

THE GERALDINES OF WEST LIMERICK

Last Phase Of Desmond Rebellion

CONCLUDING PORTION OF SPECIAL ARTICLE

BELOW we give the third and concluding portion of "Orjay's" special contribution on the Geraldines of West Limerick. This instalment deals with the last phase of the Desmond Rebellion, and tells how Gerald Fitzgerald met his end. It is as follows:

THE 11th Earl of Desmond was "Thomas The Bald," uncle of James Thomas wife was Catherine, the famous "old Countess," "Who lived to the age of one hundred and ten And died of a fall from an apple tree then."

Thomas died at the Castle, Rathkeale in 1534, and was succeeded by his grand-son, James. "The Court Page." The Court Page was slain by his kinsman, Maurice, at Leac an Sgail, County Kerry, in 1540, his namesake and cousin, James succeeding him. James, who was appointed Lord High Treasurer of Ireland, was a safe and much married man. He died in Askeaton Castle on the 14th October, 1558. And so we come to Garrett or Gerald, James's son, the 15th and last true Earl

LAST PHASE OF DESMOND REBELLION

The Desmond Rebellion has been recounted too often to tell it again here. So we will content ourselves with the last phase. It is the year 1583. Gerald is on the run in West Limerick, broken, defeated and encompassed by his enemies.

Here is the concluding portion of a letter written by him to St. Leger at the time: "The Earl of Ormond giveth forth that I should submit myself before him as Attorney to her majesty, you may be sure he doth report more thereof that I have sent him either by word or writing. But this I have offered in hope to prove the unreasonable wrongs and injuries done to me by her highness's officers in this realm, from time to time, unguilty in my behalf as God knoweth. I am contended upon these conditions so as my country, castle, possessions and lands, with my son, might be put and left in the hands and quiet possessions of my council and followers, and also my religion and conscience not barred. With a pardon, protection, and passport for my own body, to pass and repass, I would have gone before her majesty to try all those causes just and true on my part, as still I do allege if I

might be heard or have indifference and likewise hoping I might have more justice favour and grace at her majesty's hands when I am before herself than here at the hands of such her cruel officers as have me, wrongfully proclaimed. And as thereby thinking her majesty and I may agree, if not that I may be put safe in the hands of my followers again, and I to deliver my son and my said possessions back to her highness's officers. At Abbeyfeale, April 28th, 1583. Garrot Desmond."

A HUNTED MAN.

There are still glimmerings of greatness about Gerald, certainly dignity, and fully to appreciate this letter, one must remember that Gerald was a hunted man, living with a mere handful of followers in abject circumstances, with a price fit to tempt a prince upon his head. It is interesting to note the stiffening in the letter at the mere mention of Ormond, the traditional enemy.

How right he was in his dislike of Ormond, because St. Leger's answer to this letter was to send an armed force, into West Limerick, with Ormond at their head. Ormond made Newcastle his headquarters, and one of his dispatches written from Newcastle to Lord Burgley in London has been preserved. The letter was dated June 22nd, 1583, and sets out that the Earl of Desmond was deserted by all, save a priest, one Maurice MacKenraghty, and a few horsemen. It expressed the hope that Ormond would not be supplanted at Court by the malice of his enemies until he had reduced the Earl.

HOW THE END CAME.

Gerald withdrew from the West into the mountainous districts of Castleisland, and may have escaped, but for treachery. And this was the way the end came. Gerald, wanting provisions, moved to a place called Doiremore, in the valley of Glengenty, about five miles from Tralee. His men seized forty cows and nine horses from one Maurice MacOwen, whose wife was a Moriarty from Castlegregory, and with

whom Gerald had been fostered. MacOwen complained to Donal and Owen Moriarty, his brothers-in-law, and they, accompanied by some soldiers, followed the track of the cattle to the Earl's abode. Here, at dawn on the morning of November 11th, 1583, they rushed into the house, which was unoccupied, save for a solitary, unarmed man, who was sitting by the fire. Immediately he got up and said, "I am the Earl of Desmond, spare my life." For answer, one of the soldiers, by name Daniel O'Kelly, made a blow at him with his sword and nearly severed the Earl's arm. Then they dragged him outside, and, at the instigation of Owen Moriarty, the blood-maddened O'Kelly cut the Earl's head off. Moriarty, very appropriately, had a bag, into which they put the head, which ultimately reached England, where it was displayed on London Bridge for many a day.

BODY BURIED IN CO. KERRY.

The Earl's body was recovered by his friends and was buried in Kill-namanagh Chapel near Castleisland. Thereafter Owen Moriarty and his family became known as Kinel Namala—the breed of the bag. And it was long customary for the Fitzgeralds to ask, "whether there was any Moriarty in the room?" whenever they met thereafter.

So passed away the last of the Great Fitzgeralds of Desmond, and all that remained of their New Castle can best be described in a survey taken at the time:—"One great castle, built of square plan, a chief house of the said late Earl of Desmond (under that part of the aforesaid county, Limerick, which is named Connello), having at each angle of the same a round tower, with various places and chambers in each tower. And there is at the south corner, on the western side of the said castle at the south part, a high square tower or peel, built for defence within the walls of the said castle. And also there were within the walls of the said castle many buildings—namely, a large hall, a large room and an excellent chamber; one garden, and in the same, two fish ponds, all of which buildings are ruined and waste. And outside the walls, and near them, are divers orchards and gardens, three acres of land. Worth in all, per annum, along with the site of the said Castle Cxxvjs."

ESTATES CONFISCATED.

After Gerald's death, his estates were confiscated by Queen Elizabeth, who granted the lands at Newcastle to William Courtney of Devon, and the lovely castle passed from the lordly line of Fitzgeralds and crumbled, with the years, to ruin. To-day, as it slumbers by the tranquil river, some of its Geraldine greatness clings to the ivy mantled towers, and often on a still summer's night one can catch glimpses of shadowy warriors keeping guard on the ramparts, and hear again the faint sounds of revelry echoing from the vaulted roof of the famed Desmond Hall.

BLACKT

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