

Exposure of the unfounded character of the story that in the Irish rebellion in 1641, Bishop Bedell, of Kilmore, countenanced the rebels of Cavan, by drawing up a remonstrance for them / by T. Wharton Jones.

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[From the Author.]

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EXPOSURE OF THE UNFOUNDED CHARACTER
OF THE STORY THAT
IN THE IRISH REBELLION OF 1641,
BISHOP BEDELL, OF KILMORE, COUNTENANCED
THE REBELS OF CAVAN,
BY DRAWING UP A REMONSTRANCE
FOR THEM.

BY T. WHARTON JONES, F.R.S.

(Reprinted from the *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette*, for July 20,
and July 27, 1888.)

ON hearing of the frustration of the plan to surprise the Castle of Dublin and seize the arms therein stored, the leaders of the rebellion in the county of Cavan thought fit to temporise. They, accordingly, had a "Remonstrance to the Lords Justices and Council" drawn up calculated to put a gloss upon their proceedings, and which was substantially in the same style and to the same effect as the Manifesto issued on the day of the outbreak of the rebellion in the name of the Roman Catholics of Ireland generally, but concluding with the following mild admission of the atrocities which had already been committed:—"As for the mischiefs and inconveniences that have already happened through the disorder of the common sort of people against the English inhabitants or any other person, we with the noblemen and gentlemen of this and each other county in the kingdom are most willing and ready to use our and their best endeavours in causing restitution and satisfaction to be made, as in part we have already done. An answer hereunto is most humbly desired, with such present expedition as may by your lordships be thought most convenient for avoiding the continuance of the barbarity and incivility of the commonalty, who have committed many outrages and insolences without any order, consenting, or privity of ours."

This Remonstrance, (*a*) which was signed by a number of the O'Reillys—the chief clan of the county of Cavan, allies and kinsmen of the rebel O'Neills—Bishop Bedell of Kilmore was requested to carry to Dublin and present to the Lords Justices and Council. He, however, declined, on the plea that by reason of his age he was not fit to travel to Dublin with that expedition which they desired, and also because he feared that many of the poor English of Belturbet and neighbouring places, who had found refuge with him and depended on what protection and subsistence he could afford, would, by his absence, be exposed to want and other injuries. “The Bishop’s excuse,” says Dr. Henry Jones, the Dean of Kilmore at the time, from whose Narrative this is quoted, (*b*) “the rebels interpreted as a put off, yet did the gravity and respect which the Bishop’s presence commanded restrain them from what some in their council had before propounded in case he should decline that service for them.” Dean Jones himself was next in their eye, being a prisoner, with his family, in their hands. He was, accordingly, designated and commanded upon this service. “I must confess,” observes the Dean, “it was in every respect improper for me to undertake, but considering that I might gain the opportunity of laying open to the Lords Justices what I had observed of the proceedings of the rebels in the county of Cavan, and which could not otherwise be so safely communicated, I did accept the employment.”

Dean Jones, accordingly, went to Dublin, accompanied by Mr. John Waldron of Farnham, delivered the “Remonstrance,” and after waiting ten days in that city, returned with an answer from the Lords Justices and Council. “Return I must,” remarks the Dean, “my wife and children remaining as hostages in the hands of the rebels.”

The following are the preamble and substance of the Reply to the Remonstrance (*c*) brought back from the Lords Justices and Council by Dean Jones:—

(*a*) See paper in the Public Record office, London, endorsed “6 No. 1641. Coppie of the Remonstrance of the Rebells in the County of Cavan.”

(*b*) “The Beginnings and Proceedings of the Rebellion in the County of Cavan, from the 23rd of October, 1641, until the 15th of June, 1642. By Henry Jones, D.D. (London, August 11, 1642.)

(*c*) See paper in the Public Record Office, London, endorsed—“Novr. 10, 1641.—Coppie of the answer to the Remonstrance of the Rebells in the County of Cavan,”

"By the Lords Justices and Council.

"WM. PARSONS. JO. BORLASE.

"Henry Jones, Dean of Kilmore, and John Waldron of Farnham, in County Cavan, gent., attended us, the Lords Justices and Council, at this Board (November 6th, 1641), and presented unto us a writing styled—The humble Remonstrance made by the Gentry and Commonalty of the County of Cavan of their grievances, common with other parts of this Kingdom of Ireland.

"Upon consideration whereof, and of other intelligence we had from those parts before the said Jones and Waldron came hither, we observe"—Here follow the observations, which were, in substance, that the Subscribers to the Remonstrance had, without authority, presumed to make use of his Majesty's name, and that they had no right to speak in the name of all the gentry and commonalty of the county of Cavan, or other county, and that there were no grounds for their alleged fears. They were also reminded of the illegality of taking into their own hands forts and other strong places without the King's authority.

The Lords Justices and Council, however, added that, as the Remonstrants had not participated in the cruel outrages perpetrated against the English, their Remonstrance would be forwarded, with a favourable representation of their case to the King, provided they (the Remonstrants) would lay down their arms, make restitution to those who had been despoiled, and return home.

The members of the Council who, along with the Lords Justices, signed this reply, were—Lancelot Dublin (Archbishop Bulkeley), Ormond and Ossory, R. Dillon, Cha. Lambert, Ad. Loftus, Jo. Temple, Cha. Coote, Rob. Meredyth.

Dean Jones, in his Narrative, expresses his belief that the subscribers to the Remonstrance did not expect or even wish any other answer than that which they received; their object in getting up the document being rather to win upon the people, in whose name they acted, than to give any reasonable account or satisfaction to the Lords Justices concerning their proceedings. In fact, the rebels of the County of Cavan were at the very time mustering their forces—all men from sixteen to sixty years of age—to meet at Virginia the Monday following, notwithstanding that they had authorised the Dean of

Kilmore to assure the Lords Justices that there would be a cessation of all proceedings on their part until the receipt of their lordships' answer. Afterwards, says Dean Jones, as many cruelties and outrages were committed in the County of Cavan as elsewhere.

The narrative of this transaction as given by the Rev. Gilbert Burnet, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, on the authority of the Rev. Alexander Clogie, and subsequently reproduced by other biographers of Bishop Bedell of Kilmore, is altogether erroneous, inasmuch as the bishop is stated to have written out the Remonstrance for the rebels, and sent it by a special messenger of their own party to the Lords Justices; whereas it is evident, from the official copy of the original document in the Public Record Office, London, which I examined and transcribed with my own hand, as well as from the narrative of Dr. Henry Jones, the Dean of Kilmore, that it was he himself and Mr. John Waldron who took the Remonstrance to Dublin.

The real history of the affair, according to Sir John Temple, Master of the Rolls, whose name appears as one of the Members of the Council, signing the Reply to the Remonstrance, was this:—Mr. James Talbot, in a letter dated November 9, 1641, to the Lords Justices, from the county of Cavan, says that he understood from Philip MacMulmore O'Reilly, one of the signatories, that the Remonstrance from the principal Irish in the county of Cavan to the Lords Justices and Council, of which Dean Jones and Master Waldron were the bearers, had been drawn up in the English Pale, and brought thence to the Irish rebel leaders in Cavan by Colonel Plunket, a confederate of their own. And this was a good while before December 16, 1641, the date when the old English of the Pale publicly declared their alliance with the Irish in rebellion. Similar Remonstrances, it may be observed, were sent from the counties of Monaghan and Longford—probably, from other counties also. That from Monaghan was given to Mr. Nicholas Simson, one of the Members of Parliament for the county, then a prisoner in the hands of the rebels there, by Ever MacMahon, with the intimation that the gentlemen of the county had chosen him to deliver it to the Lords Justices and Council, to be by them forwarded to the King in England. The other Member of

Parliament for the County of Monaghan, Mr. Richard Blayney, cousin of Lord Blayney, was with many others massacred. Lord Blayney's wife and children, who were taken prisoners on the very day of the outbreak, had their lives spared, but were brutally treated.

The Remonstrance from the county of Longford was in the form of a letter to Lord Dillon, of Costilough, signed by twenty-six gentlemen, all of the name of Farrell or O'Farrell, and presented by him to the Lords Justices and Council on their behalf, November 10, 1641.

The story of the Remonstrance of the rebels of Cavan given in the Life of Bishop Bedell, of Kilmore, by Burnet, on the authority of Clogie, though so utterly contrary to fact, has been made use of by apologists of the rebellion, to make it appear that the proceedings in Cavan were so far countenanced by Bishop Bedell. By these apologists, Bishop Burnet's authority is especially insisted on as if unimpeachable, notwithstanding that in his preface Burnet disclaims all responsibility, saying:—"I had a great collection of materials put into my hands by a worthy and learned divine, Mr. Clogie, that was much more the author of this book than I am. I confess my part in it was so small that I can scarce assume anything to myself but the copying out what was put in my hands." And again, in his vindication of the funeral sermon he preached on Archbishop Tillotson, against strictures by Dr. Hickes, the deprived Dean of Worcester, Burnet says:—"I am not answerable for any mistakes (in the Life of Bishop Bedell) which my author (the Rev. Mr. Clogie) may have misremembered; and so if any of these are wrong, they are another man's errors—they are not mine."

The Rev. Alexander Clogie was step-son-in-law of Bishop Bedell, and though given to hasty assertion, was a talented and well-meaning man, with a profound veneration for the Bishop. In regard to his mistake about the Cavan Remonstrance:—Mr. Clogie, after his own blundering and inaccurate fashion, appears to have applied to that document emanating from the Roman Catholic rebels of Cavan the part which Bishop Bedell took, some 8 or 9 years before, in the case of a petition from the county of Cavan against the imposition of increased taxes to make up the subsidies which Wentworth,

on his appointment as Lord Deputy, demanded from the House of Commons for recruiting the army in Ireland.

A pamphlet justifying the part taken by the Irish in the rebellion of 1641 was issued in London in 1747, anonymously, and without a printer's or publisher's name, entitled "A brief Account, from the most authentic Protestant Writers, of the Causes, Motives, and Mischiefs of the Irish Rebellion on the 23rd day of October, 1641, delivered in a Dialogue between a Dissenter and a Member of the Church of Ireland, as by law established. Together with an Appendix." Under the guise of extreme candour and pretended exactness in the statement of facts, the "Churchman" labours to make it appear that it was really the English Protestants, hounded on by the Lords Justices and Council, who committed the first outrages; and that whatever the Irish did against the English was done merely in self-defence and natural retaliation. The Remonstrance of the Rebels of Cavan is quoted at length in Appendix No. 1 of the pamphlet in question as the writing of the Protestant Bishop Bedell of Kilmore, who is, on the strength of that, set before us as a witness in support of the "Churchman's" argument in favour of the rebellion!

While the unfounded allegation as to the authorship of the Cavan Remonstrance was thus greedily seized on, in order to make it appear that the rebellion, as it took place in the County of Cavan, was countenanced by Bishop Bedell, the truthfulness of the statements in the contemporary official depositions preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, was called in question, and a counter series of unauthenticated depositions adduced, long after the alleged events, to show that cruelties were in the first instance perpetrated by the English Protestants on the Irish Catholics.

In regard to the depositions preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, it may be here mentioned that in the valuable work entitled "Ireland in the Seventeenth Century," by Miss Hickson, published two or three years ago, the authoress gives an analysis of 200 of them, from which it appears that 46 refer to outrages by the Irish rebels on the British Protestants during the first seven days of the rebellion; 19 to outrages in the course of the month of November; 25 to outrages in December; 32 in January, and 19 in February.

The diminishing numbers of outrages which are here manifested, it is to be noted, must be taken to indicate not an amelioration of affairs, but only that fewer victims remained to be sacrificed, and that the British were now acting on their defence.

The misrepresentations contained in the *Dialogue between a Dissenter and a Member of the Church of Ireland* were exposed by Mr. Walter Harris (the editor of Sir James Ware's History of Ireland and the Irish Bishops) in a book published in 1752, entitled "Fiction unmasked: or An Answer to a Dialogue published by a Popish Physician, and Pretended to have Passed Between a Dissenter and a Member of the Church of Ireland; Wherein the Causes, Motives, and Mischiefs of the Irish Rebellion and Massacres in 1641 are laid thick upon the Protestants." To this book of Mr. Harris a rejoinder appeared in 1767, entitled "Historical Memoirs of the Irish Rebellion in the year 1641, Extracted from Parliamentary Journals, State Acts, and the most eminent Protestant Historians." In spite, however, of all the efforts herein made to maintain fiction for fact by vigorous assertion and re-assertion of unfounded allegations, so as to make the worse appear the better cause, the admissions of the rebels themselves in the Cavan Remonstrance, the admissions direct or indirect from other rebel sources, and the admissions of the apologists themselves, are alone sufficient to confirm the tenor of all that has been recorded on the subject in State papers, the depositions in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin; in the various pamphlets and news-letters published at the time, and the special histories by Dean Jones, Sir John Temple, Dr. Borlase, Sir Richard Cox, and even the Rev. Dr. Nalson, who wrote to palliate the atrocities of the Rebellion for the purpose of screening the King's memory from the imputations which had been cast against his Majesty for having encouraged the schemes which led to the first outburst of rebellion.

Mr. Daniel O'Connell, in his "Memoir of Ireland, Native and Saxon," published in 1843, quotes from Mr. Thomas Moore the lines:—

"On our side is virtue and Erin;

On theirs is the Saxon and guilt."

not only as a fancy motto on the title-page, but also as a brief of instruction for vituperating the English and extolling the

virtues of the pure Irish, which he does with characteristic forensic energy.

In illustration of his argument that during the Rebellion of 1641 humanity and generosity were observed towards the British Protestants by the Irish Catholics, whereas the English Protestant party acted towards the Irish with brutal ferocity, the treatment which Bishop Bedell of Kilmore experienced at the hands of the rebels in the County of Cavan is referred to as humane and generous in the highest degree.

On this it is to be observed that though the treatment of Bishop Bedell was not so bad as that which most other English Protestants experienced, his live stock was all driven away—first his oxen and kine in the field; then his horses, both abroad and in the stable; and lastly the sheep in the court-yard. Next, the septuagenarian Bishop himself, with his family, was turned out of house and home, robbed of his household goods, including his books, and imprisoned in a ruinous castle in the middle of a lake—the season of the year being mid-winter—whilst the poor Protestant refugees whom he had been protecting were turned adrift and left to their fate.

Mr. O'Connell, it may be added, repeats as true the unfounded story of the Cavan Remonstrance, to make it appear that Bishop Bedell sympathised with the rebels; whilst Mr. Thomas Moore,* improving on it, says that "such a writing coming from a Protestant Prelate, far too wise and amiable to sanction statements which he did not himself believe, may be regarded as a fair representation of the state of feeling in the province!"

To conclude: Bishop Bedell being liberated from Loughoughter Castle after three weeks' detention, found a friendly home in the house of the Rev. Denis Sheridan, where he was attended with the most affectionate care; but in about a month he succumbed to the pestilence, which too surely followed in the wake of the outrages perpetrated by the rebels.

SWISS COTTAGE, VENTNOR, I.W.

* History of Ireland, vol. iv., page 223, published in 1846, in Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopaedia.