

AT THE BACK of the Tholsel—of what remains of it, in rubble—midway in Mary Street, are two Corporation red brick houses, the gable-end of the lower one facing the traditional spot where the Archbishop of Emly, Terence Albert O'Brien, O.P., was put to death 334 years ago.

This illustrious member of the Dominican Order, grandson of the ill-fated Mayor, Geoffrey Galwey, was born in his grandfather's home, at the corner of Nicholas Street/Quay Lane, towards the end of the sixteenth century.

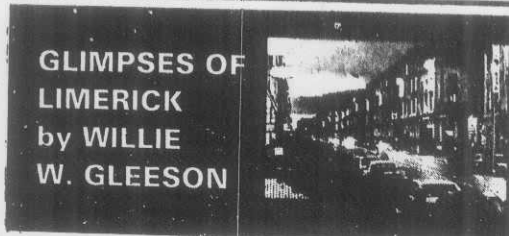
During the second Siege of Limerick (1651), General Henry Ireton—husband of Bridget Cromwell, daughter of the Lord Protector of England—lived and died there during the siege, as we shall see.

Rev. Father Dominic de Rosario O'Daly, O.D., historian, author of the "History of the Geraldines," originally written in Latin, and printed at Lisbon in 1655, four years after the Bishop's death, tells the story in his own words.

Venerated

The spot, writes O'Daly, where this holy bishop was martyred (he refers to the Pest House in Mary Street) is yet pointed out and venerated by the Catholics in that district.

When Limerick was besieged, he continues, Ireton sent the bishop word that he would give



GLIMPSSES OF LIMERICK by WILLIE W. GLEESON

Archbishop who went with joy to his death

him £40,000 and permission to retire whithersoever he should wish out of the kingdom, provided he ceased to exhort the people against surrender, but his heroic soul, spurned the offer as he had resolved to fight the good fight and win that crown which is the

guerdon of the just. When the English commander heard this he excepted the bishop from amnesty and every other condition that he proposed to the besieged and swore, moreover, that he would visit the citizens with the most rueful retaliation if they

did not bring to his quarters the head of the prelate, together with twenty men who voted against giving the city into his hands.

Two hundred ecclesiastics assembled in council and after mature consideration, resolved to interpose between Ireton and the twenty whom he had doomed to die, but in vain, for all ecclesiastics, too, were excepted.

The bishop offered to give himself up provided the lives of the rest were spared, but all the ecclesiastics rejected his proposals. At length the city—through the treachery of Captain T. S. Mac Adam and Hugh O'Neill, nephew of the great Owen Roe, displaying white feather on black cap, rode out of the city to surrender his sword and Limerick to Ireton thus saving his skin at the expense of being committed to the Tower of London, where, a year later, he died of a broken heart.

Estates

Mac Adam, for his part, was granted several estates in the Ballykillawna (now Blackwater) district of County Clare. Today, Gleeson and Ryan families are the new masters, while a cock—symbol of treachery—is a grim reminder over the traitor's grave in Kilquane (Parteen) graveyard nearby.

To return to O'Daly. We glean the particulars of his (O'Brien's) glorious death from the Acts of the General Chapter of the Dominican Order held in 1656:

"He went with joy to the place

of execution and there with a serene countenance, turning to his Catholic friends, who stood in the crowd inconsolable and weeping, he said to them: 'Hold firmly to your Faith, and observe its precepts, murmur not against the arrangements of God's Providence, and thus you will save your souls. Weep not at all for me, but rather pray that in this last trial of death I may by firmness and constancy attain any heavenly reward.'

"He then filled with a prophetic spirit, reproved the ferocity of the heretics, declaring that Divine Vengeance would soon await their crimes, and summoned Ireton, the arch-persecutor, to appear in eight days before the tribunal of the just Judge, to answer for his deeds of cruelty. This prophecy was verified and on the eighth day Ireton, stricken with the plague and crying out that the execution of the innocent bishop was the cause of his death, miserably expired. As to our holy martyr, his head was fixed on a spike and remained long exposed to public view on the Castle Tower."

Roll of honour

Bishop Terence Albert O'Brien, O.P., executed, beheaded, his head impaled October 31, 1651.

Thomas Stritch, ex-Mayor, executed October 31, 1651.

Major-General Patrick Purcell, of Ballycullane, Co. Limerick, executed October 31, 1651.

Dominic Fanning, ex-Mayor, executed November, 1651.

Sir Geoffrey Galwey, grandson of Mayor Geoffrey Galwey, 1600, executed November, 1651.

Geoffrey Baron, of Clonmel, nephew of the illustrious Franciscan Father, Luke Wadding, of Waterford, executed November, 1651.

Dr. Daniel Higgins, M.D., executed November, 1651.

Father John Collins, O.P., executed 1652.

Father James Woulfe, O.P., executed November 1651.

Father Philip O'Dwyer, brother of the Bishop of Limerick, died in prison during the plague, between July—October, 1651.

Father Laurence Welsh, Army Chaplain, executed November, 1651.

Father Francis Woulfe, O.F.M., betrayed and murdered in the city, November, 1651.

Sir Richard Everard, of Burncourt, Cahir, fate unknown.

Lieut.-Colonel Pierce Lacy, fate unknown.

Father David Roche, O.P., banished to Island of St. Kitts, British West Indies.

Bishop Edmond O'Dwyer, escaped.

Alderman Jordan Roche, ex-Mayour, executed.

Edmond Roche, Burgess, executed.

Maurice Baggott, of Baggottstown, executed.

Captain George Woulfe, brother of Father James, executed.

Captain Sexton, executed.

David Rochford, Burgess, executed.

O'Daly thus writes in 1655: "The bishop's head may yet be seen and four years later—covered with flesh quite in corrupt, and hair, on the tower which rises in the middle of the street, and drops of blood frequently issue from it."

At this juncture I would like to mention that during the construction of the Nurses' Homes in Mary Street in 1932 the Clerk of Works, the late Michael O'Flynn, showed me during the excavations 30 feet deep the vaulted foundations on which the Castle of Limerick once stood, known as Tower Hill, already referred to.

Taking more care of Limerick elderly

THE CARE OF Limerick's elderly—many of whom still fear the "County Home" stigma of the large geriatric hospitals—is set for major improvements in the years ahead.

Community care programme manager of the Mid-Western Health Board, Dr. Pierce McCrann, has confirmed that the board is preparing for the appointment of its first geriatrician and the provision of fully staffed day care centres in the city and county.

"Ten per cent of the population of Limerick city and county are over 65", said Dr. McCrann, "and the National Council for the Aged has recommended that health boards should be obliged to provide a statutory service for old as they do for children."

Another step

The move is another step in the changing face of the care of the elderly in this region in recent years.

More and more of Limerick's elderly are choosing to live out their final days in private nursing homes, nine of which have sprung up in the city and county, with a further home opening in Athlaca shortly.

The homes, catering for between 15 and 25 patients at a minimum of £100 a week, are nearly all booked out.

"We are happy with all of them", said Dr. McCrann. "They have to follow strict guidelines now and all are inspected regularly".

Miss Joan Stack, the health board superintendent public health nurse, said of the Limerick nursing homes: "They are second to none".

The board's big geriatric hospitals, St. Ita's in Newcastle West and St. Camillus in the city, give extra facilities such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy which often enable old people to return eventually to their own homes. Medical card holders are accommodated free of charge. Others are charged according to means.

But even board officials admit that the admissions policy to such hospitals is not as good as it would be if they had a full time geriatrician.

By PATRICIA FEEHILY

"People are being sent to those hospitals from Croom and other city hospitals. A full assessment isn't always possible", Dr. McCrann said.

The establishment of a day care centre in Limerick and another in the county, which is now being pursued by Dr. McCrann's department, will have major consequences for the care of the aged in the area.

"We are at present assessing people who might benefit from such a centre", Dr. McCrann said. "I believe there will be many people interested".

Community care facilities for the elderly in Limerick, however, are considerably handicapped by a shortage of public health nurses.

"For 10% of the population we have only 38 nurses", the programme manager said ruefully, "and I don't think in the present cutbacks that we will get any more staff".

The public health nurses, however, keep a register of all people over 65, and visit regularly those most at risk, particularly those living alone.

"There is a whole range of services available", Dr. McCrann said, "from chiropody grants to home improvement grants".

Old people can also apply for home helps, a scheme which has met with considerable success.

Dr. McCrann said that the board's community care department was also considering introducing to Limerick the boarding-out concept for old people, where a family took in an elderly person for whatever period they wished. This has already been tried in the Mid-West in County Clare after the closure of the Edenvale Hospital in Ennis.

Voluntary work

Mid-West, however, will continue to depend on voluntary endeavours such as the Vizes Court centre in Limerick city and the work of Sr. Geraldine and her colleagues in Janesboro.

Dr. McCrann said that it was heartening to see more and more volunteers coming to the assistance of old people in Limerick.

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