

## HISTORIC IRELAND

### SOME NOTED PLACES

To those who know Ireland and Irish history well, perhaps Tara is the first name that presents itself to the mind when speaking of the country's striking points of history—a hill of gentle eminence, sloping upward from the fertile plains of Meath. Here it was that the Ard Righs made laws for the entire country, and St. Patrick first preached the faith during one of the triennial parliaments presided over by the chief monarch, Leary. The last monarch who dwelt at Tara was Diarmid. Extracts from the old Annals bring up strange scenes from those first early, half-civilised days, when St. Patrick's successors were instilling those Catholic principles to which the Irish have clung so tenaciously. One of the most interesting of these extracts has to do with that Diarmid who was the last high king to reign at Tara, and who for all that is known to the contrary may have been buried in the remarkable tumulus at New Grange, not far from Dublin, which is known to have been the burying-place of the ancient Irish kings. For many years considered an outlaw, a price set on his head by Tuathal, whose successor in office he was to be, Diarmid lived many years with St. Kieran at Clonmacnoise, and when the saint was founding his monastery, helped him to put up his first building. Afterward, when he was King Diarmid, he had serious disputes with the monks. The monasteries had the right of sanctuary, and on two separate occasions the king denied this right, taking by force the offenders who sought it and putting them to death. The monks protested, but he flagrantly insulted them, whereat, in their indignation and anger, they set a ban upon Diarmid and Tara, condemning both. After that the ancient palace fell into decay; no other Ard Righ ruled within it, each king, after Diarmid, ruling in his own ancestral territory.

Sympathy in itself is an education, for anything that broadens the mind helps to develop it. Sympathy, therefore, is the companion we must take with us on our voyage to the historic spots of Ireland. Hers is such an heroic story and so pathetic. Well has Father Hill called her 'the passion flower of nations.' Her struggles for liberty, the great men who rose within her borders, leaders in battle—all are memories which will appeal to the heart as well as to the mind. One may feel inclined to smile, in this prosaic age, when they show you the grave of the poet Ossian, as they do at Cushendall in County Antrim—or point out the evidences of Fion MacCoul's great strength. But after a while one grows to expect these tales, even to look for them, and in turn to love them. Yet all the tales are not of imaginary personages. The doings of hundreds of years ago live fresh in the people's hearts to-day—wonderful tales of wonderful deeds.

In Galway there is a beautiful church—now Protestant—dedicated to St. Nicholas—called St. Nicholas Within the Walls to distinguish it from the Catholic Church of St. Nicholas Without. In the Church of St. Nicholas Within were two statues carved in black marble—one of the great saint himself, and the other of Our Lord. Both of these escaped the fury of Cromwell and his men, and may be seen in the Catholic church of the same name. Though even now very beautiful, the Protestant church must have been much more magnificent in the old days, for it had fourteen chapels, at the altars of which Mass was often celebrated at the one time. One of the five of these left standing is called Lynche's Chapel, containing a monument to Mayor Lynche Fitzstephen, whose tragic story is part of the history of Galway.

James Lynche Fitzstephen was elected Mayor of Galway in 1493. He had one son, Walter, his idol and the idol of the townspeople, who was engaged to be married to a lovely young girl. Preparations were going on for the approaching nuptials, when a noble young Spaniard came to visit the mayor—the son of one who had befriended and entertained the mayor during a recent visit to Spain.

Young Fitzstephen had one great fault—jealousy. He became so intensely jealous of the Spaniard that in a moment of blind rage, seeing him leaving the house of the girl with whom he was in love, he accused him of treachery, and in his mad fury slew him.

The grief and consternation of the worthy mayor when the body was found were uncontrollable—but when his son Walter stepped forth out of the awe-struck throng and in a tone of forced calm acknowledged his guilt, the father was stupefied. There was but one course to pursue, and that course the unfortunate young man desired to follow—he must give his own life for the life he had taken. Recovering from the first shock, the people begged the father to have pity. All pleaded earnestly for him—the wife, the mother, the friends, the sweetheart who had been the innocent cause of all the trouble. But Mayor Fitzstephen was inexorable. Honor and justice demanded full expiation. In order to avoid the gathering of the people, he set the execution for an early hour in the morning. Citizens were appointed to watch the prison, and an effort was to be made to rescue the young man on his way to the scaffold. But while the populace surged to

and fro before the house, the father himself led his son—more than willing, even eager thus to atone—to the second storey of the mansion, placed a rope about his neck and launched him from a window directly over the entrance door.

The history adds that the father never left his house again—his heart was broken. All that remains of the scene of this tragedy is a portion of the front wall of the house. In this are two Gothic doorways. Over one is the coat-of-arms of the Lynches, over the second, and beneath the window from which Walter Fitzstephen was hanged, are the 'crossbones.'

In 1649 Cromwell had besieged Drogheda, which then, as now, extended on both sides of the Boyne. The walls encircling the town were a mile and a half in length, twenty feet high, and from four to six feet thick. Of the eleven massive gateways only one remains standing. From there he went to Wexford, and the frightful tragedy of the Bull Ring, as the market-place was called, still lives green in Irish memories. There three hundred women of all ages and rank knelt before the cross praying for mercy, and there the brutal soldiery murdered every one. In the height of the carnage a priest appeared bearing aloft a crucifix, encouraging his helpless people, until he, too, was stricken down.

Strongly built and fortified, Wexford was easily in a position to make favorable terms with the enemy. It was defended by a brave and experienced garrison, and in case of siege would have held out and probably defeated the besiegers. Four gentlemen of position in the town were appointed to treat with Oliver Cromwell in behalf of the people. One of these, James Stafford, was captain of the castle, which, being built on a height, commanded the walls of Wexford. While the governor and inhabitants were awaiting Cromwell's reply, this man, for a price, delivered up the keys of the castle, and the besiegers were thus treacherously enabled to enter. Singularly enough, the priest mentioned above, who died at his post, was Father Raymond Stafford, of the same name and race as the betrayer.

The story of the city of Limerick—the scene of the greatest struggle for Irish liberty—is one to stir the blood. Indissolubly connected with it is the name of Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan. Besieged by the enemy, it was saved by Sarsfield's bravery, and Sarsfield's ride is a matter of history. With a hostile army at its gates, the city was making active preparations for defence, when a deserter informed Sarsfield that a large train of artillery was expected to be in the English camp in a day or two, and that there would be no organised attack until it arrived. It was then that Sarsfield determined on the brave attempt which has passed into history as Sarsfield's ride. Waiting until night, he rode out, with a body of picked men, in a directly opposite route to that from which the siege train was expected—this in order to mislead any possible watchers. Under the guidance of a gentleman who, refined and highly educated, was yet an outlaw because of his faith, they journeyed through the country, over mountain and valley, making a wide circuit until, by degrees, they stole nearer and nearer to the artillery train and its escort.

They rested all the following day among the mountains and when darkness fell again started out. There was but one thing wanting that Sarsfield might not spring his mine too soon—the watchword for the night in the enemy's camp. An Irish trooper, whose horse was lame, was obliged to drop behind the rest. On his road he encountered an Englishwoman, the wife of one of the soldiers. She had lost her way and was utterly at sea when the good-hearted soldier came across her. He mounted her on his horse until they reached a path from which he could show her where to reach the English camp. Grateful for his kindness, she gave him the countersign. It was Sarsfield!

So secretly and carefully had the Irish made their way through the hills, and so true to the cause were the peasantry, that the English convoy had no suspicion of danger until the sentries caught the tread of horses and heard the word: 'Sarsfield!' Even then they suspected nothing until the Irish were upon them, and in a short time the work was done. The guns, the baggage, powder, and stores of every kind were piled upon the loaded cannon, their muzzles were buried in the ground, and with a roar and a flash that were heard at Limerick, the whole train was blown into the air.

The memorable devotion of the women of Limerick has passed into history. After the English had beaten the men from their posts they urged them back to the conflict, boldly standing in the breach even nearer to the foe than the men, and fighting for nearly three hours, throwing stones, bottles, and every available missile down on the heads of the assailants. To this splendid heroism King William's own historian attributes his defeat—'foiled by a woman's hand before a battered wall.'

Limerick was victorious that time, but King William determined that it must be won. The Irish, with Sarsfield, were determined to defend it to the last. A year after the gallant defence recorded above it was once more a battlefield—one on which the fortunes of the campaign were to be decided: the last great Irish struggle for many a generation.