

GLEANINGS FROM LOCAL HISTORY

by
AN OLD OBSERVER

After the death of the Earl of Desmond in 1583 and the final collapse of the Desmond rebellion, the plantation of Munster slowly got under way with the confiscated Desmond lands being parcelled out by the Crown to English undertakers as they were called. The whole of County Limerick was parcelled out in lots of about 12,000 acres and given to some fourteen undertakers, mostly gentlemen from the West of England.

Sir William Courtenay of Powderham Castle, near Exeter, in the County of Devon, a Knight whose family was scarcely surpassed by any in Europe in antiquity of descent and splendour of connection, was granted the castles and land of the parishes of Newcastle, Monagea, Abbeyfeale, Athea and parts of the parishes of Ardagh, Kilscannel and Killeedy, containing ten thousand five hundred English acres; to hold by the name of Newcastle for ever from the year 1594. He was bound to build houses for eighty families and carry out the other conditions usual in grants to undertakers in Munster.

In 1622 one of the Courtenays, George, was living in the Castle in Newcastle which was described as a fair large castle, which had been somewhat ruinous, but was much repaired. In 1625 Courtenay received a grant to hold a Saturday market and a fair on the 21st September in Newcas-

tle.

George Courtenay did not spend long in Newcastle and never seems to have settled down or been happy there. A letter written by him from Newcastle gives a good idea of his frame of mind. "If I could get permission to return to England I would soon bid Ireland adieu, as I am very weary of it. Will and myself are so deeply out of clothes that we have none to our backs. Wherefore I would have you to make us each a suit, but not of stuffs, for I cannot abide them. Let Will's be a handsome holiday suit with a cloak and lined as the fashion with taffeta or somewhat you see fittest for gentry, and let mine be good cloth with the like handsome lining of what the tailor thinks best, but let it not be heavy."

It is no surprise to find George Courtenay leaving Ireland soon after this plaintive letter and the Courtenays, later Earls of Devon, were absentee Landlords from this out.

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