

In 1367, as the English Government could rule neither Ireland or Desmond it adopted the weak but subtle policy of attempting to accomplish both by appointing Gerald Justiciar in succession to the Duke of Clarence. Gerald, however, was too interested in personal aggrandisement to make a success of the post from the English standpoint and was soon replaced by Sir William de Windsor.

When Turlough O'Brien was expelled from the Kingdom of Thomond by his cousin Brian, Gerald attempted to show his authority and power by reinstating him. Brian marched into Limerick and inflicted a crushing defeat on him at Mainister-nenagh. Gerald was taken prisoner, and his territory, as well as the City of Limerick, was burned and ravaged by Brian, who was afterwards known as Brian "Catha an Aonaigh."

Although Gerald often acted on the Government's behalf he had no sympathy with their attempts to abolish Irish customs and ruled his own feudal territory by Irish law. He was so powerful that even after the passing of the Statute of Kilkenny, which was to kill forever the hibernization of the colonists, Gerald sent his son to be fostered and educated by the O'Briens of Thomond.

He was a poet and a reputed magician and one of the main causes of his feud with the Butlers is said to have been that a Butler referred to him sneeringly as "Gerald the rhymier." Some of his poetry, written in Norman-French, is still in existence in the Book of Waterford. He was loved by the Irish and many legends have sprung up in the county about him. One is that he never died but went to a magic land and that he reappears once every seven years on the shores of Lough Gur and rides around it on a horse with silver horse shoes, and that he must continue to do so until the shoes are worn out.

He died in 1398 and the Annals of Clonmacnoise wrote his obituary—"The Lord Garrett, Earle of Desmond, a nobleman of wonderful bountie, mirth, cheerfulness in conversation, charitable in deeds, easy of access, a witty and ingenious composer of Irish poetry, and a learned and profound chronicler, and, in fine, one of the English nobility that had Irish learning and professors thereof in greater reverence than all the English in Ireland, died penitently after receipt of the Sacraments of the Holy Church in proper form."

JAMES FITZGERALD

James Fitzgerald, barrister and Irish member of Parliament, was born in Ennis in the year 1742, son of William Fitzgerald, attorney of the same town. He claimed descent from that branch of the Fitzgeralds known as the White Knights.

Fitzgerald had a brilliant career at Trinity College, where he graduated in the year 1764. He was called to the Bar in 1769 and soon established a reputation as an eloquent and hard-

working barrister. His practice became enormous and, in 1787, he was rewarded by the Government with the office of Prime Serjeant.

Like most of the barristers of his time, Fitzgerald found the additional profession of politics useful towards his advancement. He was M.P. for Ennis in 1772, and for Fore, County Westmeath, from 1776 to 1783. In the latter year he was elected for both Tusk and Killybegs in Roscommon and accepted the former seat for which he was re-elected in 1790. In 1797 he was elected for the Borough of Kildare, and, as a member of Grattan's patriotic parliament, was one of its fiercest opponents of the Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

Fitzgerald's experience at the Bar and his forensic eloquence earned him the reputation of being one of the greatest orators in Ireland—and this reputation in the days of great speakers like Grattan and Flood, was no mean one. His most famous speech was made in the year 1782 when he proposed, in those unenlightened days, a measure of relief for his disenfranchised Catholic fellow-citizens. In spite of his eloquence, the measure was of course rejected.

He was no great statesman but his eloquence made him particularly sought after, and though he never sought political office, his career in the House of Commons gained him many professional appointments. He was especially brilliant in his many speeches against the Union and earned for his honesty the bitter enmity of Castlereagh and his corrupt associates. Just as those who voted for the Union gained titles, money and political office, Fitzgerald was deprived of the prime-serjeantcy for his opposition and refusal to accept bribes. In spite of this, however, the Irish Bar showed its respect to him by continuing to give him precedence over the newly-appointed attorney and solicitor-generals.

Once the Union was law, Fitzgerald accepted the position and sat for Ennis in the Imperial Parliament until 1808, when he resigned in favour of his son, William Vesey Fitzgerald. In 1782 he married Catherine, the daughter of the Rev. Henry Vesey, a grandson of the Archbishop of Tuam and cousin to Lord Glentworth of Limerick. In 1826 he refused an English peerage and his wife was created Baroness Fitzgerald and Vesey. He was then 84. Having remained faithful to his ideals to the end, and having served Ireland in an upright and honest fashion, according to his own lights, this grand old man died at Booters-town, about four miles outside Dublin, on the 20th January, 1835, at the ripe old age of 93.

SIR JOHN FITZGERALD

The Chevalier Sir John Fitzgerald was born in 1640, son of Sir Edmund Fitzgerald, of Clonlish, County Limerick. When