

On the restoration of King Charles, Pierce de Lacy returned to Ireland, married the widow of Nicholas Comyn, Mayor of Limerick in 1648, and recovered part of his own and his wife's estates. For a time he lived at Curragh Chase, later the home of the de Vere family, as a lessee of the Duke of York, who became James II. In 1682, he was implicated in a supposed plot to annex Ireland to France, but his reputation and service as a Royalist withstood the accusation and saved him.

When the Jacobite wars began in Ireland, the old soldier again took up arms, and, although then nearing 70, distinguished himself by putting Colonel Odell to flight near Athlacca. He commanded a battalion inside the city during the siege of 1691 and was involved in the disastrous affair of Thomond Bridge. About 600 Irishmen, led by de Lacy, were returning from a skirmish into Clare, hotly pursued by the Williamites, when the French Governor of the city lifted the drawbridge before the Irish could get into the city. Whether this was done by accident, design, or crass stupidity was never determined, but the result was that nearly all the 600 Irish soldiers were either drowned trying to get into the city or slaughtered on the bridge. Pierce de Lacy died with the rest, the true death of a soldier and a peculiarly fitting one for the last member of a family which had already achieved such fame in Ireland and were yet to gain an even more famous name on the different battlefields of Europe.

## SIR ROBERT LAFFAN

Sir Robert Michael Laffan, Governor of Bermuda, was the son of John Laffan, of Skehana, County Clare, and was born there on 21st September, 1821. He was educated at the French College of Pont Levoy, and the Royal Military College at Woolwich, after which he became a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers.

In 1839, he went to South Africa on frontier service and was appointed engineer-in-charge of an expedition for the relief of the British Army under Colonel Smith at Natal. The expedition was successful and Laffan won great praise for his part in it. From here he went to Mauritius, where he again distinguished himself, and, on his return to Great Britain, he was appointed in command of the Engineers at Belfast, and an Inspector of the Irish Railways, then in their infancy.

In 1852, he was sent to report to General Sir John Burgoyne on the state of the defences of Paris and Antwerp, and in 1860, he completely renewed the defences of Malta. He performed a similar work in Ceylon shortly afterwards. Laffan was now the recognised Army authority on engineering and he was deputed to examine and report on the famous Suez Canal, the opening of which he witnessed in 1869.

Another of his works was to completely reorganise and re-lay-out the military barracks and manoeuvring plains at Aldershot and the Old Parade Ground there has been renamed in his honour "Laffan's Plain."

After a time as Chief Engineer at Gibraltar he was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Bermudas with the rank of Brigadier-General. He was knighted in the same year. Here, during a very critical period of office, he was both popular and successful, and he died in office at Mount Langton on 22nd of March, 1882. He was buried with full military honours in Pembroke Churchyard, Bermuda, after lying-in-state for two days.

Laffan left four sons and one daughter by his wife, Emma Norsworthy.

## ANDREW MacCURTIN

Andrew MacCurtin, the Irish poet and scholar, was born at Moyglass, Kilmurry Ibricken. He came of a long line of poets and scribes, and, being brought up in the strictest traditions of the Bardic Schools, had no use for the new-fangled verse of the traditional period in which he lived. In a long poem to his patron, Sorley MacDonnell, of Kilkee, he complains bitterly "of changed system and metre and of having to compose in metres void of all rule and concord, and to fit himself for an evil fashion never practised in Erin before, and to frame a left-handed awkward thing of a ditty because the gentlemen of the country will give more for it than for a well-turned lay or poem." "More respect," he says, "is accorded to a dry, half-educated boor who has no clear view of either alliteration or poetry than to the highly trained bard or man of song. He himself is now thought a fool if he composes a lay in good taste, but he is not of this opinion," and he protests that he "will continue to write after the strictest manner of his craft."

Andrew succeeded to the hereditary title of Ollamh to the O'Briens of Thomond, and, as such, was an authority on the pedigrees of all the great Munster families. He wrote an excellent hand, as may be seen from his manuscripts, many of which are now in Trinity College, the Royal Irish Academy and the British Museum, and, according to Eugene O'Curry, was one of the best Gaelic scholars of his day.

Like his cousin, Aodh Buidhe MacCurtin, he depended chiefly on the patronage of the O'Briens and of Sorley MacDonnell, and, in one of his longer poems, he tells us how he deserted his patrons and went to live in his native and lonely Ibricken because of a slight received from the latter and because he hated mere wealth, loathed the English language and despised those who thought it fashionable to speak the "Saxon jargon."