

GRANNY CASTLE

By MRS. T. G. LANIGAN

CAISLEAN Creannach and Dun Braum are the ancient names of this ruin—the Castle of the gravelly place or the Fort of Braun. It would be reasonable to suppose from this that Braun erected a fortification of some kind here to command the river and probably to repel the incursions of the Norse men from their settlement at Waterford. On the coming of the Normans the site fell to the Le Poers (Ormonde Deeds) who occupied it until Eustace Le Poer fell from the King's favour in 1375 and was executed for treason. King Edward III then granted the manor to James 2nd Earl of Ormonde. Tradition says that this Castle was built by the Ormondes during the 14th century, and it probably was built about the end of that century by James 3rd Earl, who also built the Castle of Gowran, the Castle of Danesfort and established the Butlers in the Castle of Kilkenny.

Piers Ruadh, the 8th Earl of Ormonde, who made it his residence, was married in 1485 to the famous Margread ni Gearoid or Margaret Fitzgerald, daughter of the 8th Earl of Kildare, traditionally known as the "Countess of Granny." She inspired respect both as a builder and as a powerful woman of affairs and fear as a ruthless oppressor in the interests of the Butlers. She is generally given credit for the building of Ballyragget and Balleen Castles, the rebuilding of Gowran Castle and the founding of the school which is now St. Canice's Library, about 1538, and the introduction of weavers and tapestry-makers from Flanders to Kilkenny, though, no doubt, her husband, Piers Ruadh, played his part, too, in all these activities.

We have no record of exactly what period Piers and Margaret spent at Grannagh Castle, though a letter from Piers, addressed from Waterford about 1505, and one from Margaret in 1540, from the same place after the death of Piers, may indicate that they resided here at these times.

Grannagh did not appear to be considered an important Butler stronghold and gets little mention in the Ormonde

Deeds. The reason Piers and Margaret are so traditionally associated with this Castle is probably the fact that he did not fully enjoy recognition as Earl of Ormonde until 1538, one year before his death. He and his Countess spent their whole lives contending with various impediments to their enjoyment of the Butler Estates.

Thomas the 7th Earl was an absentee landlord having enormous estates in England. He appointed his nephew, Sir James Butler, an illegitimate son of his brother, as his deputy to manage his Irish Estates. This position gave Sir James Butler such power in Ireland that he hoped to succeed to the estates on the death of his uncle, and consequently harried and pursued Piers and Margaret until the latter could stand it no longer. So Piers went out on the road between Dunmore and Kilkenny and killed him. Things were a little easier for Piers and Margaret when the Black Butler was out of the way, but there was the second obstacle of Pier's two elder brothers and their sons, who were born out of wedlock because their parents, Sir James Butler and Saib Kavanagh were within the forbidden degrees of kindred and had to await a dispensation from Rome before they could marry—a protracted process in those days. An Act of the Irish Parliament was subsequently passed to legitimise them but, nevertheless, with some considerable effort, Piers succeeded in establishing his claim to be the old legitimate son of his father and so successor to the title of the Earl of Ormonde.

The third obstacle to Piers' succession appeared later. Thomas the 7th Earl left two daughters who inherited his English estates. When one of their sons, Sir Thomas Boleyn Viscount Rochford, father of Anne Boleyn, grew up, he began to think longingly of the title of Earl of Ormonde, which he felt he might claim through his mother. In 1527 he succeeded in persuading Henry to induce Piers to relinquish the title and accept instead, the title of Earl of Ossory. The major title was restored to him, however, on the death of Thomas Boleyn, and the English and Irish estates finally separated. So that in 1538 he and Margaret, after a lifetime of endeavour, found themselves firmly entrenched in the Butler estates which they passed on to their son, James

the 9th Earl. Piers died in 1539 and Margaret in 1542.

They were buried together in St. Canice's Cathedral and their monument can be seen in the south transept. Both their sons, James 9th Earl of Ormonde and Richard 1st Viscount Mountgarret, are also commemorated by stone effigies in the Cathedral.

The Castle remained in the hands of the Ormonde family until at least 1641 when James 12th Earl 1st Duke of Ormonde was returned as tenant under the King. In the Cromwellian wars it was strongly garrisoned for the King and commanded by Capt. Butler. Col. Axtell despatched a party to reduce it, but they returned without accomplishing their orders, whereupon Axtell himself marched out with two cannon and secured its surrender after having partly demolished it. The destruction initiated by Cromwell's soldiers was carried on by the surrounding peasantry until the Castle came into the possession of a family called Roche from Limerick, presumably some time in the 18th century. The second member of that family to occupy it one George Roche, arrested the decay and did some repairs in 1824. The Board of Works did considerable repairs about 1925.

1855

THE CITY LAMPS

It affords us much pleasure, as well as to the public an evidence of the interest and anxiety felt by the new Mayor for the well-being and improvement of the city, to find that His Worship, at yesterday's meeting of the Town Council, took up the subject of the defective lighting of our streets and expressed an intention of actively exerting himself for its amendment. Perhaps there are few subjects of a purely local interest, of more importance than this to the citizens of Kilkenny; for scarcely anything can detract more seriously from the safety of both the persons and properties of its inhabitants, than an inefficient lighting of the streets. That this is but too plainly the case in Kilkenny, we need not say; and nothing surprises a stranger on entering it more than that such a thing should be suffered to exist, when many towns of only one-third its extent and population are lighted in a far more perfect manner. We trust our excellent Mayor, who has already given proof of his concern in the matter by lighting John Street perfectly at his own expense, will not allow the present state of things to rest long.

K. J.