

THE STORY OF IRELAND

(By A. M. SULLIVAN.)

XIX.—HOW HENRY RECALLED THE ADVENTURERS. HOW HE CAME OVER HIMSELF TO PUNISH THEM AND BEFRIEND THE IRISH.

Strongbow having now assumed the sovereignty of Leinster, King Henry's jealousy burst into a flame. He issued a proclamation ordering Strongbow and every other Englishman in Ireland to return forthwith to England on pain of outlawry! Strongbow hurriedly despatched ambassador after ambassador to soothe Henry's anger; but all was vain. At length he hastened to England himself, and found the English sovereign assembling an enormous fleet and army with the intent of himself invading Ireland! The crafty knight humiliated himself to the utmost; yet it was with great difficulty the king was induced even to grant him audience. When he did, Strongbow, partly by his own most abject protestations of submission, and partly by the aid of mediators, received the royal pardon for his contumacy, and was confirmed in his grants of land in Wexford.

Early in October, 1171, Henry sailed with his armada of over four hundred ships, with a powerful army; and on the 18th of that month landed at Crooch, in Waterford Harbor. In his train came the flower of the Norman knights, captains, and commanders; and even in the day of Ireland's greatest unity and strength she would have found it difficult to cope with the force which the English king now led into the land.

Coming in such kingly power, and with all the pomp and pageantry with which he was particularly careful to surround himself—studiously polished, politic, plausible, dignified, and courtierlike towards such of the Irish princes as came within his presence—proclaiming himself by word and act, angry with the lawless and ruthless proceedings of Strongbow, Raymond, Fitzstephen, and Fitzgerald—Henry seems to have appeared to the Irish of the neighborhood something like an illustrious deliverer! They had full and public knowledge of his strong proclamation against Strongbow and his companions, calling upon all the Norman auxiliaries of Dermot to *return forthwith to England on pain of outlawry*. On every occasion subsequent to his landing Henry manifested a like feeling and purpose; so much so that the Irish of Wexford, who had taken Fitzstephen prisoner, sent a deputation to deliver him up to be dealt with by Henry, and the King imprisoned him forthwith in Reginald's tower to await further sentence! In fine, Henry pretended to come as an angry king to chastise his own contumacious subjects—the Norman auxiliaries of the Leinster prince—and to adjudicate upon the complicated issues which had arisen out of the treaties of that prince with them. This most smooth and plausible hypocrisy, kept up with admirable skill, threw the Irish utterly off their guard, and made them regard his visit as the reverse of hostile or undesirable. As I have already pointed out, the idea of national unity was practically defunct among the Irish at the time. For more than a hundred years it had been very much a game of "everyone for himself" (varied with "every man against everybody else") with them. There was no stable or enduring national government or central authority in the land, since Brian's time. The nakedly hostile and sanguinary invasion of Strongbow they were all ready enough, in their disintegrated and ill-organized way, to confront and bravely resist to the death; and had Henry on this occasion really appeared to them to come as an invader, they would have instantly encountered him sword in hand; a truth most amply proven by the fact that when subsequently (but *too late*) they found out the real nature of the English designs, not all the power of united, compact, and mighty England was able, for hundreds and hundreds of years, to subdue the broken and weakened, deceived and betrayed, but still heroic Irish nation.

Attracted by the fame of Henry's magnanimity, the splendor of his power, the (supposed) justice and friendliness of his intentions, the local princes one by one arrived at his temporary court; where they were dazzled by the pomp, and caressed by the courtier affabilities, of the great English king. To several of them it seems very quickly to have occurred, that, considering the ruinously distracted and demoralised state of the country, and the absence of any strong central governmental authority able to protect any one of them against the capricious lawlessness of his neighbors, the very best thing they could do—*possibly* for the interests of the whole country, *certainly* for their own particular personal or local interests—would be to constitute Henry a friendly arbitrator, regulator, and protector, on a much wider scale than (as *they* imagined) he intended. The wily Englishman only wanted the whisper of such a desirable pretext. It was just what he had been angling for. Yes; he, the mighty and magnanimous, the just and friendly, English sovereign would accept the position. They should all, to this end, recognise him as a nominal liege lord; and then he, on the other hand, would undertake to regulate all their differences, tranquillise the island, and guarantee to each individual secure possession of his own territory!

Thus, by a smooth and plausible diplomacy, Henry found himself, with the consent or at the request of the southern Irish princes, in a position which he never could have attained, except through seas of blood, if he had allowed them to suspect that he came as a hostile invader, not as a neighbor and powerful friend.

From Waterford he marched to Cashel, and from Cashel to Dublin, receiving on the way visits from the several local princes: and now that the news spread that the magnanimous English king had consented to be their arbitrator, protector, and liege lord, every one of them that once visited Henry went away wheedled into adhesion to the scheme. Amongst the rest was Donald O'Brien, Prince of Thomond, who the more readily gave in his adhesion to the new idea, for that he, as I have already mentioned of him, had thrown off allegiance to Roderick, the titular Ard-Ri, and felt the necessity of protection by some one against the probable consequences of his conduct. Arrived at Dublin, Henry played the king on a still grander scale. A vast palace of wicker-work was erected for his especial residence; and here, during the winter, he kept up a continued round of feasting, hospitality, pomp, and pageantry. Every effort was used to attract the Irish princes to the royal court, and once attracted thither, Henry made them the objects of the most flattering attentions. They were made to feel painfully the contrast between the marked superiority in elegance, wealth, civilisation—especially in new species of armor and weapons, and in new methods of war and military tactics—presented by the Norman-English, and the backwardness of their own country in each particular; a change wrought, as they well knew, altogether or mainly within the last hundred and fifty years!

(To be continued.)

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