

THE STORY OF IRELAND

(By A. M. SULLIVAN.)

XXII.—HOW THE ANGLO-NORMAN COLONY FARED.

I have, in the foregoing pages, endeavored to narrate fully and minutely all the circumstances leading to, and attendant upon, the Anglo-Norman landing and settlement in this country, A.D. 1169-1172. It transcends in importance all other events in our history, having regard to ulterior and enduring consequences; and a clear and correct understanding of that event will furnish a key to the confused history of the troubled period which immediately succeeded it.

It is not my design to follow the formal histories of Ireland in relating at full length, and in consecutive detail, the events of the four centuries that succeeded the date of King Henry's landing. It was a period of such wild, confused, and chaotic struggle, that youthful readers would be hopelessly bewildered in the effort to keep its incidents minutely and consecutively remembered. Moreover, the history of those four centuries fully written out, would make a goodly volume in itself: a volume abounding with stirring incidents and affecting tragedies, and with episodes of valor and heroism, adventurous daring, and chivalrous patriotic devotion, not to be surpassed in the pages of romance. But the scope of my story forbids my dwelling at any great length upon the events of this period. Such of my readers as may desire to trace them in detail will find them succinctly related in the formal histories of Ireland. What I propose to do here, is to make my youthful readers acquainted with the general character, course, and progress of the struggle: the phases, changes, or mutations through which it passed: the aspects it presented, and the issues it contested, as each century rolled on, dwelling only upon events of comparative importance, and incidents illustrating the actions and the actors of the period.

Let us suppose a hundred years to have passed away since King Henry's visit to Ireland—that event which Englishmen who write Irish history affect to regard as an "easy conquest" of our country. Let us see what the Normans have achieved by the end of one hundred years in Ireland. They required but *one* year to conquer England: and, accordingly, judging by all ordinary calculations and probabilities, we ought surely, in one hundred times that duration, to find Ireland as thoroughly subdued and as completely pacified as England had been in the twelvemonth that sufficed for its utter subjugation.

The nature of the struggle waged by the Anglo-Normans against Ireland during this period was rather peculiar. At no time was it an open and avowed effort to conquer Ireland as England had been conquered, though, as a matter of fact, the military force engaged against the Irish throughout the period exceeded that which had sufficed the Normans to conquer England. King Henry, as we have already seen, presented himself and his designs in no such hostile guise to the Irish. He seems to have concluded that, broken and faction-split, disorganised and demoralised, as the Irish princes were, they would probably be rallied into union by the appearance of a nakedly hostile invasion; and he knew well that it would be easier to conquer a dozen Englands than to overcome this soldier race if only united against a common foe. So the crown of England did not, until long after this time, openly profess to pursue a conquest of Ireland, any more than it professed to pursue a conquest in India in the time of Clive. An Anglo-Norman colony was planted on the south-eastern corner of the island. This colony, which was well sustained from England, was to push its own fortunes, as it were, in Ireland, and to extend itself as rapidly as it could. To it, as ample excitement, sustenance, and recompense, was given, prospectively, the land to be taken from the Irish. The planting of such a colony—composed, as it was, of able, skilful, and desperate military adventurers—and the endowing of

it, so to speak, with such rich prospect of plunder, was the establishment of a perpetual and self-acting mechanism for the gradual reduction of Ireland.

Against this colony the Irish warred in their own desultory way, very much as they warred against each other, neither better nor worse; and in the fierce warring of the Irish princes with each other, the Anglo-Norman colonists sided now with one, now with another; nay, very frequently in such conflicts Anglo-Normans fought on *each* side! The colony, however, had precisely that which the Irish needed—a supreme authority ever guiding it in the one purpose; and it always felt strong in the consciousness that, at the worst, England was at its back, and that in its front lay, not the Irish nation, but the broken fragments of that once great and glorious power.

The Irish princes, meantime, each one for himself, fought away as usual, either against the Norman colonists or against some neighboring Irish chief. Indeed, they may be described as fighting each other with one hand, and fighting England with the other! Quite as curious is the fact, that in all their struggles with the latter, they seem to have been ready enough to admit the honorary lordship or suzerainty of the English king, but resolved to resist to the death the Norman encroachments beyond the cities and lands to the possession of which they had attained by reason of their treaties with, or successes under, Dermot McMurrough. The fight was all for the soil. Then, as in our own times, the battle cry was "Land or Life!"

But the English power had two modes of action; and when one failed the other was tried. As long as the rapacious freebooting of the barons was working profitably, not only for themselves but for the king, it was all very well. But when that policy resulted in arousing the Irish to successful resistance, and the freebooters were being routed everywhere, or when they had learned to think too much of their own profit and too little of the king's, then his English majesty could take to the *role* of magnanimous friend, protector, or suzerain of the Irish princes, and angry punisher of the rapacious Norman barons.

We have already seen that when Henry the Second visited Ireland, it was (pretendedly at least) in the character of a just-minded king, who came to chastise his own subjects, the Norman settlers. When next an English king visited these shores, it was professedly with a like design. In 1210 King John arrived, and during his entire stay in this country he was occupied, not in wars or conflicts with the Irish; quite the contrary—in chastising the most powerful and presumptuous of the great Norman lords! What wonder that the Irish princes were confirmed in the old idea, impressed upon them by King Henry's words and actions, that though in the Norman barons they had to deal with savage and merciless spoliators, in the English king they had a friendly suzerain? As a matter of fact, the Irish princes who had fought most stoutly and victoriously against the Normans up to the date of John's arrival, at once joined their armies to his, and at the head of this combined force the English king proceeded to overthrow the most piratical and powerful of the barons! Says McGee: "The visit of King John, which lasted from the 20th of June to the 25th of August, was mainly directed to the reduction of those intractable Anglo-Irish princes whom Fitz-Henry and Gray had proved themselves unable to cope with. Of these the De Lacys of Meath were the most obnoxious. They not only assumed an independent state, but had sheltered de Braos, Lord of Brecknock, one of the recalcitrant barons of Wales, and refused to surrender him on the royal summons. To assert his authority and to strike terror into the nobles of other possessions, John crossed the Channel with a prodigious fleet—in the Irish annals said to consist of seven hundred sail. He landed at Crook, reached Dublin, and prepared at once to subdue the Lacys. With his own army, and the co-operation of Cathal O'Connor, he drove out Walter de Lacy, Lord of Meath, who fled to his brother, Hugh de Lacy, since de Courcy's disgrace, Earl of Ulster. From Meath into Louth John

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