

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF DESMOND

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The Desmond war was the last important domestic war, the final dress-rehearsal, before the Elizabethan army turned its resources against its most powerful European enemy, Spain, and began to send its troops overseas in ever-increasing numbers.¹ In the Public Records Office in London there is a small collection of sixteenth-century maps of Munster and of the Kerry coast. Significantly in a map of Munster tentatively ascribed to 1567, William Cecil in his own writing, has inserted the names of Gaelic lords and their approximate location. In a map of Bantry bay, Cecil has corrected the mapmaker, probably Robert Lythe, in his positioning of Birhaven [*sic*] and moved it across the bay. In a map of 1572 the details of the siege of Castlemaine are written in laboriously, and in a fourth map, the siege of Dún an Óir, he sketches in the English ships-at-war with their names as they closed in on the fort.²

Yet in the mid-seventies, three years before the war broke out, the province of Munster was quiet. Towards the end of 1576 Sir William Drury, president of Munster, wrote to his friend, Sir Henry Walsingham:³

The whole province is, I thank God, very quiet, and not any one man that I can say he is out, and so I trust it will continue. The common people more ready to embrace justice than the lords whose pride is great, and do impatiently bear and hardly digest the English government no further than force and heavy hand constraineth.

However it was a fearful kind of peace with an underlying violence concealed in Drury's laconic statement further on in the same letter:

The second of October last, I began the assizes in Cork, where I hanged to the number of 42, of which some were notable malefactors, one pressed [to death] and two gentlemen of the chief of the Mc Sweeneys hanged, drawn and quartered; one of these being captain of galloglass half a year before my coming, took away the prey of cattle (with his banner displayed)

from Cork, the which banner he had carried before him unto the place of execution, and the same I reserve for your honour . . .

It was a tense brooding hush that lay over Munster. Three years previously the earl of Desmond, Gerald, still a prisoner of the Queen, had been transferred to Dublin after a long sojourn in the Tower of London, and had dashed to freedom unopposed by the mayor of Dublin. Symbolically he had changed his English dress for Irish costume when he reached Lough Gur. There he was met by his countess and by some freeholders of Limerick and there he made a proclamation that no cess or constable or sheriff should ever exercise their office in his country.⁴

From Lough Gur, Desmond and his countess repaired to his favourite castle in the 'sweetest island of Kerry', Castleisland, and from all parts of his earldom came news of castles being re-taken or yielded up to the Geraldine demands. Yet war did not break out; indeed Desmond submitted and made fair promises, seeming to be more interested in administering his large patrimony than in incurring the queen's displeasure. So the middle years of the 1570s passed in the uneasy calm described by Drury.

Of Desmond's sentiments in those years we can form little idea. Twice imprisoned by the Queen for long periods, more than a third of his lifetime as earl, 1559-83, was spent in prison. Did he guess that his Queen's pretended concern for his constant good affection masked her intention to conquer his palatinate, which formed so compact, so desirable a prize if her officials succeeded in capturing it for the Crown? By all accounts the Desmond earldom was an imposing super-structure upon older Gaelic holdings and was semi-autonomous. Sydney in an earlier report on the earl of Desmond to Queen Elizabeth wrote that 'he enjoyeth under his rule, or rather tyranny, the third part of this great country, which I assure your Majesty, I know to be greater than Yorkshire. In all which his limits neither is your name revered, or your laws obeyed. Neither dare my sheriff execute any part of his office therein'. The Desmond rental book was impressively large; the earls were probably the wealthiest landowners in Ireland at the accession of Queen Elizabeth. Cox, the seventeenth-

1. G. C. Cruickshank, *Elizabeth's army* (Oxford 1946).

2. Public Record Office, London (Maproom) MPF 74 Munster, MFP 94 Bantry bay, MPF 78 Castlemaine, MPF 75 Smerwick harbour. See Dunlop 'Sixteenth-century maps of Ireland', *English historical review* 20 (1905) 309-37, J. H. Andrews 'Geography and government in Elizabethan Ireland', *Irish geographical studies* (1970) 178.

3. W. Drury to H. Walsingham, 24 November 1576 (*Cal. State Papers Ire.* 1574-85, 101).

4. Two near-contemporary accounts of the Desmonds, T. Russell *Relatio Geraldinorum* (Gilbert Collection 173, Dublin Corporation Library) and D. O'Daly, *Familia Geraldinorum* (Lisbon 1655), suggest that the earl of Desmond suffered mental damage and returned a changed man. See, also Sr Benvenuta, 'The Geraldine war—rebellion or crusade?' *Proceedings of the Irish catholic committee* (1967) 17.

century historian, stated that the Desmond rental was 'greater than any other subject in Her Majesty's dominions'.⁵

On a modern map of Munster the eye spans appreciatively from Dungarvan to Dingle upwards towards the Shannon. The earldom of Desmond stretched from north Kerry through Limerick across to the hilly country west of Thurles. In east Munster the Blackwater river formed the boundary, and Youghal throughout most of the sixteenth century was an important port for the earl's commerce overseas. The earldom encompassed much of modern Co. Cork, recognising the limits of MacCarthy lordship but exercising an ill-defined suzerainty over the Gaelic lords, MacCarthy More, MacCarthy Reagh, O'Sullivan, O'Driscoll, O'Mahony, O'Donoghue, O'Keeffe and O'Callaghan. For centuries the river Maine and its tributary, the Brown Flesk, were a dividing line between Anglo-Norman Desmond (which included the Liberty of Kerry and the Lordship of the Decies), and Gaelic Desmond of the south-west. The Brown Flesk rises near Millstreet and flows westward into the river Maine near Currans and from thence the confluence flows into Dingle bay a few miles beyond Castlemaine, which is built on the river. These two rivers formed an important boundary between Kerry and Desmond: moreover at certain times of the year the whole of that central plain of Kerry became flooded and presented an impassable barrier between the two territories. Castlemaine and Castleisland were then transformed into strategic bridgeheads of vital importance to the holders. Castleisland was a Geraldine stronghold, reputed to be dearer to Gerald than all his other castles, including even Askeaton on the Shannon.

Castlemaine, which had been customarily shared as a kind of frontier pass by the Geraldines and the MacCarthys in turn, had been captured. Deputy Perrot had already seen its strategic position in his rapid campaign of 1570 and had written to Cecil of 'the necessity of winning it'. From 1571 onwards it was the target of constant attacks and in 1573 was taken for the Crown, a constable and twelve men-at-arms being placed there. The Earl never ceased to petition its return to him. As late as 15 February 1578 a Desmond petition was refused by Cecil: 'the council of England does not think it convenient, for sundry good considerations that the said castle be restored to the possession of the earl or any subject'.⁶ Perrot's accompanying remark 'that both it and the priory of

5. R. Cox, *Hibernia Anglicana* (London 1869) 392; cf. also Sydney's remarks scattered throughout *Cal. Carew MSS* 1519-74.

6. *Cal. State Papers Ire.* 1574-85, 159.

Killya close by should not be suffered to pass from the Crown because it will always master Kerrie and the Earl of Clancarty's countrie' shows how well the English had mastered the topography of the Desmond palatinate.⁷

Kilmallock too had been ceded to the English. It was there that Gerald of Desmond had yielded up his son as a hostage for good behaviour to Drury in 1579, and it was there in that same year that the dead body of James Fitzmaurice was set on spikes around the historic town. In contemporary maps the Desmond territories were strategically ringed at certain key-points: Glin, Carrigafoyle, and Askeaton along the Shannon, Youghal in the south, Castleisland and the Dingle peninsula. By 1579 Kilmallock, Tralee and Castlemaine were in the hands of the English but since the earldom was composed of highly localised units each with its own castle or tower-house, the conquest of the whole palatinate presented peculiar difficulties to the planners of the final stage of the war. Victory was not symbolised by the capture of any one town, or castle but was the result of encroachment and penetration until every castle has been destroyed or yielded up. This explains the scorched earth policy of the final phase.

Whether in 1579 the Lord President of Munster was aware that there was a centre of resistance in the Desmond palatinate hidden from observation is a matter for conjecture. Between Castleisland and the river Shannon and west of Abbeyfeale is the district referred to locally as Ciarraí Luachra (but this is not to be confused with Sliabh Luachra, a region of mountainous, hidden valleys through which the Brown Flesk flows, an area of great antiquity and literary interest). This whole stretch of country together with the territory to the north-west of Kilmallock comprising the older divisions of Glenquin, Shanid, Connelloes Upper and Lower in modern Co. Limerick was the centre of the last Desmond stand. Here were situated the fairest castles of the Geraldines: Rathkeale, Carrigafoyle, Ballyloghlane, Askeaton, Liscarroll, Adare, Glin and Lixnaw. In between were the woods, those of Kilcowrie, the woods of old Connelloes thick and impenetrable, Harlow Wood on the Waterford side and the great forest of Kilmore stretching in a matted, clotted thickset into Aherlow, and on the Tralee side the sad woods of Clonish and Glanekinty where the Earl was finally murdered.⁸

7. *Ibid.*, also 'Notes touching presidenship of Munster', *Cal. Carew MSS* 1514-74, 391.

8. E. McCracken, 'The woodlands of Ireland c. 1600', *Irish historical studies* 11 (1959) 271-96.

It is not our purpose here to describe either land settlement or social stratification within the palatinate. Until we can match documents from the Desmond survey papers with lists from the Inquisitions of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart times, there remains a great deal of incomprehension and obscurity about the gradations of landholdings and offices within the earldom.⁹ Tentatively we can suggest a close-knit group around the earl who were bound to him by ties of fealty and kinship and who, though engaging wholeheartedly in the segmental politics and warfare of sixteenth-century Gaelic Ireland, were bound by treaty or contract to come to the earl's assistance in time of need. Of these the Fitzmaurices, lords of Lixnaw, enjoyed the office of marshal, charged with the cessing and quartering of the Earl's troops, for a greater part of the sixteenth century. However, during the imprisonment of the Earl in the 1560s, it was to a kinsman, James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, that charge of the earldom was entrusted, and later he constituted himself head of the 'crusade' which plunged the whole of the palatinate into war. Close to the Earl were the Fitzgibbons, the White Knight family, who controlled a large area with a castle at Mitchelstown, the knight of Glin who had holdings in Shanagolden, and the Fitzgeralds of Pallas, faithful kinsmen of the earl.

The knight of Kerry (always a blood relative of the Earl) traditionally lived in Castleisland, the cantred of the sept, also called the cantred of the hundred manors. The Fitzgeralds, lords of Muskerry, held a strong position at Springfield Castle (Gort na dTiobraid) near Dromcolliher in Co. Limerick. One other group could be expected at all times to render service, the Munster gallowglasses of the earls of Desmond, the Mac Sheehys, the Mac Donnellis, and the Mac Sweeneys with their retinues of mailed archers on horseback. There is no reason to challenge the eulogy pronounced on the Geraldines by their admiring historian, Daniel O'Daly, writing from lost records:¹⁰ 'no less than fifty lords and barons paid them tribute, and were ever ready to march under their banners'.

The wise Sydney had once remarked to Queen Elizabeth that Gerald, fourteenth or fifteenth,¹¹ earl of Desmond was a man of imperfect judgment rather than a man of malicious intent. After his

9. Though the original Desmond survey papers were destroyed in the Public Record Office, Dublin in 1922, several copies exist. I have examined M. J. Byrne's transcript in the *Kerryman* August/October 1927. See also 'Inquisition of 1584' *Kerry Arch. Mag.* 1 (1910) 213-26.

10. C. P. Meehan (ed.) *History of the Geraldines* (Dublin 1878) 228.

11. Lodge, *Peerage* I, 63.

long imprisonment, the Earl became noticeably frail in health and though a skilled horseman had to be helped on his mount. His second wife, Eleanor, daughter of Edmund Butler, lord of Dunboyne was devoted to him as was his first wife, Joan, daughter of James, eleventh earl of Desmond, widow of James, earl of Ormond and mother of Thomas, the twelfth earl of Ormond. With ties of kinship so closely woven between the families of the two earls, it is rewarding to scrutinise the role played by Thomas, earl of Ormond, in the final overthrow of the house of Desmond.

At the beginning of 1572 Fitzwilliam, the Lord Deputy wrote to Cecil that 'the South was always the ticklish part of Ireland, Ormond alone could manage it'. It was not so much the knowledge that Thomas of Ormond, Black Tom, was high in his cousin's favour; he had grown up in Elizabeth's company and played and studied with her half-brother, Edward, and his loyalty to her was woven out of the strands of young affections and alliances. By the 1570s Ormond's political stature had grown to such dimensions that were it not for his remarkable steadfastness to the Queen's cause, he could have been as troublesome to her officials in Ireland as Desmond was, or as O'Neill later became. Undoubtedly he desired office. He was ambitious (possibly he even aspired to marry his royal cousin at one stage), but his supreme characteristic was his political realism. For reasons outside the scope of this study, Ormond had by the late seventies turned his vast energies and ambitions in another direction, that of augmenting the family lands by means of annexations and gifts of monastic lands.¹²

Born in 1532, son and heir of James Butler, who had died in mysterious circumstances in London, Thomas Butler took possession of his estates in 1554. From his inauguration he showed himself zealous in the service of the Crown, helping to crush Wyatt's Rebellion, taking the field against the Scots, and allying himself with the Lord Lieutenant. He was amply rewarded. In 1556 he was granted by Queen Mary the priory of Athasshill and the abbey of Jerpoint, the friary at Callan, the friary at Thurles, Carrick and Tullophelim with all their appurtenances. He got parcels of land in Kilkenny and Waterford, the monastery of Kilcowle in Tipperary, the Manor of Kilrush, the Grange of Legan, Blackrath, Ballienagh, Ferroughmore, and finally the plum of the lot, the monastery of Holy Cross in fee-farm.¹³

12. T. Carte, *Life of James, duke of Ormonde* I (London 1736) XC VII.

13. *Ibid.*

Elizabeth too showered favours on this cousin. She confirmed him in the regalities of Tipperary and sundry other possessions ranging as far as Westmeath. By a patent issued in the first years of her reign, she nominated him to the office of Lord Treasurer of Ireland, an office he enjoyed all his life, and one continued by King James.

It was predictable that the favoured house of Ormond would, at this period, be a thorn in the side of the Geraldines. A perusal of the grants given to the Butlers by the Tudors¹⁴ makes it clear that the Kildare Geraldines would almost certainly have challenged them had they not been extinguished, but the Desmond Geraldines were still a force to be reckoned with. However, following the death of Joan, Gerald's first wife and mother of Thomas Butler, a serious quarrel had broken out between the two earls resulting in a heavy defeat for Gerald at the battle of Affane in 1565. The battle of Affane was not a local skirmish¹⁵ between two neighbouring lords but a bid for supremacy over the suzerainty of south-west Tipperary. For Gerald it was a serious setback. He lost 208 of his followers and was wounded himself. It marked the turn of his fortunes, for two years later he was arrested on the charge of exercising jurisdiction over lands possessed by Ormond in south-west Tipperary and was subsequently committed to the Tower. The imprisonment of his madcap, dangerously violent but able brother, Sir John, shortly afterwards, did indeed make a rebel of the Earl; his bitter reaction to the act of parliament in 1569 abolishing the Irish 'captaincies' estranged him deeply from his queen and her Irish officials. His anger was shared in this case by the brothers of Thomas Butler, who joined in the rebellion triggered off by the claims of Sir Peter Carew to Butler lands in Idrone, County Carlow in 1569.¹⁶

Thomas Butler, the earl, kept himself aloof. In Sydney's words he 'politically kept himself in England', and was only persuaded to leave for Ireland, on the Queen's order, when Sydney, who was sympathetic to the Geraldines, admitted that he could not control the south in Butler's absence. So great was Butler's standing that he even succeeded in winning pardons for his brothers in 1573 and in so doing, adroitly out-manoeuvred them. Though pardoned, they were not restored in blood. As for Queen Elizabeth, her reward to Butler for his loyalty was to free the Ormond land from cess. This is interesting because one of the causes of the quarrel that led to the

14. E. Curtis, *Calendar of Ormond Deeds VI* (Ir. MSS Comm., 1937).

15. G. Butler, 'The battle of Affane', *The Irish Sword* 8 (1967-8) 33.

16. See account of incident in article on the Tenth earl of Ormond (1552-1616) (Dict. nat. biog.).

battle of Affane was Butler's proclamation forbidding, in the interests of his poorer dependants, the execution of any ancient Irish customs within his dominions. It was in enforcing this proclamation, that he clashed with Desmond. Affane was important for another reason. It marked the gradual retrenchment back from Kilmallock towards Kerry and Limerick around Adare-Rathkeale-Castleisland which became more clearly visible when the earl of Desmond made his final bid for autonomy in the late 1570s.

It would seem that Thomas Butler was an Elizabethan of his time preferring to organise his huge, newly-acquired estates on the model of an English estate. (It would be interesting to compare the estate management of Thomas Butler with that of the ninth earl of Northumberland, where judicious use of land leases on the principle of careful calculation enabled the Butlers to become one of the most prestigious landholders in the late Elizabethan age.)¹⁷ To take a small example, Thomas Butler insisted on victualling his own standing army at his own charge. Even during peaceful times this was never less than 300 horse, 500 foot, a fact known to Elizabeth's officials but one they were powerless to remedy. Ormond could do no wrong in the eyes of his royal cousin. He maintained armed castles for securing the limits of his own territories, as far west as Thomond, at Nenagh, at Cahir Castle, at Fermoy, in Clonmel, and at Carrick, where he built the most representative Tudor house in the south of Ireland, half-garrison, half-manor. These Butler fortresses were to become garrison towns in the following century. Butler presents a sharp contrast to the unfortunate Desmond at this period. His star was riding high; Desmond's in full decline. Gerald had seen his friend and cousin, Fitzgibbon, the eleventh White Knight (who had received his title from the hands of the earl himself), attainted for treason in 1569 and his estates escheated to the Crown except the right of his widow to hold by inheritance or dower, and Desmond was a helpless spectator.¹⁸ Desmond too lacked the finesse of Ormond. His exactions on the freeholders of his own palatinate were sharp and cruel and his system of taxation unremitting and harsh.

THE DESMOND WAR

There is a common interpretation of events in Munster in the 1580s to be gleaned from a perusal of quite different writers: Thomas

17. J. M. W. Breen, *The estates of the Percy families 1416-1537* (London 1958).
18. A valuable collection of original sources for Geraldine history may be consulted in *Historical and archaeological association of Ireland Journal* 1 (3rd series) (1868-9) and for an account of the Knight see *Royal Soc. of Anq. Ire. Jn.* 5 (4th series) (1879-82).

Carte for the Butler angle, writing in the eighteenth century, O'Daly and Russell for the Desmonds, writing backwards from the following century, *The Annals of the Four Masters*, near contemporary, Cox, *Hibernia Anglicana* from the committed perspective of the 1680s, and in the immediate context of the war, the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Elizabeth, the Acts of the Privy Council* et al. This version by a kind of consensus gives us a double level of understanding. On one level there is the contemporary opinion that Gerald, earl of Desmond, while not being a capable or astute leader, was psychologically a rebel by 1579 despite assurances and guarantees, and that he secretly aided his energetic cousin, Fitzmaurice, who landed in Smerwick with a papal force and made his way up country to the Shannon where he was slain by his kinsman, Tibbot Burke of Castleconnell, just a month after his landing in Dingle. There are certain odd aspects about that story. First, Desmond had yielded up his heir to Drury at Kilmallock as guarantee of his own good behaviour less than a year previously. Secondly, there was no love lost between the Earl and Fitzmaurice: Fitzmaurice had been wounded in feeling by Desmond's failure to reward him for his earlier services. That may have been so, but by 1579, Fitzmaurice had become a crusader and what seems more incredible, on his death, the mantle of crusader fell on Gerald, earl of Desmond. This aspect of the Earl's last years does not concern us here though it does emphasise that already Ireland was moving into the realm of international politics and was by no means a negligible factor in counter-reformation papal strategy.¹⁹

Below that level of ostensible religiosity was the grim reality that the hegemony of the Desmond palatinate was capable of being smashed once and for all time now. At least six people were aware of the desperate nature of the conflict about to take place. The Earl Gerald understood the finality of this last stand; so also did his wife, who had been the recipient of personal letters from the Queen warning her of the folly of her husband's behaviour.²⁰ Deputy Perrot, Lord Justice Pelham, and Queen Elizabeth in concert with her adviser, Burghley, knew that the end was approaching, and Thomas Butler could not but have been aware of what the result would be. In a letter to the earl of Leicester, Sir Henry Wallop wrote concerning Butler: 'he dislikes the course which we would have advised him to follow, if he had first imparted his purpose to

19. Sr Benvenuta *art. cit.*, 11-20.

20. Queen Elizabeth to Lady Desmond March 1578 (*Cal. State Papers Ire.* 1574-85, 129).

us. He alleges that he followed such instructions as he received from Her Majesty'.²¹

The war did not really assume the proportions of declared hostility until November 1579. Drury, Lord President of Munster, shortly to die of illness, had sent Henry Davells and Carter, two popular officials of the new class in Elizabethan Ireland to obtain reassurances of peace from the earl of Desmond and his brother, Sir John. Indeed Davells had travelled to Smerwick fort, which he pronounced vulnerable and capable of attack. Desmond's delay in aiding the capture of the fort on that occasion,—or even lending his gallowglasses to augment the Crown forces—foiled that attempt to involve Desmond in policing his own palatinate for the Queen's government. One reason why Desmond may have prevaricated in this testing situation was that his army was steadily defecting over to Sir John of Desmond's banner; the latter had become the acknowledged leader after Fitzmaurice's death. One contemporary record estimated that the Earl's private army shrank from 1,200 to 60 and that it was the landless men who deserted him.²² The murder of Davells and Carter while in bed in a Tralee inn was carried out personally by Sir John of Desmond and was regarded as a crime of singular ferocity which caught the public imagination. Sir John defended himself by saying that Davells and Carter held a session of jail delivery in the palatinate and that neither he nor his brother were prepared to tolerate English officials acting in that capacity. Though the Earl did not identify himself with the crime, neither did he deny Sir John's allegations; but he accompanied Drury in a raid into Connelloes, where in an engagement near Springfield castle Sir John's forces were routed. Shortly after that event Drury died, his place being taken by Malbie, Lord President of Connaught until Sir William Pelham should arrive to take charge. Malbie arrived in Munster with 150 horse and 900 foot, but when he finally encountered the Geraldine brothers, John and James, near the river Maigue, he had not the Earl at his side, and he was resoundly beaten by the '1,000 choice gallowglasses' of the Geraldine forces.²³

Though Ormond was not officially appointed Governor of Her Majesty's forces in Munster until January 1580, the two earls were

21. Wallop to Leicester, 19 September 1583 (*Cal. Carew MSS* 1515-88, 364-5).

22. Pelham to Queen Elizabeth, 28 December 1578, 'A short note on some parts of Thomas earl of Ormond's services and employments', (*Cal. Carew MSS* 1575-88, 313, 413).

23. R. Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors III* (London 1890) 59-115. This is still the best narrative account of the Desmond war.

in communication in the latter half of 1579. Ormond was present in Dublin on the presentation of an award to Pelham and travelled south with him. It was Ormond who treated with the earl of Desmond near Adare before the latter was proclaimed traitor. Pelham's letter to the Lord Justice and Council in Dublin gives us a good picture of what led up to the proclamation:²⁴

On my coming to Cashel the earl of Ormond presented to me a company of 200 soldiers, with which and my own band and the Berwick soldiers we marched to Limerick; and there meeting with Sir Nicholas Malbie and his companions, we made a journey into Connelloes, having first from Cashel written to Desmond desiring him to repair unto me. At length the Countess came with letters, accusing Malbie of diverse hurts. Ormond met him beside Adare. As he would consent to none of our offers, he was yesterday proclaimed traitor. I have left Ormond as General of this war, and delivered to him 800 footmen (besides the 100 footmen under Sir William Morgan), 250 horsemen, and 200 kerne.

In point of fact Desmond's excuses to Ormond on that occasion were interesting in the light of the subsequent proclamation of treason: he stated that he had blockaded Smerwick and driven off the O'Flahertys and that he had been preparing to victual Drury. He reminded Ormond that he delivered up his own son and feared for the safety of his son and wife, knowing that Sir John of Desmond hated them. He himself detested Malbie and accused Malbie of desecrating the tombs of the Geraldine line at Askeaton.²⁵ Ormond straight away gave those confidences back to Pelham, who relayed the government conditions back to Ormond for transmission to Desmond: surrender of Dr Sanders and Desmond was to yield up either Carrigafoyle or Askeaton and repair to the Lords Justice and endeavour to prosecute his rebellious brothers. Desmond refused and thereupon he was proclaimed traitor, the proclamation being signed by seven of the Butlers.²⁶ The proclamation asserted that Desmond had treated with foreign princes for the subduing of Ireland, that he had entertained James Fitzmaurice and Dr Sanders, Dr Allen and the Spaniards; that he had displayed the Pope's ensign against the queen's, and that he had brought strangers into the

24. Pelham to Lord Keeper and Council, 3 November 1579 (*Cal. Carew MSS* 1575-88, 164-5.)

25. Meehan, *op. cit.*, 124.

26. *Cal. Carew MSS* 1575-85, 164.

kingdom, and finally that he had been privy to the murder of Henry Davells.

Of those listed in the proclamation the name of Dr Sanders caused Queen Elizabeth most irritation. Sanders, able, scholarly, writer of well known polemical books of which his most famous was his attack on Queen Elizabeth, *De visibili monarchia*, had been professor at Oxford but went into exile as a recusant in the 1560s. He was one of the first exiles to take the view that the only hope for English Catholics lay in foreign invasion. He was sent to Madrid in 1573 by the Pope to promote the project and it was there he met Fitzmaurice. He sailed to Ireland with Fitzmaurice and landed at Smerwick. His meeting with the Earl led to a relationship of trust and intimacy between Dr Sanders and the immediate family of the Earl. A forceful personality, rather intemperate in speech, he exerted strong influence on the Earl and was blamed by Elizabeth's officials for leading the Earl on the path of folly he chose.²⁷

Ormond was now formally in charge of the war in Munster, and we get a good idea of conditions there from his terse note written to Walsingham from Waterford:²⁸

I have the name of 800 Footmen left in my charge, and they are not 600 able men, as Mr Fenton can tell, for I caused my Lord Justices to take view of them. They be sickly, unapparrelled, and almost utterly unvictualled. There are 150 horsemen with me . . . my allowance is such as I am ashamed to write of . . . I long to be in service among the traitors who hope for foreign power. . . .

By 1580 the Geraldine war was the curtain-raiser for a decade of international war upon which England embarked with her greatest enemy, Spain. The official correspondence which the Earl carried on with Pope Gregory XIII, his reputation for choosing the war-cry 'Papa Aboo' since the proclamation, his sack of Youghal, and the defiling of the Queen's standard there, all indicated a new element in the Munster war:²⁹ a rejection of the crown of England and a turning to Europe for help. Desmond was literally a traitor in the

27. P. McGrath, *Papists and Puritans under Elizabeth I* (London 1967) 124, 168, 178, 184.

28. *Cal. Carew MSS* 1575-88, 413-4.

29. In the Nunziature files in the Vatican Archives, are many items concerning Ireland which were sent at various stages to the Vatican through the offices of the papal nuncios situated in different parts of Europe. Nunziatura d'Inghilterra I has a collection of documents relating to the Desmond war. Here are found four letters written by the earl of Desmond to Pope Gregory XIII. They are dated 23 January 1582; 1 September 1582; 6 November 1582; 28 June 1583.

correct Elizabethan sense, and this probably explains the grimness with which Ormond pursued his responsibilities as general of the war. Ormond's raid into Connelloes showed his appreciation of the importance of this middle area of the palatinate and the efforts he made repeatedly to contain the war within that area manifested a real understanding of the topography of the war. By March 1580 Ormond felt sufficiently strong to put into effect his systematic conquest of the palatinate. Tralee had been burnt by the rebels and a dispatch from Pelham forwarded to Cecil on 10 April 1580³⁰ informed the latter that 'all the country between the Earl's house of the island and Tralee (was) on fire, burnt by the rebels, and all the houses in Tralee burnt and the castles razed, saving the abbey, which they had not defaced, and there I rested a day'. At Rathkeale Ormond and Pelham met to divide forces: Pelham to sit before Carrigafoyle castle, Ormond passing over Sliabh Luachra with great massacre and thence up to Carrigafoyle to join Pelham. Carrigafoyle was taken; so also was Askeaton, Ballyloghlane castle and then Glin castle. So Desmond became an outlaw with none of his hundred castles to offer a refuge to him. Desmond's letters to Pope Gregory have a note of desperation about them.

The summer of 1580 was one of great restlessness in England, and in Ireland the rebellion of Lord Baltinglass and the Mac Carthy uprising delayed the end of the Munster war. Though Ormond and Pelham spent most of that summer in Kerry and though Ormond did his utmost to get the O'Sullivans and the Kerry chieftains to submit, progress was slow. There were still great resources in the Gaelic part of Desmond: for example, Ormond and Pelham came upon a herd of 4,000 cattle outside Castleisland.

Two factors impeded the war. Pelham was supplanted by Lord Grey de Wilton in August 1580 and the Spaniards landed once again at Dún an Óir, near Smerwick in the late autumn or winter of 1580. The massacre of the Spaniards in Dún an Óir is a curious macabre event in which Elizabeth's new star, Sir Walter Raleigh, played his part.³¹ Raleigh disliked Ormond, possibly there was personal rivalry between them at this time. Grey's period as commander-in-chief was

30. Pelham to Lords and Council of England (*Cal. Carew MSS* 1575-88, 237).

31. Report of San Joseppi on the capture of Dún an Óir (*Nunziatura d'Inghilterra* I, Vatican Archives, ff. 201-3, f. 249). Reports of Dr Sanders, undated, between June 1579 and January 1581 on the state of religion and the state of the war in Ireland (*Nunziatura d'Inghilterra* I, Vatican Archives, ff. 185-7; ff. 258:9). See also H. Mangan, 'A vindication of Don Juan del Aquila', *The Irish Sword* 2 (1956) 350.

one of unhappiness for his officers. Private bickerings went on among that distinguished coterie of Elizabethans who found themselves bivouacking on a Kerry peninsula during inclement winter conditions. Unexpectedly a collective hostility manifested itself against Ormond and so serious were the complaints led by Raleigh, that Ormond was removed from office as military commander. The most revealing accusations were not those of Raleigh to the Queen (rather spiteful and petulant),³² but those of Malbie to his friend Leicester.³³ Malbie accused Ormond of sympathising with the Clanrickards of Connacht: 'a letter came unto them (the Earl of Clanrickard's sons) from my Lord of Ormond admonishing them to raze the Castles, which being won for them, the Englishmen would dwell in them, and so by that means would banish them clean . . .'.³⁴

Ormond's reaction to his dismissal was cheerful and prompt, handing over his office with a spirited defence of his conduct and the announcement that he would visit his cousin and render her a personal account. This news greatly dismayed his accusers. Typical of Elizabeth, though she gave Ormond little satisfaction, she made it clear that his removal from office was not a mark of disfavour but an economy measure to shorten the war. Acting upon Ormond's suggestion she issued an amnesty for those involved in the war with some notable exceptions. Among the exceptions were Desmond and his brother John (James had been killed) and Dr Sanders. Amongst those who accepted the amnesty were the Barrys, the Condons, the Seneschal of Imokilly, the Moriartys and the Brownes. Sanders' death occurred shortly afterwards in a second skirmish near Springfield castle. He was attended in his death by Bishop Mulrian and the news of his death was formally conveyed to the Pope.³⁵

More discouraging was the death of Sir John of Desmond, the most able and unscrupulous of the Desmonds, which occurred in circumstances similar to those of his cousin, Fitzmaurice. He encountered an enemy where he thought to find a friend, Zouch instead of Barry, and he was killed by the hand of a former servant, Fleming.³⁶ His head was cut off and was sent to Dublin, his body to Cork until it was blown out to sea nearly three years later.

Munster was now in that pitiable state described so movingly by

32. Malbie to Leicester 21 September 1581 (*Cal. Carew MSS* 1575-88, 323). According to Bagwell, Raleigh's indictment and observations were drawn up by Malbie and St Leger (*Bagwell op. cit.*, 101).

33. Gerard of Desmond to Pope Gregory XIII, 28 June 1583 (*Nunziatura d'Inghilterra* I, ff. 330-31, Vatican Archives).

34. Meehan, *op. cit.*, 94-6.

the Four Masters. Raleigh had turned against Grey, disapproved of his scorched earth campaign and was more disposed to regard Ormond favourably. In fact he recommended to Cecil (Lord Burghley) that management of the war be restored to Ormond and the latter returned to Munster with fresh powers in January 1583. Systematically he beat his way through the great wood of Harlow where he slew many rebels and dispersed those who 'came in'. Desmond, who had been lurking in the woods of Kilcowrie, fled to Sliabh Luachra, accompanied by his wife, a woman of great courage and endurance, and was pursued relentlessly. He offered a dignified surrender to St Leger but Ormond insisted on an unconditional one. Desmond then sent his wife away to safety and eventual pardon and though he rallied fitfully and made forays into different parts of the earldom, desertions and submissions reduced him to a state of extreme penury. It was Ormond who finished the war. In the beginning of July 1583 he passed over Sliabh Luachra, through Castleisland and Castlemaine and thence into Dingle to cut off Desmond's escape by sea. By then all Desmond's supporters had submitted, the earl of Clancarty, Viscounts Barry and Roche, the baron of Lixnaw, Sir Thomas of Desmond, Sir Owen O'Sullivan, Edmund MacGibbon, and a host of others. In September Ormond was close on Desmond's heels in Sliabh Luachra and captured his chaplain. The assassination of Desmond by Owen Moriarty on the night of 11 November 1583 was allegedly an act of retribution for cattle stealing on the part of Desmond's few followers.³⁵ It was not accomplished with the connivance of Ormond, but it was done with his subsequent approval.

Thus fell the great house of Desmond. The Earl's body was hurriedly conveyed through the byways of the hills to the little mountain graveyard of Kilnanimh, in the mountain range of Sliabh Luachra. The Geraldines were laid low. As Bagwell remarks, 'with the earl's death the mediaeval history of Munster closes'. The plantation which followed brought in the St Legers to Doneraile, the Fentons to the inheritance of the White Knights, the Herberts to Castleisland, the Grenvilles and the Raleighs, the Carews and the Thorntons, and later the Boyles, earls of Cork, and later still the Lansdownes by the union of the Petty heiress with the Fitzmaurices of Lixnaw.

As for Ormond, the subsequent plantation according to Carte did

nothing to reward Ormond who 'thought it proper to represent his own right to the lands lately possessed by Desmond, his mother being sole daughter and heir to James, earl of Desmond, and heir-general to all his estate, though he had been kept out of possession, by power of the late earl's who had forfeited'.³⁶

Yet Ormond opposed the plantation in its final form on the grounds that the lords of Munster who had served the Crown so loyally should be re-imbursed. According to Carte this advice was not heeded and even Ormond did not receive adequate recompense. He acquired 3,000 acres of Tipperary and a great tract of poor land in Kerry. He continued to play an important part in the history of the province. He never received the deputyship which he desired so greatly but when the Munster phase of the Nine years war broke out, he was again called to play a notable part. He was sent to negotiate peace with Hugh O'Neill and was given supreme command of the Munster forces for a brief period but the old dislike and suspicion were still there and even Mountjoy voiced his distrust of Ormond's ultimate loyalty.

Ormond's loyalties were always firstly to the Queen, and then to Ormond and to his line, and by extension to Ireland as part of the Crown's possessions. Understanding of his actions and his repudiation of Desmond's treason fall into place when we consider the ordering of his loyalties and his sense of responsibility. Because finally Ormond was the most responsible of those involved in carving up the palatinate. It says much for his good sense that unlike the majority of Elizabeth's favourites, Ormond was still her friend and confidant until death parted them. About his military prowess it is hard to wax enthusiastic. He seemed to spend a great deal of time during the Munster war, marching up and down the province. Yet he won battles, he deployed his troops intelligently, he was merciful when the occasion could have tempted him to the cruelties practised by his contemporaries, and he was efficient as quartermaster in worrying out stores and arms for his soldiers. A responsible man rather than a brilliant general.

But the folk-memory of west Munster is true to the Geraldines and to this day recalls them in legends and ghostly hauntings in Smerwick at certain times of the year; in Lough Gur, where the Earl Gerald is supposed to rise at the resurrection clad in silver coat-of-mail, in Shanagolden, where the Geraldine stories are less savoury; and in Castleisland. It was no accident that for over a century afterwards

35. Examination of Owen Moriarty on 26 November 1589 reprinted in *Kerry Magazine* I (1854) 98; also T. Churchyard, *A Scourge for rebels* (London).

36. Carte, *op. cit.*, XCVIII.

the Gaelic bardic traditions survived strongly in Connelloes and that the Mac Gearailts of Springfield castle were the patrons of Dáibhí Ó Bruadair, the last of the bardic poets, and one of them went overseas with the Stuarts after the Williamite wars. Nor was it an accident that eighteenth-century Ireland saw a glory of literary talent from Sliabh Luachra of which Aodhagán Ó Rathaille was the foremost. It was with this Gaelic Ireland that the Munster Geraldines had identified and despite their shortcomings and indeed their irresponsibility, Gaelic Munster has enshrined their memory not only in the numerous graveyards of the Geraldines in Youghal, Askeaton, Tralee and Kilmallock, but more tenaciously in that lively, selective, unpredictable but intuitively correct organ of tradition, the folk-memory of the people.

DR DERMOT LYNE: AN IRISH CATHOLIC LANDHOLDER IN CORK AND KERRY UNDER THE PENAL LAWS

GERARD J. LYNE

Although the modern surname Lyne would seem to be of ancient Kerry origin it is not certain when a family of that name first became established in the Bearehaven peninsula.¹ All the Lyne families now resident in the Lauragh² and Bearehaven³ areas are, with one exception,⁴ descended from a physician named Dermot Lyne, who settled near the modern village of Ardgroom, Co. Cork, probably not before the year 1680,⁵ and who subsequently became the owner of a considerable amount of leasehold property in that locality. It is hoped in the article which follows, besides providing information concerning this particular individual and his immediate family, to furnish also some sidelights on the predominantly catholic and Gaelic society of early eighteenth century Cork and Kerry of which they were a part.

SOME CONTEMPORARY REFERENCES

The earliest record of Dr Dermot Lyne of which I am aware occurs in the year 1694, when his name figures on a government list of prominent persons in Bearehaven and south Kerry who are 'to be confined until the Rapperees may be reduced being suspected of relieving and supplying them'.⁶ On another such list,

1. For the purpose of this article, the Bearehaven peninsula may be regarded as including the towns of Kenmare, Co. Kerry, and Bantry, Co. Cork, together with their immediate neighbourhoods.
2. The name applied in modern times to the district immediately round Kilmakilloge Harbour, Co. Kerry.
3. That part of Co. Cork centred on Castletownbeare, extending north to Ardgroom and west to Glengarriff.
4. The Lyne family of Fighanagh, Lauragh, who are of north Kerry origin. Another unrelated Lyne family, that of Kilgarvan, a few miles north of Kenmare, are said to be of Killarney origin.
5. See below, p. 52. The descent of the various branches of the Lyne family in the Bearehaven peninsula from Dr Dermot Lyne, can be demonstrated, though it would be outside the scope of this article to attempt doing so.
6. Charles Monck to Lord Justice Wyche, 16 June 1694 (*57th Report of the deputy keeper of the public records in Ireland* (Dublin 1936) 490). Monck's list contains eighteen names in all, including 'O'Souleven Moore and his sons, O'Souleven Bear, Mc ffining, O'Donaghow, John Mahony . . . Morris and John Connell . . . Dr. Lyne . . .' That this last name, which stands fourth from the end, refers to Dr Dermot Lyne of Ardgroom, seems clear from n. 8, below. For notes on 'Mc ffining' and John Mahony see below, pp. 55, 59-60 and nos 41, 76. 'O'Donaghow' probably refers either to O'Donaghue *Mor* or O'Donaghue of the