee and approbation,
With senators on the bench; this is it
That makes the wappen'd widow wed again;
She whom the spital-house and ulcerous
Would cast the gorge at, this embalms and spices
To the April day again."

—Timon of Athens.

It is a fact of common experience that men sometimes find themselves in a "towering rage;" and then they think hard things and give them tongue and commit them to paper. The mildest of men sometimes have fierce thoughts, and only in fierce language can they find for them adequate expression. At such a giddy eminence however few can fulfill the requirements of the ideal man, as the ideal historian,

"Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage, without overflowing, full."

We confess ourselves in imminent danger, under the influence of the thoughts of this chapter, of being lifted up in one of those whirlwinds of passion to breathe threats and slaughter on those accountable for the troubling of one peaceful conscience in the wilds of Achill Island. With an endeavor, however, to hold ourselves in proper control, we proceed with the story.

We have stated that the peace and beautiful faith that long reigned undisturbed in the homes of these poor islanders were finally threatened—yes, in this home of poverty, this ultima thule of civilization, as it has been called, where the simple-minded peasants lived and died, if under the frown of earth, under the smile of heaven. This scene of peace was changed to a scene of war, and these abandoned, despised ones of humanity, were asked to fight against awful odds.

Achill, said the writer of the life of Nangle, "has been for half a century the great battlefield of Protestantism in the west of Ireland." The leader of the invading army and the new religion, who,

says the same author, " was destined to shake the spiritual edifice which they (the Catholic priests) had erected in the west of Ireland, to its very foundations," was Edward Nangle. At one time, "during this half a century," some thirty schools dispensed soup and Protestantism to the hungry children of sorely tried parents; the Herald says of Nangle, quoting from a letter written in Achill Island, "If ably seconded in his efforts, there is every likelihood of the whole population becoming Protestant." Such, then, with a large discount for the hyperbole of advertising rhetoric, was the situation created by the intrusion into this starving island in the stormy Atlantic Ocean of the subject of this chapter, Edward Nangle, in the year 1834.

Mr. Nangle was a native of Athboy, County Meath. His father was one of those lukewarm Catholics whose final end, according to a high authority, is to be vomited. And whether "idolatry" was included among the sins of the young Edward, over which in maturer years, we are told, he wept copiously, his biographer

seems to suggest, but does not definitely state. At any rate, he was educated for the ministry "of the pure Gospel," and in due time ordained. By some combination of circumstances, on a summer evening of 1831, we find him aboard the Nottingham, which was laden with Indian meal for the starving West, and anchored at Westport Quay. Having received an introduction to the Rev. Edward Baker Stoney, Anglican minister of Newport, and afterwards of Castlebar, and, having been well received, he made his way good to Achill Island, whither he was bound to reconnoitre with a view to future conquest. Things looked shocking to him there. His spirit was stirred within him as he saw these people "wholly given to idolatry," and he lost no time in landing his army of scripture readers, ably led by himself, described by his biographer as "the chosen vessel to hold the torch of truth to the benighted Romanists in the west of Ireland."

He received from Sir Richard O'Donnell, then as we have seen the proprietor of the island, one hundred and thirty acres of land around Sliabh More, and proceed-

ed to lay broad and deep the foundation of a proselytizing institution. It was called the Colony, or Settlement, and was situated seven miles from Achill Sound, the entrance to the island, under shelter of the highest mountain in Achill. When his mission became known and appreciated, all the militant forces of Irish Catholicism rose up in arms against him, but, by allying himself with the purchasable section of humanity, that he wisely suspected was to be found in the island, he managed to obtain a foothold at last. Nor was this weakness peculiar to starving Achill Island. We remember when less acquainted with men and more with classics, reading with indignation the saying of an old Roman: "Every man has his price." And did not he who "holds the mirror up to nature" recognize the influence and mastership of the "yellow, glittering, precious gold"? But the gold, whence did it come?

High up on the eastern slope of Sliabh More Mountain is a large white stone, which the natives call the "Star." Around this stone, from time immemorial, the

people were accustomed to pray, as Catholics do at holy wells and shrines where sojourned the saints of God. Nangle saw this, and groaned in spirit, and tore his garments. The world was told that this people still walked in darkness, worshiped a large stone for their God, never heard of the grace of Redemption, and two Papist churches were filled with the victims of degrading superstition. And now only gold was necessary "that the light of divine truth should for the first time burst on the island." The purse strings of many a credulous English Protestant loosened almost spontaneously at such an announcement and such an appeal. Streams of money poured into the island, and in a very brief space of time there sprung up at Sliabh More a small church, three commodious school rooms, an hospital, a kitchen for cooking food for a hundred children, two substantial dwelling houses for two clergymen, a steward's house and thirty thatched cottages large enough to hold twenty-five children each; and much more. In addition, a Doctor Neason Adams, who seems to have been a humane

and beautiful but deluded character, threw in his lot with the "Apostle of Achill," as Mr. Nangle has been called, and won the affections if not the souls of the sick poor. Thus was Proselytism, which is more destructive of the elevating influences of religion than anything else in the world, thoroughly equipped.

Religion, in particular the beautiful religion of the Saviour of the world, is heaven-sent, to raise our carnal spirits from earth to the home "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary rest." Who parts with religion, or his conception of it, for things earthly, is abandoned forever. He will do anything. The keystone of morality is broken, and it will never, never, hardly ever, be repaired. Pity, profoundest pity, for those hapless victims of the worst kind of slavery; but for the demoralizing system, its abettors, its promoters, who ensnare the weaklings, the little ones—well, pity, too, but eternal disgrace. This sneaking traffic whereby the poor are tempted with gold to make sham profession of one creed, and sham abjuration of another, is repugnant to every

finer instinct of humanity. We believe that the sincere profession of Protestantism is compatible with the highest evolution of human character, and this servile commerce has evoked from Anglican Protestants even in Achill Island most vehement expressions of disgust. This, at any rate, we hold to be true, that for ever and for ever, as long as the deeds of men come before the bar of human judgment, the proselytizer will be condemned as a bad man and proselytism as amongst those

"Uncouth horrors of the past
That blot the blue of heaven and shame the earth."

Are we justified in laying at the doors of the institution which inspires these thoughts, responsibility for this scarlet sin of Judas, the charge of proselytism? We shall see.

Some seven miles across the island from the Colony eastwards, in the wild, treeless, valley of Mweelin, flanked by the Minan Cliffs, are, as we've already described them, the ruins of what would seem to have been a once famous city. This was the site of the college already referred to.

HERE LIE THE REMAINS OF THE SECOND COLONY ESTABLISHED IN ACHILL ISLAND.

This colony was erected about the year 1845, for the same laudable purpose that called the mother colony of Sliabh More into being, and is described in the Herald of September, 1851, as containing: "A rectory, a handsome church, steward's house, a long row of cottages, in all eighteen families, a school having forty scholars," and "Trinity College," itself having sixty boys selected from thirty schools. For each of these cottages, twelve in number, a small plot of land was striped out of the bog and mountain, and together with the cottages, formed the prizes of perversion. When the school flourished, (at one time, as we've seen, it had as many as sixty students), these cottages were boarding houses and supplied these youths (whose appetite for learning does not appear to have been their distinguishing feature) with shelter, turnips and other delicacies, at the expense of the mission. For the details of the description we are indebted to an old graduate of the college, whose acquaintance we had the

supreme felicity of forming, in our search for antiquities. In the course of an eloquent description of his college career, which lasted some eighteen months (i. e., the college career, not the description), we managed to glean our information. The course of studies included Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and my informant added, betraying a little pardonable vanity, Geometry. The reading book was a copy of the Scriptures, and students were obliged to commit to memory those passages in which they were taught to see the condemnation of the Catholic religion. "It was a cunning work," said my old friend. "We were expected to go to church, of course, on Sundays, and so we struggled on, 'warring with our conscience.'" On asking if it were quite plain that the religion he professed to embrace was wrong, "plain," he replied, smiling at my innocence, "it was as plain as the sun in the heavens, but we were hungry. However, as times improved, and they began to say that the Pope is Antichrist, we could stand it no longer, so we left. There was a big fight between Nangle and Dallas, so

Dallas took away the students, and the school was closed." Later on, the cottagers left, too, and some of them at least returned to the Catholic faith. And today, except the church, where services are held once in a time, the whole colony, college, minister's house, and cottages, are in ruins.

What is this but a tale of proselytism? And it is the tale of many. But we are beating a dead horse. When men of this class avoid the well-to-do and the independent, and seek out such places as Dingle and Clifden and Achill Island, where poverty and famine make men an easy prey to any creed that brings food or relief, there seems little room for hesitation in deciding what is the best argument on which they rely. It seems an instinct of common sense to pronounce those who come amongst a starving and unlettered people, preaching unpopular doctrines, with their right hands filled with gifts, if not guilty, at least, to use obsolete but strong language, "vehemently suspect" of sweetening the one with the other. In 1852, moreover, when Mr. Dallas, the

founder of the Irish church missions to Roman Catholics, took over from Mr. Nangle the management of the colonies, which, worn out by anxieties and by persecution, the apostle had laid aside at last, it was found necessary to form a special committee to take charge of the temporal relief, which had hitherto been mixed up with Mr. Nangle's spiritual ministrations, the Irish church missions professing to use no such incentives. The transaction clearly implied that proselytism had been going on. The missioners convicted Nangle, nor did they free themselves, for they allowed these things to remain as before, prizes of perversion, which did not depreciate; nor were they less effective in inducing the hungry proselytes to swallow the arguments of the missioner or to receive with feigned piety the lectures of the spoon-fed Bible reader.

These considerations, as well as threats of evictions issued later to those who refused to go to church, or bribes offered to those who did go, seem to us ample proof of the statement that Dugort colony was the head and center of a system of pros-

elytism with all its inseparable iniquities. The founder and apostle of Achill may have had the best of intentions, and may have believed himself a vessel of election, for all we know. But no man of experience in the results of proselytism, whether he be Catholic or Protestant, can have any other desire than is expressed in the words: "Hide them from my aching sight." But let us see what progress he made.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROGRESS OF NANGLE.

"They only the victory win
Who have fought the good fight and have vanquished the demon that tempts us within;
Who have held to the faith unseduced by the prize that the world holds on high,
Who have dared for a good cause to suffer, to fight, and, if needs be, to die."

—Blackwood's Magazine.

It lends an interest to our narrative of religious affairs in Achill before the great

famine, to state that the repeal movement of 1843, made itself felt there, and the uncrowned king of Ireland did not disdain to lend a helping hand to vindicate the slandered innocence of the young political enthusiasts of the island. On a bright autumn evening of September, 1843, a number of young men were assembled on Keel strand, playing at politics. The great awakening of patriotic sentiment in Ireland in that year of hope and disappointment, stirred their young hearts to start a repeal meeting, or a branch of the repeal movement. One tall fellow lifted up a water rod and elected himself captain of the band. They were eleven in number. One McHugh ignorantly misinterpreting their designs, or maliciously misrepresenting them, proceeded to the Colony at Dugort and declared they had sworn to burn the Missionary Settlement, and especially Nangle's house. Nangle seized this golden opportunity of making known his perils to the charitable public. To the consternation of the villagers, the eleven repealers were arrested and lodged in Castlebar jail. Father James O'Dwyer,

then parish priest of the island, saw to their defense, and O'Connell supplied money to the same purpose. In the summer of 1844 they were acquitted. McHugh was then arraigned for perjury, and was tried and convicted at the summer assizes at Castlebar in 1846. He was, however, recommended for mercy and received three months' imprisonment. Such was Achill's share in the repeal movement that ended so disastrously for Ireland. The incident brought Mr. Nangle before the public, nor was he slow to take advantage of his opportunity. But we are anticipating a good deal.

After some initial troubles Mr. Nangle succeeded in building himself and his adventurers snug quarters at Sliabh More, and with money flowing free the outlook for the new doctrines was rosy. Mr. Nangle, though according to his biographer having to face a population of pagans, or, worse still, of Papists, had a decided advantage over the pioneers of Christianity, who were told by the Master: "Do not possess gold nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor

two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff, for the workman is worthy of his meat." The converts were not burdened with the support of the missioner, or of any of his retainers. On the contrary, he had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, medicine for the sick, and could with singular appropriateness tell his followers: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all other things will follow."

In the third number of the Achill Herald, dated September 20th, 1837, is a letter reprinted from the Freeman's Journal, which, written by Father Connolly, parish priest of the island, gives the results of three years of Nangle's work. According to this letter, the writer calculated that twelve, or fourteen thousand pounds had been received into Nangle's treasury within a few years in response to circulars and placards scattered broadcast throughout the kingdom, one of which at Port Stewart is said to have described the Nangle missionary field thus: "There are one hundred and ninety-eight Achill Islands, inhabited by fifteen thousand

souls, who never heard of the glorious Redeemer and who worship a large stone for their god." The missionary returns of this investment were the purchase of twelve adults and twenty-three children, a total of forty-five out of a hungering population of five thousand. 'Tis true, four schools had been opened in 1835, at Dugort, Sliabh More, Keel and Cashel, which at one time had been attended by three hundred and seventy-six children, "being," in the words of the letter referred to, "induced by promises of clothes and porridge, when nakedness and hunger and unparalleled poverty shook the resolutions of many." When Father Connolly wrote two of the schools had been closed, and the number of children had been reduced to twenty-three, as already stated.

In Nangle's comments on the letter, he does not impugn the substantial accuracy of the figures, although he said the number of children was greater than was represented. He denies absolutely that the Port Stewart placard told such an exaggerated tale, and disclaimed all responsibility for it. Dr. John McHale, however, in a pub-

lic letter, referred to this calumnious description of Achill Island and its inhabitants as supplied by the missioners, and we believe he had reasonable grounds for doing so. While admitting, however, that he was losing ground owing to the influence of the priest, and that the children were falling off, Mr. Nangle fires a parting shot, by saying, "before entering his schools they were as ignorant and as uncivilized as the untutored savages of Central Africa, and now the flourishing plant of Christian education was blighted by the blast of antichristian influence."

In this interesting letter Father Connolly tells us that since his advent to the parish some two years previous, only two old men fell sick at the Colony, and in the heart of the mission at a time when their sincerity could not be questioned, they sent for the priest and were received into the Church once more. About this time there came to the Colony an old lady named Brigid, who had such a retentive memory that she learned practically the whole Bible by heart, and showed herself so exemplary a convert that she received

from the "Apostle" himself the name of "Brigid, the Angel." Brigid at length fell sick at the Colony, and to the great scandal of the brethren sent for the priest. The Colonists held a council of war on the approach of the priest; and after a clash of arguments on both sides, the peace party prevailed and the priest was admitted and Brigid received the last rites of the Catholic Church. She was now a fallen angel, but there was still some hope of redemption in starving her into penitence. The Catholics came to hear of her plight, and Toney Patten was commissioned to the rescue. Accompanied by a servant, with his father's horse caparisoned in straddle and cleeves, he proceeded in fear and trembling to the enemy's camp, bundled up the patient in one of the cleeves, balancing the machine by placing her weight in stones in the other, and carried her off in triumph. She recovered from her illness, but never returned to the Colony. Such is a glimpse of the first years of Nangle's labors in Achill Island.

The great Dr. McHale had been appointed Archbishop of Tuam the year af-

ter Nangle started his mission in Achill. His voice echoed throughout Ireland during his long and useful life, stretching almost over the nineteenth century. His memory is a benediction to hundreds who still remember him in Ireland and in America, for, in the words of the poet:

> His memory long will live alone
> In all our hearts, as mournful light
> That broods about the fallen sun,
> And dwells in Heaven half the night.

The Lion of the Fold lost no time in giving the encouragement of his magic presence to the priests and people of Achill Island. He was consecrated in 1834, and in September of the next year he visited Achill. His coming was the signal for scattering pamphlets and issuing challenges by Nangle. As we should expect, the great Archbishop, treating these things with contempt, contented himself with warning his lambs and his sheep against those who would rob them of their peace on earth, and their hopes in heaven. During the fifty years of fight,

his advice, his public letters, his money, did much to decide the issue.

Some eight or nine years passed away, when Mr. and Mrs. Hall paid a visit to Achill Island in July, 1842. These popular Irish writers describe in "Ireland, Its Scenery and Character," what they saw in Achill, to which they had come for the very purpose of seeing for themselves the work of charity and evangelization that was being done by Mr. Nangle, and of which so much had been said and so much doubt existed in the public mind. As we regard their verdict as unimpeachable, Protestants as they were, without having any motive for lying, we shall give their testimony in their own words for the glory of those soldiers of the faith to whom they bear witness. After having reviewed the work superintended by "the Apostle of Achill," and examined what they call "the confused document" of a report of the Colony, the writers referred to make themselves responsible for the following statement: "We consider every conscientious accession to the Protestant faith as a contribution in aid of

the well-being of the state and the prosperity of Ireland more especially; but such experiments as that in Achill will be made in vain. We have shown that here it is a complete failure." And, going on to explain the cause of this failure, they proceed to say in words that for the sake of Achill Island, should never be forgotten in heaven or on earth: "It was impossible," they say, "not to appreciate the magnanimity of the poor, miserable, utterly destitute and absolutely starving inhabitants of Achill, who were at the time of our visit enduring privations at which humanity shudders—and to know that by walking a couple of miles and professing to change their religion, they would have been instantly supplied with clothes, food and lodging. Yet these hungry thousands —for it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that in the month of July last nine-tenths of the population of the island were entirely without food—preferred patiently to endure their sufferings than submit to what they considered a degradation. Such fortitude we do believe to be without parallel in the history of any ignorant and

unenlightened people since the creation of the world." Such is the eloquent testimony of those impartial writers who came to find out for themselves the state of the case. And who can point to more glorious achievements anywhere on earth than they witnessed in Achill?

Further, to show, perhaps in a stronger light, the unwavering constancy of those trusty soldiers of the faith, let us make a revelation, but tell it not in Gath.

Everyone who is acquainted with Ireland, knows how the Irish Catholic loves and honors the priest. He cannot easily admit evil of him. All the world may sin, but the priest—impossible; and, least of all abandon the faith. To the Colony in those days before the famine came some few fallen priests. There was a blowing of trumpets. It was expected that the poor, starving people should have no scruple about doing what priests had done, and a large secession from the Catholic fold was confidently anticipated in the island. A subscription list was opened up in the Achill Herald to erect a Priests' Asylum at Dugort. Two years of study was re-

quired to purge their minds of papacy and superstition, ere they were permitted to preach the pure gospel, and hence the necessity for the asylum. Having regard to the signification of the word in Ireland, the name of the institution was not inappropriate. Some of the natives informed us that it was no unusual thing to see one of these unfortunates wandering over hills and valleys weeping, hiding his head for shame.

A pathetic story is told of one such priest who sought refuge amongst the proselytizers in Connemara at this time. He had been suspended and went over to the Reformers, renouncing his priestly faith. One day, as he was traveling along the road, he saw a poor man die of hunger by the wayside. No priest was at hand, and although he had declared all priests impostors and their attempt to forgive sin blasphemy, he knelt by the dying man and wept while he gave him absolution.

We proudly state the example of these few priests in Achill Island had absolutely no effect in the direction anticipated.

These people saw cedars fall and still stood erect; and this decade or more of their history before the famine, closes with those memorable words ringing musically in our ears: "Such fortitude we do believe to be without parallel in the history of any ignorant and unenlightened country since the creation of the world."

CHAPTER XI.

THE FAMINE YEARS.

Could singing voice or echoing chord
To every hidden pang be given,
What endless melodies were poured,
As sad as earth, as sweet as heaven!
—O. W. Holmes.

The great famine of Black '47 struck a blow on Ireland, by this time recovering from the wounds and bruises of centuries of oppression, from which she staggers still. In 1845 there were eight millions of people in Ireland, today almost half that number has dwindled away and the popu-

lation is still vanishing. The country was, during the famine years, one huge hospital for the dying, or a charnel-house of the dead. There were in a few years 729,033 deaths. "More," said John Bright, "than ever fell by the sword in any war England ever waged." Had O'Connell, "the uncrowned king of Ireland," in the full tide of his glory and power in October, 1843, launched the thunderbolt of war against England, the result could not have been more disastrous than that which followed from what appears to have been the culpable negligence of the English government in Ireland during the years of famine. Speaking of what might have happened had O'Connell insisted on holding the Clontarf meeting on the 5th of October, 1843, despite the proclamation of the government, and ordered an attack on Dublin Castle, John Mitchell declares "It were well for his fame if he had; and the deaths of five or ten thousand that day might have saved Ireland the slaughter by famine of a hundred times as many." Instead of this bold course, however, O'Connell sounded the

signal of retreat. Expectant Ireland, ready for the word to advance, was bitterly disappointed. O'Connell ceased to be the idol of the people. The ardor that inspired the exulting thousands of the monster meetings throughout Ireland was extinguished, and the repeal movement was no more. Whether O'Connell yielded to the counsels of fear or prudence, John Mitchell declared him, "After the English government, the greatest enemy Ireland ever had." But he was hardly a coward. Some influential Englishman was reported as saying in the incipient stages of the famine, when the potato crop was destroyed, that if potatoes failed, there was no lack of grass or weeds in the field. "I will go," said O'Connell, "I will go to England and see if these sentiments are general, and should I find this to be the case, I hesitate not to say 'tis Ireland's duty to die in arms." He died on the 15th of May, 1847, and the news of his death found the country for which he fought so long, helpless and famine-stricken.

The Young Ireland party, founded in 1842, which had been for some time under-

mining O'Connell's influence, and which drew together a bright band of young literary patriots that we imagine only Ireland could produce, united with Old Irelanders in calling England's attention to their dying nation and the means of saving her. "Ireland," said one of them, "exported corn, barley, oats and cattle in far greater quantities than would have sufficed to save the people." Passionately, menacingly, these youthful lovers of Ireland pointed out England's duty to close the ports:

> They who hungered where it grew—
> They whom Heaven had sent it to—
> They who reaped with sweat of brow,
> They or none should have it now.

So wrote Judge O'Hagan. The rebel party of Young Ireland clamored for war. Mitchell was at their head. They separated from their brethren and rose in a rebellion which ended in smoke. The constitutionalists amongst them struggled on a little longer, but were soon scattered far and wide. Far away in Thibodeaux, Louisiana, Richard Dalton Williams

found an early grave, and swan-like sang the song of their failure:

> I fade away to my home of clay,
> Without one dream fulfilled;
> My wreathless brow in the dust I bow,
> My heart and my harp are stilled.

They failed somehow to rescue Ireland. And, as she was now bleeding to death, proselytism began to flourish. Hyena-like, the "soupers" stalked abroad to do their uncanny trade. They were confident now of robbing Ireland of that ancient faith, her ready espousal of and struggles for, which lifted her above the commonplace of the nations, and hold her still there. New hope revived the now moribund settlement in Achill Island, and Nangle girded his loins to extinguish Popery forever in Ireland's largest island, and to erect in its ruins the stronghold of Irish Protestantism.

Many of my friends, the ancients, remember with a shudder the scenes of those dreadful years in Achill Island. At that time, as we have seen, the islanders were absolutely dependent on the bogs and

the sea for sustenance, and had no security, as is now derived from migratory labor, from the pinch of periodical famine. The early advent of the blight here, as elsewhere in Ireland, foreshadowed terrible things. In due time terrible things came to pass, when, as an old man told us, —the same who spoke of Keem altar— "The people died like midges." Two thousand of the islanders were swept away during the famine. Along the roads, in sand banks by the lone sea, at Dooagh, Sraheens, Glashilaun, the unconsecrated graves of these hapless victims of hunger and disease, are still pointed out by the aged and decrepit figures that survived to tell the tale. They were happy, if they could give anywhere to their coffinless dead a scanty tomb. Ravening dogs, strong with the strength of hunger, scoured the island, and men were powerless to frighten them away. People grew insensible to the claims of kindred. Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, died and were buried, when burial was possible, where they fell. The remnant of the family circle sat motionless, speechless, tear-

less around their fires, and waited calmly for the next to die. So the old people say. Funerals were no longer held, only those who dug the grave assisting as a rule. They ate grass, weeds, or anything. "The distress," says the Achill Herald of February, 1847, "in some of the villages is so great that people are endeavoring to maintain themselves on limpets which they gather on the rocks, or boiled seaweed."

Public works were started, but men at length were unable to work. Public charity, committee meal, as it was called, was distributed at Achill Sound. To this point, from all parts of the island, men and women flocked for their seven pounds of meal, and around large fires listened for the creak of the wagons that carried the meal from Newport and Westport. There are those still living who saw scores die in the ditches, waiting for their turn to be fed. We read in the Herald of March, 1848, that "a poor woman, returning from the Sound with her rations of meal for herself and children, died, and the meal was taken away." The nearest Work-

house, at Westport was thirty miles away, and was built to accommodate a thousand people. In one day, we are told, three thousand applied for admission there. The Irish poor are well known to seek shelter in the Poor House only as the last resource. But the pangs of hunger overcame the pangs of proud repugnance, and the Workhouses were filled. The proselytizer found his field of labor amongst those whom the Workhouse disgorged, and Nangle claimed it all to himself. "We would," says the Herald of February, 1847, "earnestly impress upon the friends of the suffering poor in Ireland the necessity of keeping any money intended for their relief out of the hands of the Romish priests. The best means of doing this is to make the Protestant clergy the dispensers of their bounty."

A network of soup schools was now cast over the Island of Achill. Dugort and Mweelin Colonies were at full blast, whither many certainly went for a time to keep body and soul together. It would be incredible to say that all saw food, and all should die of starvation.

"Father," said an old man who is now dead, "we were fasting for three days, hungry going to bed and hungry getting out of it, and we could only go and die by the hedges. The school was by our doors, and we went and were fed. The Protestant bishop came one day. We did not know what he was doing, but I believe he confirmed us." Figures are grossly exaggerated and cannot be trusted as to the numbers who went over temporarily. Nangle referred to them in the following thanksgiving: "We are thankful to say that a gracious movement of God's Holy Spirit on the hearts of the people seems to accompany the heavy calamity with which he has visited them." "The Achill Colony," says the Tablet, "has been doing a brisk and prosperous trade, particularly since the famine began to rage in the west of Ireland." The Nation of November 29th, 1852, speaking of this class of missioners in general, asks: "Shall the soupers and text-distributers accomplish the work which all the force of England for three hundred years has been unable to effect?" The poor were suffering from

moral paralysis under this awful calamity wherever the proselytizers prospered, and no reasonable man would hold them accountable for what they did under the dictation of hunger, at least to the fullest extent. About this time, a certain man outside Achill Island saw his children about to starve to death, nor had he anything to give them. A minister lived close by, who fed all who came to his church. This poor fellow entered the Catholic church one day, threw himself on his knees before the altar, and besought the Great Legislator to give him one fortnight's leave to go to the minister's church, that thus, until the potatoes grew, he might save his children from starvation. Such was the nature of "conversions" in Achill Island, which the Tablet described as "murdering souls," whereby a fragment of a starving people, beautiful in their simplicity, and till then strong in the ancient faith, were starved into hypocrisy and infidelity, and Heaven thanked for the work of degradation.

'Tis true, Nangle saved the lives of many children and many families, and for this we gladly give him credit, nor have we any

doubt that many were assisted unconditionally. "During the famine of '45, '46 and '47," says Hall's Ireland, from which we have already quoted, "there can be no denial of the fact that the Mission did much to alleviate the sufferings of the peasantry of Achill. * * * And if not so successful as they could wish in securing the spiritual welfare of their neighbors, they may at least congratulate themselves in having materially improved their temporal condition." All this admitted, the general scheme of the Colonists remained unaltered, and while alleviating the sorrows of earth, they did so only at a sacrifice of the dearest principles of those whom they relieved. In May, 1847, a visitor to Achill Island is quoted by the Achill Herald of that month as having written under his name in the visitors' book at the hotel in the Colony, the following pertinent note: "I am astonished that English generosity could require the ignorant people to abandon the principles in which they were brought up and the creed which they understand, for food." But enough of that. Lest false impressions be created,

and we do wrong to the deathless dead who yielded up their lives for the purity of the faith, or who preserved themselves "clean" as the natives describe it, and managed to live, 'tis an indubitable fact that many died rather than live in dishonor, and many suffered hardships untold rather than seek relief by compromising religion. To omit others let us pause to tell one family history, and leave the reader to his own reflections.

Every Sunday morning along the wild mountain road of Corraune, a septuagenarian is seen trudging four miles to Belfarsad church to Mass. She has charge of the sacristy there, to which she has given twenty years of faithful service. This interesting survival of famine years is one of a family of eight persons. Her father during the bad times worked on the public road at Kildownett, and earned enough to keep his family and himself from starving. He was taken sick. His earnings were discontinued. His children had nothing to eat. The soup school was near, and he was urged to send the children there. He refused, and the children fell

sick, too. The teacher then came and asked him to put their names on the list, and they should be fed. He still held out, and his robust Irish faith allowed four sons and three daughters to go down to an early grave in a few weeks rather than sully for a moment the beauty of his Catholic faith. The old sacristan managed to live, and a faith that saints might envy regulates her every thought and brightens her solitary life. Sometime ago the school teacher trained some children to sing hymns in the church, where Biddy, as she is called, almost officiates. To the surprise of the congregation and Biddy, the children's voices rang out one day during Mass. The priest having asked Biddy afterwards what she thought of the singing, "Oh," she says, bursting into tears, "I was crying when I heard it, thinking of the Blessed Virgin and the Angels," and she wept like a child as she spoke. Nor is she one of your sickly pietists. During the investigations prescribed for old age pensioners the sacristan, being well qualified by age, but for a brief period having been in receipt of outdoor relief which barred

her claim, the following incident took place. The pension officer and the doctor were in consultation, and some friends came along to have Biddy's claim supported by saying in her hearing that the relief she obtained was merely medical assistance. Biddy scorned to support her claim by a lie and indignantly blubbered out: "I never took any medicine in my life." Such is some of the gold dust of character famine and proselytism discovered in Achill Island.

CHAPTER XII.

TIT BITS FROM THE ACHILL HERALD.

When, in ages dreary,
Nangle, bold apostle, came
To refresh the sick and weary,
Waste and darkness to reclaim.
—Knapp.

We have referred to the Achill Herald, started in 1837, and printed and published

in Achill Island as the organ of the new movement. The journal was intended not so much for "the untutored savages," as it was pleased to describe the islanders, but rather as an advertising agency for the editor-in-chief, Mr. Nangle, wherein he exercised his ability to throw light on public questions of the day, and on his own lofty mission, being "the chosen vessel to hold aloft the torch of truth for the benighted Romanists on the western coast of Ireland." If only to show what manner of man he was, we shall give a few specimens of his deliberate utterances from the forgotten pages of his journal.

The Papacy and the priesthood seemed to have loomed up before him as a horrible spectre, a hobble goblin, which he was chosen by Heaven to slay, and the thought of which destroyed in him all chances of a balanced judgment. "The Pope," he said, in April, 1847, "and nobody else, is the man of sin." And in September of the same year, speaking of the Babylon denounced by St. John, he has no doubt that he is referring to Rome as dominated by the Papacy, and declares his opinion in

no weak terms. "There is," he says, "no proposition for the truth of which we rely on the testimony of the Scripture that we can assert with more thorough confidence than this." In January, 1848, he draws this practical conclusion: "Popery is the root of bitterness in our land; and those who are anxious to promote the temporal as well as the eternal welfare of Ireland, should lend a helping hand to those who are laboring to eradicate that poisonous plant from the soil of Ireland." His advice was not always followed.

In 1845, the Government, to his inexpressible horror, actually increased the grant to Maynooth College, the nursery of the Irish priesthood. Since the establishment of the College, in 1795, the Engglish Government gave an annual grant of from eight to nine thousand pounds. The government selected the lesser of two evils, a Catholic priesthood from France, at this time hostile to England, or one trained under the vigilance of the government at Maynooth. Hence the annual grant to the College. In 1845 Sir Robert Peel and his government were liberal-

minded enough to accede to the rightful demands of the situation by augmenting the annual grant to £26,360, which in 1871 was converted into a bulk sum of £369,040, equivalent to fourteen years' purchase. The government relinquished all claims of interference in the management of the College, which, however, was liable to inspection by government visitors. Since then the College has been independent, and has grown in years and grace and wisdom.

Poor Nangle's impotent rage knew no bounds at this national apostasy. Was not the government lending its powerful arm to the perpetuation of the Papacy in Ireland? "Retribution," Nangle declared, "must sooner or later come." And in March, 1848, when all the horrors of the famine and fever and revolution fixed the attention of the world on Ireland, Nangle, in a leader, "Britain's Sin and Judgment," triumphantly pointed to all this as the fulfillment of his prediction and the visible chastisement on the nation of an offended Providence. Again, as late as 1852, when a poor Bible reader, a min-

View of the Colony and Sliabh More Mountain, Achill Island.

ion of his own, was waylaid in Achill Island, he had no difficulty in tracing the deed to the doer, and exclaimed thus: "Such is the Maynooth theology, for the teaching of which funds are drawn from the national treasury. How long will England tolerate the abomination?" So far for Nangle and the Papacy. Nor can it be denied that even in the twentieth century there are many outside Orange Ulster whose most fervent prayer is voiced in those charitable words, "To Hell with the Pope." Their number, however, is growing less, and probably the world will one day grow calm enough to look with a kindly smile on the strange man of peace imprisoned in the Vatican, whose kingdom is not of this world, and whose power touches not the prerogatives of kings. But let us return to the Herald.

Nothing is more interesting than the dusty pages of an old newspaper. That which fifty days old we trample under foot without remorse becomes in fifty years a treasure that grows in value with age. The very advertisements tell their tale and become topics of absorbing inter-

est. Here are a few specimens from the Herald. One deals with the Herald itself. Here it is:

ACHILL.

Printed and published by Michael Daly for the proprietor, at the Missionary Settlement, Dugort, Island of Achill, County Mayo. Subscription—Five shillings per annum, paid in advance—to be forwarded by postoffice order on the postmaster, Newport, Mayo, postpaid, with the name and address of the subscriber (legibly written) directed to the publisher of the Achill Herald, Isle of Achill, County Mayo. Thursday, October 31st, 1844.

Another quotation from the same number runs thus:

ACHILL PRIESTS' ASYLUM.

Contributions towards the erection and support of a House at the Missionary Settlement, Achill, for the temporary accommodation of Roman Catholic priests, who have renounced the errors of Popery, and are studying for the ministry in the Established Church, will be thankfully received by Rev. Edward Nangle, or Neason Adams, Esq., M. D., Dugort, Achill.

The house referred to, so suitably named, does not appear to have ever been erected, although some few unfortunates qualified for admission, and a list of subscriptions was published by the Herald, ranging from five shillings to five pounds.

In the Herald of February 20, 1838, we are informed that the Catholic priest made a collection of potatoes at Dugort amongst the poor people, and his action evoked an indignant protest from the editor. In February, 1847, urged by the same praiseworthy tenderness for the poor, we suppose, Nangle issued this significant warning to the charitable public: "We would earnestly impress upon the friends of the suffering poor in Ireland the necessity of keeping any money intended for their relief out of the hands of the Romish priests. The most effectual way of doing this is, to make the Protestant clergy dispensers of their bounty." We don't know whether the warning was heeded.

In all the moves of Catholic Irishmen he saw sinister designs. Anything that tended towards the perpetuation of the

alliance formed long ago between Catholicity and Irish nationality was distasteful to him. The great Apostle of Temperance, Father Mathew, who preached at Westport the 20th of June, 1840, comes in for an unfavorable notice. Nor did O'Connell himself, the uncrowned king of Ireland, escape censure. In a leader of June, 1847, one can read beneath the surface a suppressed Te Deum of exultation on the once great leader's death. "Far be it from us," he says, "to exult over a fallen foe who has been hurled from that bad eminence to which he climbed with so much toil and crime." These quotations are promiscuously selected, and might be further multiplied without throwing any additional light on the portrait of Edward Nangle; so we close.

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER THE FAMINE.

But these are deeds which should not pass away,
And names that must not wither, though the earth
Forgets her empires with a just decay,
The enslavers and the enslaved, their death and birth;
The high, the mountain majesty of worth,
Should be and shall, survivor of its woe,
And from its immortality look forth
In the sun's face, like yonder Alpine snow,
Imperishably pure beyond all things below.

—Byron.

The famine, as we have seen, found the Achill colony in a moribund state. A few years before, it is true, the priests' asylum was talked about, but we have no evidence that it appeared above ground. Mweelin Training School, too, had been erected in 1845. Nevertheless, the future of Nangleism doesn't seem to have been

bright at that time. Very soon, however, under the awful scourge of a famine, the number of the pupils increased in the Nangle schools. A church was erected at Achill Sound in 1849, and somebody wrote, "There was every likelihood of the whole island becoming Protestant." Mr. Nangle, however, had foresight enough to see that the reign of famine must come to an end, that it was merely a temporary visitant, however valuable to his purposes. He therefore cast about for other auxiliaries.

About this time, in 1849, the Encumbered Estates Court had been created for the relief of indigent landlords, and Sir Richard O'Donnell was obliged to avail himself of its services, and unburden himself of his embarrassments in Achill Island. The Committee of the Achill Mission saw in this a valuable investment for the spoils of the famine, whereby the colony might be permanently endowed, and the powerful lever of landlordism be placed in the hands of the proselytisers. In those days landlords could evict with impunity, the peasant had no tenure but a tyrant's will, and a decree of eviction

meant a sentence of death. Accordingly, negotiations were completed, and the Herald of 1851 makes the following modest announcement: "The trustees of the Achill Purchase Fund beg leave to inform those kind friends who contributed to it, that the private contract into which they had entered with Sir Richard O'Donnell for the purchase of the Achill Estate, received the formal sanction of the Encumbered Estates Commissioners on the first of the month. The price which they have agreed to pay for the estate is £17,500 ($87,500), and they have lodged that sum in the funds to the credit of the Commissioners. There will be some expense attending the conveying of the property, but the liberality of the friends of the Mission have supplied them with enough to meet it. Three English gentlemen have contributed £7,000 ($35,000) of the above sum, and a portion of the land proportionate to the sum contributed by them, will be conveyed to them, which will leave three-fifths of the estate to the Mission." Referring to the above transaction, an Achill correspondent of the

Freeman, quoted in the Herald of August, 1852, writes: "One arch seducer and a company of Saxon bigots have lately purchased extensive tracts of the lands and mountains of this parish; and hence, as landlords, they wield a powerful engine of annoyance against the poor tenants. Threats of persecution of every description and of wholesale extermination are uttered against them unless they barter what is dearer to them than life, their souls and their conscience, and those of their children. But, notwithstanding all this, the people of Achill are firm as a rock in the ancient faith." Such were the efforts made by the proselytiser to maintain the influence the famine had given him over some of the Achill people, when the famine itself had disappeared. The proselytisers became landlords in the island, when to be landlord was almost to be omnipotent; and, notwithstanding the number of beneficent land bills passed since then, which tend to make the peasant owner of the land he tills, they still cumber the ground.

About the same time Dr. McHale,

ever watchful, purchased part of the estate owned by a Catholic family of the MacLaughlins within the island, which included Tonton Valley and Bunnacurry, the Archbishop getting possession of Bunnacurry. The Corraune estate, also once owned by the MacLaughlins, and now in the hands of the Dickens family, went at the same time to Mr. MacCormac. Dr. McHale was thus enabled to establish the Franciscan Brothers in Achill island. Their first establishment was "on the road which leads to the Protestant colony at Dugort, commanding a beautiful range of sea and mountain scenery." They were unable, however, to hold out there, and they finally settled down in a more sheltered site, where they still remain, at Bunnacurry. They converted the wild bogs and mountain sides into smiling fields, in addition to teaching Dr. McHale's Irish Catechism to the peasants, who can even now perfectly remember it. Although the members of the order have not yet outlived their usefulness, it would not detract from the higher purpose of the institution to incorporate into their

programme some scheme of technical education, and help to equip this needy and handicapped people for the race of existence.

The building of the monastery was signalized by a great battle, which, like the night of the Big Wind, is a landmark in the memories of the people. It is called the Battle of the Stones. It serves to show that in 1852, when the monastery was founded, the fighting spirit which lay dormant during the famine years, had revived and was carrying all before it. Father Michael Gallagher, a native and a parish priest of the island, had been evicted from his house at Cashel by the Mission landlords, who now owned that village. The stones of his own and some dilapidated old houses around were being carried towards the monastery, which was then in course of erection. One night a contingent from Dugort Colony assembled in force and despite the resistance of a few laborers around, had the stones removed and carried back to the Mission territory once again. Cashel men, dreading the landlord's vengeance, were intimidated into

neutrality. Soon the news spread through the island, and far beyond it. On an appointed day, men, women and children assembled from all parts of the island determined to fight if necessary for possession of the stones. Corraune, especially, having a Catholic landlord, Mr. MacCormac, furnished a little army of eighty or ninety able-bodied men, headed by a Mr. Ryan, an associate of the landlord; and this formidable phalanx of stalwart men struck terror into the enemy. Police were summoned to the scene of war from a distance of thirty miles. Sir Richard O'Donnell, himself, was there too. The Protestant party were frightened. The police threatened resistance should the Catholics attempt to remove the sones. For a time, their threats had effect. Catholics, however, grew gradually bolder. Their numbers were great, their enthusiasm was greater. One of them, braver than the rest, at length seized a large stone, and immediately every Catholic man, woman and child followed his example, and before many minutes the stones were all carried once more towards the monastery, to the

McHale property, neither police nor Protestant daring to resist. Another example of the same healthy revival of normal temperament was shown by a woman one day about this time, who shoved into an open grave in the Catholic cemetery a Protestant minister, who attempted to read burial services over a penitent renegade.

Notwithstanding the accession of power landlordism secured to proselytism, its influence began to wane since the departure of the famine which marked the zenith of its power. The first evidence given of the Colony's failure was the departure of Mr. Nangle from Achill in the spring of 1852. His retirement is thus described by Captain Dallas, who now undertook the superintendence of the missionary work which the Apostle laid down: "After so many years of anxiety and of continual opposition from the priests around him, Mr. Nangle's health had become unequal to the exertions by which this important mission had been planted and nurtured, and on which the blessing of God had so graciously descended." After Mr. Nangle's departure from the island, his biographer

tells us, speaking of the Church Mission of which Captain Dallas was the president and founder: "The Society then took over the maintenance and superintendence of the whole missionary agency, including the clergymen, Scripture readers and school teachers, and the entire support of the Mweelin Training School." One department, however, the Irish Church Mission was unable to take over. In their spiritual administration the Irish Church Mission professed to give no temporal relief to their converts, and as Mr. Nangle had always acted otherwise, another committee, called the Temporal Relief Committee, took charge of the prizes of perversion which they still continued to give as before. Captain Dallas, however, was unable to hold out for a longer period than two years. The game was played out. The disappearance of the famine and the consequent falling off of charities, as well as the need for them, brought the Catholic and Protestant combatants to more equal terms; and the advent of a young priest to the parish, Father James Henry, hastened the end.

Father Henry took up the work with the zeal of a saint and the soul of a hero. Taking with him representatives from every village, he visited all the parents concerned, and exacted a promise for the immediate withdrawal of the children from soup schools, and followed up his success by visiting the schools themselves, and it may be, chasing the children away. He proved himself in many respects a second Father O'Flynn:

> Checking the crazy ones,
> Coaxing uneasy ones,
> Lifting the lazy ones
> On with a stick.

He is credited with having broken the power of proselytism in Achill, and also built Belfarsad church in 1858, as well as the parochial residence at Bunnacurry.

The Herald of June, 1853, quotes from a letter of Father Henry's, in the course of which he says that no less than nine proselytising schools had been closed in the island during the previous eight months, and four teachers had been received into the Catholic Church, one of

whom "declared before the congregation at the parish church, that while in the jumpers' pay he always cautioned the children under his charge against his interpretation of the Scriptures as being, to use his own language, 'false and damnable.'" "To a superficial observer," says Nangle's biographer, "in the year 1858, it may have appeared likely that the number in attendance at the various Protestant services being very considerably diminished, sinister influences were at work; and that possibly a process of disintegration like that which in the material world wears away the largest rocks, had commenced." In such euphuistic language did the famine-aided wealth of unscrupulous proselytism make tardy confession of its defeat by the ragged, starving Catholics in the barren mountains of Achill Island.

It can never be calculated what countless sums of money were poured into the coffers of the Dugort treasury. In Nangle's paper, the Achill Herald, and elsewhere, English Protestants were informed that there were in Achill thousands of human

beings, victims of the most degrading superstition, who could be easily redeemed. These, being only too eager to strike a blow at Catholicity, were gulled into the belief that here was the chance of building up a tower of strength to Irish Protestantism. The proselytisers came to a people "absolutely starving" and "utterly destitute." They had been there when famine was in the island, when thousands died in ditches, "howling for bread." Nevertheless, by a heroic display of that long-tried Irish faith, which for three hundred years against all the might of England's crown preserved the name of Catholic to Ireland, they were beaten. One of their colonies is a heap of ruins, another is inhabited by men of strange names not elsewhere found in the island, for the islanders held aloof. It is a fitting monument to Nangle's failure, and to the triumph of these Catholic poor who refused to follow him.

Gradually, but steadily, his apparent converts declared their real and ancient convictions, and returned to the faith, while Protestant services and Protestant schools were abandoned. Less than ten

native families remained permanently in Nangle's camp. Many having fled across the sea, were baptized or received into the Church by Catholic priests in America. For years after the famine, old men and women, so-called Protestants, sent a dying message for the priest. Only a few weeks ago the last return was registered. An old man of ninety-four years of age, who had been during the greater part of his life a jumper, sent word for the Catholic priest, and laid his troubles to rest forever, dying a few hours afterwards. Why did he remain away so long?

Sometime ago his friends invited the priest to call on him. He had openly declared his intention of having the priest by his dying bed, and the priest gladly accepted the invitation. He was a tall, gaunt old man, and his venerable age, if nothing else, commanded the respectful interest of his visitor, whom, in presence of many persons, he welcomed, and with whom he conversed very freely on many topics, saying among other things that he intended to have him by him when he died. "Why wait till then?" the priest

asked. "Why," he said, "what can you do for me? Can you forgive sins? Did you not read the Bible which says, 'Who can forgive sins but God?'" He spoke with evident conviction, and the priest was touched with pity to see how this poor, unlettered peasant had been fooled. These words spoken by the enemies of Christ against Christ Himself, had been stuffed into his mind as the approved words of God, and he was unable to get their real meaning from the context. The priest tried to tell him all this. He seemed to reflect, but the false interpretation had found a place in his mind, and could not be easily dislodged. "Well," at length the priest said, "if I can do you no good now, what is the reason of your confidence in me when you are about to die?" "Well," he said, "what does Scripture say: 'Is anyone sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church.'" Such was the effect of proselytism on this poor man's mind. His case was pitiful in the extreme. He ended well, however, for he called in the priest at last, and, dying very

soon afterwards, we have no doubt he "blundered into Paradise."

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE ACHILL PROBLEM."

"And wherefore do the poor complain?"
The rich man asked of me.
"Come, walk abroad with me," I said,
"And I will answer thee."

—Southey.

According to statistics furnished by the Department of Agriculture, Ireland, the total area of the Island of Achill is 35,975 acres. Of this area, however, 31,496 acres consist of woods, of which there is very little, bogs, marshes, mountains and water, leaving 4,479 acres of poor soil to sustain 5,000 inhabitants. The parish of Achill, which has a population of 7,000 souls, embraces, in addition to the island, a considerable portion of the mainland—Pulranny, Tonragee and Corraune—whereas in the island itself, the average standard of liv-

ing ranges at different times from existence to starvation.

Having regard to the hungry thousands, who inhabit the hills and valleys of this storm-swept island, the question of how they manage to exist must puzzle the observer who stands on any vantage point in the parish. Far as the eye can reach are to be seen vast tracts of undrained bog land, with hardly a patch of green to light up the dreary wastes around him. Mountains of savage grandeur there are in abundance,

> "On whose barren breast
> The laboring clouds do often rest."

Not a sheltering tree in the horizon. True, there is, as has already been observed, embedded in bogs and mountains every side one turns, the roots of trees, the only remnant of the forests that once feathered the now bare and bleak mountains and valleys in the island.

Here, then, in those valleys by the great Atlantic, sheltered by the mountains, in twenty or thirty congested villages, those Irish Catholics live. Day and night they

hear "the moaning of the homeless sea." The storms sweep those hills from whose summits the rains rush down with little warning, and in the moist moor and mountain lands of which the island consists, under such a climate, the fruits of the earth are scant indeed. Agriculture is a risk, if not an impossibility. The peasants may cultivate their farms to the exact requirements of agricultural science, and in the words of a native: "One blast from the Northeast withers up in a moment a promising crop, the fruit of months of toil." Nor are there any industries to fall back upon.

Equally unsatisfactory is the harvest of the sea. The fishermen are badly equipped to do battle with the waves. The Congested Districts Board supplied by means of a loan seven large fishing boats to some of the Achill fishermen at a total cost of one thousand two hundred and thirteen pounds, repayable by installments spread over a term of years. They seem, however, to have nearly in every case proved a failure. Their short experience teaches the needy fishermen that the imme-

diate returns from the sea are uncertain, and from this conviction, having regard to the imperative demands of the necessities of life, results a general abandonment of the fishing trade during the summer months for a more reliable and more remunerative employment.

When an exile returns to Achill to visit the scenes of happier days and feast his eyes on his native mountains, he invariably selects the winter season. During the summer few could be found at home to welcome him. "It is a well-known fact," says the author of "Contemporary Ireland," "that throughout the summer there is not an able-bodied man to be found in Achill Island." It is almost literally true, but it is not the whole truth. The emigration of able-bodied men to England and Scotland during the summer months is not peculiar to Achill Island. Achill, however, unlike other parts of Ireland, is compelled to send girls of 11 years and upwards, and boys of the same age, for five months of the year to Scotland to earn by digging and picking potatoes enough money to tide the family over the winter

months. About one thousand of these girls, Achill Workers as they are called, cross the Channel every year. Two competent commissioners, having been sent to make inquiries on the advisability of allowing Irish girls to do fruit picking work during the summer months in Blairgowrie in Scotland, turned aside to acquaint themselves on the conditions under which these Achill Workers live. The accommodation afforded them was pronounced "wretched and demoralizing." "In one very small compartment," continues the report, "slept fourteen persons from Achill, ten men and four girls, feet to feet, the men on one side and the girls on the other. Cut away from this by a wooden partition, seven feet high, in about the same amount of space, slept a large number of tramp laborers, whose language and conduct was described as fearful. The beds consisted of a little straw, spread on a few plank boards, with a small, light blanket, which they had to carry about from place to place to cover them." It is pleasant, indeed, turning from the accommodation, "wretched and

demoralizing," afforded these poor emigrants, to hear of the excellent character given by everybody of these Achill girls and men. Speaking of the girls, who carry their home atmosphere of purity about them, the Commissioners say: "Cases of misconduct among them are almost, if not entirely, unknown." Surely, this is enough to awaken general sympathy for these islanders, but it is not all.

During the absence of these laborers, the married women and children, the aged and decrepit, remain to guard the homestead. These hardy women bravely go into the fields and mountains to do men's work and labor from early morning to save the crop and to make what they can by the sweat of their brow. They face the task with cheerful submission and look forward with buoyant hope to the return of the "Scotties" at the end of the year. Alas, they do not always return. A few years ago the little boat that took a number of these girls and boys to Westport, where they take steamers to Glasgow, was wrecked. All on board were thrown into the sea, twenty-three were drowned, and,

preceded by the winged news of evil, their dead bodies were carried home to their friends, now almost frantic with grief. Such, then, is the Achill problem, which in the name of humanity clamors for solution.

A sometime visitor to Achill recommended by way of solution the submersion of the island as the only known way of relieving so much misery. The population, however, is increasing and the people may be trusted to offer a stiff resistance to such a remedy. Sixty or seventy years ago a kindly-disposed traveler, seeing the work of Nangle and the needs of the people, expressed himself thus: "Would that some unpolitical philanthropists—men who took a human view of the human wants and human feelings of these poor islanders—would settle among them and place in their hands the plough and spade, teach the children to read and write, the boys to make shoes and coats, to fish and to dig, to rake and sow and reap and to build houses, the girls to knit and spin, and to make gowns, and use them like brothers, sisters, children."

Surely, the Congested Districts Board, with which the solution now rests, will grapple with the question and fulfill, at least, the ideas of this philanthropist. The State cannot afford to forget these people. A visit to cities in America and an acquaintance with the priests and surgeons and teachers, lieutenants of police, responsible officials in hotels and business firms, who claim kindred in Achill Island, will show how much goodness and intelligence is imprisoned there. Surely, it is not beyond the power of statesmen and economists to make life worth living for peasants in Achill Island. Nor does one require to be either one or the other to venture the following suggestions:

There are, in the first place, large ranches of rich pasture lands around Crochaun Mountain, Cloughmore, and elsewhere, that can be made available for distribution amongst hungry, landless men. Some of this land is well sheltered and is more suited for cultivation than some other parts of the island. Having regard to the unsuitability of land and climate for the growth of crops now culti-

vated in Achill Island, it is not too much to expect that the Department of Agriculture can discover some hardy fruit or root crop adaptable to local conditions, which would supply nourishment and be a source of profit to those who are surely not too lazy to work. To teach lessons of agriculture to peasants such as are to be found in Achill Island and elsewhere it seems absolutely necessary to start and to finish by having experimental plots or model farms, the more the better, which will be always before their eyes. If these theoretical agriculturists have the secret of making two blades of grass or two ears of corn grow where only one grew before, they should do it so that the peasants may see them, and the poor peasant will not then be slow to follow their example.

As to the development of fisheries, it seems that the large boats supplied at so much cost by the Congested Districts Board represent all, or nearly all, money wasted. The men who worked in them had their families or dependents to tide over the winter. The shopkeeper probably in every case remained unpaid for the food-

stuffs supplied during the preceding winter, and with the future looming threateningly ahead, the risk of giving a summer to the sea was too great, and the boats for the season were abandoned. If by some means these risks were removed by paying the men as much as they could earn in Scotland, time could be had to develop such confidence in the trade as a whole as would make these men give up their whole time and energy to the fishing, and turn their eyes from labor in Scotland, where security of earnings is now more proportionate to the great stakes at issue. There seems to be no doubt, too, that cooperative associations must inspire more independence and courage in these sons of toil, and reduce to a minimum, far below the present standard of prices, the cost of living, as well as of agricultural production, and enable the producer to receive the market value, and that too in hard cash, of the fruits of his toil.

To pass for a moment to another phase of life in the island. That grand intellectual movement, the awakening of Irish Ireland, is slowly but, thank God, insup-

pressibly growing. Here in Achill Island the last remnant of Irish-speaking Ireland is dying, and we think that the conservation and development of such national resources demand more attention from the directors of the Gaelic movement than they have hitherto received.

Much more might be said of these dwellers by the sea in this "Forgotten Part of Ireland;" and while we readily acknowledge that leisurely revision and judgment and time must discover in these sketches much crudeness of expression, inelegance of diction, and even inaccuracy of statement, we must allow them go. And so we close the book, thinking that there is much in Achill of the good and the beautiful after all; that its people have been unjustly described as savages, that it has a history; that Irish Catholics of heroic faith and fight have lived and died and suffered here, whose tale we cannot fully tell, but could we do so, the world would listen as we did. One word more and we say farewell.

Who can glance at the history of Achill during the last century and forget

or overlook the unselfish labors of the Catholic priests, their trials and hardships endured here (long before wires or trains placed them in touch with the outside world), where they witnessed the sickening sights of famine-aided proselytism? We have said little about them. The collection of potatoes which the priest was obliged to make at Dugort in 1838 occurs to us now, and we leave the reader to infer the rest. This much, however, we will say: They were mainly under Heaven instrumental in preserving for modern Achill the ancient Catholic faith. Here, as elsewhere in Ireland, in darkest days, they won the trusting reverence and grateful love of those Celtic souls, expressed in that untranslatable pharse, "Sagarth Aroon," and crystallized in the beautiful song:

Who, in the winter's night,
Sagarth Aroon,
When the cold blast did bite,
Sagarth Aroon,
Came to my cabin door
And, on my earthen floor,
Knelt by me, sick and poor,
Sagarth Aroon?