Some twenty-five to thirty years ago there lived at Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny, a woman named Mrs. Laracy (nee Annie M. Kenny).

She was intelligent, well-educated, well-read and well-travelled. Keenly interested in all the problems of her day, she worked for the betterment of her fellow-men.

She was a forceful character, a great lover of birds, insects and animals of all kinds, hence a strong anti-vivisectionist. Full of sympathy for oppressed peoples of any kind, she strongly opposed the segregation of the white and coloured races.

Under the nom-de-plume "Stormy Petrel," she contributed articles and poems to the local papers. In "Holiday Wanderings" she described a trip to Oberammergau.

Some of her efforts at poetry included the following lines on the beautiful interpretation of Nascagnie's "Ave Maria by Mrs. T. Dooley on the organ at Castlecomer on

The "Stormy Petrel"

(Being a short talk given by Mrs. J. P. Healy at Christmas Party, 1957).

Here is a verse from the hymn to St. Fiachra sung by Irish emigrant pilgrims of 1679 at the shrine of the saint at Maux (The hymn was entitled "Divo Fiacrio Carmen" (a Poem in honour of St. Fiacra):

"Regis Hiberni generaosa proles
Fortis Eugeni soboles Fiacri
Sancte, materno gremio corusca
Syderis instar."

"Noble descendant of an Irish king,
O Holy Fiachra, strong offspring
of Eoghan,
Scintillating, on your mother's knee,
Like a star."

OKR 1959
Mary Angela Healy: The "Stormy Petrel"

With a keen sense of humour she called “a spade a spade” and abhorred the attitude one so often meets with of “damning with faint praise.” She decidedly was not a “yes” woman.

She was a personal friend of Michael Davitt and head of the local women’s branch of the Land League.

John Dillon, John Redmond and Sir John Pope-Hennessy were others of the numerous public figures of the past entertained in her house.

She served on the Castlecomer Board of Guardians as a District Councillor with energy and ability, and when any
excitement was on or any work to be done she was well
to the fore. She was a conscientious D.C. in every sense of
the word.

Her romance in the Autumn of her life, which account
I heard from her own lips, is worth relating. A poem written
by her entitled "The Golden Chain," appeared in a copy
of the "Kilkenny People," read by a certain prisoner-of-
war — a Kilkenny man named Capt. Laracy, in Africa,
who had fought with the Boers. He wrote to congratulate
her on the sentiments expressed therein. She replied thank­
ing him for his letter. He wrote again and asked her to
continue the correspondence. Letters thus passed between
them while he served his sentence. When released, on
arriving at Kilkenny station he immediately made his way
to Castlecomer, visited his pen-friend and "popped the
question." They were married shortly afterwards.

A person returning from Kilkenny City some time
later, came on a strange scene — a few miles from Castle­
comer, namely, a man horse-whipping another on the side
of the public road. On approaching nearer he discovered
Capt. Laracy lashing an individual who had dared to deride
his wife with uncomplimentary words.

Annie Laracy loved her native Castlecomer and her
neighbours, and I think the affection was reciprocated on
the whole. She had her enemies, of course, as all public
people have.

Altogether she was "a colourful character," "a woman
in a generation," and I'm sure she is not forgotten in
Castlecomer today. She died 12th May, 1931, aged 77.

Go n-canaidh Dia trocaire ar a h-anamh.

MARY ANGELA HEALY.