

DEATH OF GERALD, 16TH EARL OF DESMOND

11 NOV 1583

Desmond and his party were now reduced to the utmost straits. "Where they did dress their meat," says Hooker, "thence they would remove to eat it in another place, and from thence go into another place to lie. In the night they would watch; in the forenoon they would be upon the hills and mountains to descry the country, and in the afternoon they would sleep." Ormond had agents stationed at many points to watch Desmond's movements, and lay hands on and secure him. All means of subsistence were gone, and he must needs take by force what was necessary for existence. They were indeed his tenants and subjects on whom he lays tribute, but they acknowledge him lord no longer.

Some three miles north of the direct road from Tralee to Castleisland, and somewhat nearer the latter town, there is a deep narrow glen about two miles long, enclosed on all sides within high hills. The northern side is thickly wooded throughout its whole length to-day as it was three hundred years ago.⁽²⁶⁾ An old road crosses the wood obliquely at its western end, perhaps for cattle in the uplands to come and drink at the stream in the Glen. This road is known as "Boher-an-Erle" (the Earl's road). The glen is called Glounaneenta (Glouna dionta—Glen of the cattle sheds). It is as secluded as a glade in the Great Lone Land; its stillness is rarely broken except by the song of the mavis, or the murmur of the streamlet in the valley. It is hallowed from its associations, and the simple husbandman can tell its history. Mostly in this glen Desmond lay concealed during 1583. "The Earl of Desmond," says Churchill, "accompanied only with seven men and his priest, who from the tenth of last March (1583) hid them (selves) in a glen within Sleeve-Lachra, having no other food for the space of seven weekes, than six plow garrans, whereon they fed without bread, drink, or any other sostenance."

On Saturday, 9th November, 1583, the Earl of Desmond went westward from Glounaneenta "wood near Castleisland" beyond Tramore to Derrymore wood near Bunnow, whence he sent two of his horsemen, Crohore Scully and

decided to bivouac for the night. After a while Owen and Donnil went on the hill overlooking the glen, probably the present Keelbawn, to see whether "they may discover any fire in the woode or hear any stirre," and having come over the glen, sure enough they saw a fire beneath them. Donnil then crept cautiously on to spy who might be there, and on returning announced that there were persons in a cabin, but that the cattle had not yet arrived. So they decided on postponing attack until

the prey and the Earl's party were together. At dawn on Monday, 11th November, the Moriarties and soldiers were astir. Owen and Donnil with a soldier named Daniel O'Kelly took the lead up the glen, the Kernes following and four soldiers last. When they came opposite the hut they rushed towards it with a great cry. Those in the cabin heard them approach, and all made their escape except an old man. Owen "ran throw the the cabbin after the Erle's company." O'Kelly rushed in followed by the Kernes and soldiers, and dealt a blow with his sword at the old man, inflicting a deep wound on the arm. "Hold," said he, "I am the Earl of Desmond; save my life." Owen, who had just returned, made answer: "Thou hast killed thyself long ago, and now thou shalt be prisoner to the Queen's Majesty, and to the Earl of Ormond, Lord General of Munster." Desmond was bleeding, and Owen grasped him by the injured arm, and was hurrying him on, but the Earl was faint and slow; whereupon Owen threatened to cut his head off and take it with them. Donnil then offered to take the Earl on his back, and proposed to the others to do the same in turn. Donnil soon got tired, and let him down. The Earl's party, who had been guarding the cattle on the hill, were now making their appearance. So the company refused to carry Desmond any further, dreading attack. The truculent Owen then ordered Kelly⁽²⁷⁾ to prepare to cut the Earl's head off, and laying Desmond on the ground, they bared his neck, and Kelly "drawing his sword," severed the head from the body. The sordid pair, Owen and Donnil, instantly took posses-

John Daly, with eighteen Kernes to bring him a prey, while he and John McElligott and two or three footmen stayed at Derrymore. Now, there lived at Cahir-ni-fahye, west of Castle Gregory Castle, beside the sea, a family of the Moriarties⁽²⁷⁾ who had made themselves very active as henchmen of Ormond's. By the Earl's direction the Kernes went to capture a prey from this family. They took from Maurice Mac Owen and Robert Mac Edmond forty cows, nine horses, with great store of other goods and household stuff, and stripped naked Maurice, his wife, and children, which we may reasonably interpret, stripped half naked, since it is the testimony of an enemy who will not mince his charges. Straightway Maurice prepared to recover the cattle, and sent word to his brothers-in-law—Owen McDonnil Moriarty, and Donnill, Owen's brother who lived at Castle Drum; and sought aid also of Colonel Stanley in Dingle who had charge of the Queen's forces in the district. Stanley directed them to follow the cattle, to call to their aid the Ward

of Castle Magne, and promised to muster a band to follow and give them assistance. Owen Moriarty, the younger of the brothers, went to Castle Magne, and besought Captain Cheston to accompany them with his men. Cheston refused to leave his charge, but gave five soldiers to aid the party. "Donnil having eighteen proper Kernes⁽²⁸⁾ in company," whereof two had firearms, went eastward from Castle Drum by the foot of Sleave Mish, probably as far as the present old mountain road, where he remained until he was joined by Owen and the five soldiers; and all proceeded towards Tralee: this was Sunday, 10th November. They hastened on, hoping to intercept the cattle before they crossed the river at Tramore, now Blennerville. On coming to Tralee they found the track of the cattle going eastward to Slieve Loughra. The soldiers now hung back, and said they'd go no farther, but would return to their charge. The energetic Owen, however, persuaded them to stay, "promising them two biefs of the pray" if they were so lucky as to rescue them; if not, he would give them "a bief of his own in respect of their travayle"; the soldiers on these terms agreed to go on. Following the track they reached Ballinorig by daylight, and continued eastward by moonlight as far as Glounaneenta, where they

sion of the head,—a prize more valuable than the cattle. They all made haste to Castle Magne, where the brothers

gave up the head to Cheston for safe keeping "till they had made themselves ready to bring the same to the Lord General." They then sent word to Lieutenant Stanley to apprise him "of their happy successe."⁽³⁰⁾

Beside an angle of the old road—Boher-an-Earla,—within the wood, to the right as you descend, is shown the site on which the cabin stood; and further down, in a recess at the opposite side, is the spot where tradition tells the Earl was beheaded. It is believed he was buried where the body lay. Dr. Smith says that after some days the body was removed to another place for interment, lest it should be outraged, and so continued to be removed for eight weeks until it was finally laid to rest in the Geraldine graveyard of Kilananama, near Ardnagragh.

arrangements were made for the distribution of Desmond's lands. But everything must be done in order. The lands were first surveyed, and divided into Seigniories of 6,000 to 12,000 acres. This done, the Earl was declared attainted and his lands confiscate at a Parliament held on the 28th April, 1586. Forthwith the entire Palatinate was let out to Undertakers on specially favourable terms. Sir Edward Denny got 6,000 acres around Tralee at fourpence an acre, on his "undertaking" to plant twenty English families on the land. Sir Walter Raleigh 12,000 acres in Cork; Sir William Herbert 13,276 acres around Castleisland; Sir Valentine Browne, "one of Her Majesty's Commissioners of the Survey," 8,000 acres, part in the Dingle promontory and part around Killorglin.