

The Ten Civic Families of Kilkenny

By Mrs. J. C. J. Murphy

THE Ten Tribes or Civic Families of Kilkenny were the descendants of the Knights who came over during the Anglo-Norman invasion, with one or two exceptions. In the course of time they became successful traders, professional men or landowners, and by their enterprise and industry in trade, their upright dealing and integrity, conspicuous charity and hospitality, made an honourable reputation far and near for the place of their adoption, and left to their descendants the maintenance of the high character which they had won as well as the care and exercise of the municipal offices and the rule of Government of the Community whose interests they had done so much to advance and foster. The well-known couplet holds the names of these ten families:

Archdekin, Archer, Cowley, Langton, Ley,
Knaresborough, Lawless, Ragget, Rothe and Shee.

Mr. John G. Prim says: "The Cromwellian settlers or intruders found a colony like the thirteen Tribes of Galway in possession of the Municipal Offices and taking a leading part in the local trade and management of public affairs were this knot of ten families." He also says that of a list of Chief Magistrates, 50 in number, who governed the town for a half-century prior to its capture by Cromwell, there were only two who did not bear some one of the ten family names of the Tribes of Kilkenny.

It was the day of the Merchant Prince. I quote Mrs. C. J. Kenealy in her paper on Kilkenny Armorial Bearings: "These families were for the most part very wealthy. Only wealthy men at that time could afford to engage in trade, since the trader must furnish his own

fleet to transport his goods and provide protection for the journey."

To these families and others like them must be given the credit of building the magnificent stone mansions which formed the High Town, and the beautiful Churches which are a lasting memorial to the great builders the Normans were.

In the Middle Ages, three Nationalities flourished in Kilkenny: Irish, Anglo-Norman and Flemish, the latter being a colony of weavers who were brought over here from the Low Countries by the Ormonde family, to make tapestries and carpets, they were also bakers, fullers and brewers. The three Colonies each spoke their three different languages. Bishop Rothe said in his History of Kilkenny: "From these three Nations fused into one common people . . . sprang the inhabitants which we now see." Hogan says the Flemish built the original bridges, the mills, weirs, dams and other water contrivances in the City of Kilkenny.

The maker of the couplet employed a little poetic licence, as he did not place the families in their order of wealth, but probably as the names would rhyme best. Strangely enough, the first family, the Archdekins, and the last family of the couplet, the Shees, are of Milesian Irish origin. The other eight appear to be of Anglo-Norman descent.

ARCHDEKINS

The Archdekins sprang from a common ancestor, Gille Mochoda who belonged to the MacGillicuddys of Kerry, branch of the O'Sullivan family. Some of the branches anglicised the name of MacGillicuddy to Archdekin, and again this latter became MacOdo from Mochodh or MacOdh, the ancestor, and lastly MacCody or Cody. The MacOdos of Galmoy were an important family since the 14th century. A Redmond Archdekin lived in Gowran and died there in 1336. The Archdekins of Bawnmore had a castle on the site of the present ruins of the ancient family residence of the Bryan family who

succeeded them at Bawnmore some time about the middle of the 17th century. They were also owners of Erck and having forfeited they removed to Timahoe. A branch of the family lived in Kilmurry, Thomastown, in 1619.

Peter Archdekin Burgess of Kilkenny died in 1586 and is buried with his wife, Helen Manderil, in what is now called the Bryan vault in St. Mary's churchyard. In St. Mary's Church there is a monument erected in 1636 by James Archdekin, Merchant and Burgess of Kilkenny, and his wife, Catherine Woodlock. A Catherine Archdekin married James Bryan of Jenkinstown, and from them descends the present Jenkinstown family. The Archdekins had a residence in Irishtown, perhaps because they were an Irish family. James Archdekin was Mayor of Kilkenny on its surrender to Cromwell on 27th March, 1650. The Military Governors of the City and the Castle, Sir Walter Butler of Paulstown and James Walsh, respectively, blamed the Mayor for his speedy surrender, asserting that the City might never have been taken had he not sued Cromwell in such abject appeals, and certainly his letters to Cromwell seem to cry "peace at any price," in contrast to the spirited and courageous replies sent to Cromwell by Sir Walter Butler. It is a significant fact that the besieging army having been repulsed near the Castle, had little difficulty in entering by the Dean's Gate in Dean Street, not a stone's throw from James Archdekin's residence, taking possession of St. Canice's Cathedral and all Irishtown. However, there were extenuating circumstances such as the inhabitants and garrison being very much reduced owing to the plague which was raging in the City at the time.

An illustrious member of the Archdekin family of this period was Father Richard Archdekin, S.J., the author of the well-known treatise of Theology, born in Kilkenny in 1618 and died in Antwerp in 1693.

ARCHERS

The Archer Family gave their name to many places in and around Kilkenny, their Norman name, le Archer,

is said to be derived from the privilege of carrying the King's Bow in the time of Henry I. In the reign of Edward III. members of the family held responsible positions in Kilkenny. Walter, a Portreeve in 1345, followed by John followed by Adam holding the same position in 1350. Contemporaneous with these was John le Archer, Prior of Kilmainham and also in the high office of Lord Chancellor. The name Archer is found no fewer than 64 times in the lists of our Civic Magistrates as Portreeves Sovereigns, Mayors, Sheriffs, Coroners, etc. Walter Archer, who was Sovereign of Kilkenny in 1590, had a Manor and land at Brickendaragh and other lands in the County as well as several houses in Kilkenny, one of which in High Street opposite Mary's Lane, which appears to have been the family mansion. Over the door is the family Coat-of-Arms and the inscription: "Insignia Martini Archer, Kilkenny, 1582." His great grandson, Walter, forfeited under Cromwell in 1653. Walter's son, Patrick, received 1,000 acres of the ancestral property forfeited by his eldest brother. Among distinguished Churchmen of the family were Father Luke Archer, Abbot of Holy Cross Abbey, also Father James Archer, S.J., of almost legendary fame. Father Edmond Hogan, S.J., says in his short account of Father James Archer that he was the most distinguished member of the Archer family, born in Kilkenny in 1550 and educated at the famous school in his native city, presided over by Dr. Peter White. He entered the Society in Rome and was ordained about 1581. He was thrice on the Irish Mission in most perilous times; he possessed immense influence over the Irish nobles and Chieftains, and by his zeal, counsel and help he never failed them. The English and Anglo-Normans, who had adopted the new religion at the time of the Reformation, regarded Fr. Archer as a traitor, and because of his influence he was greatly feared by them and constantly sought by the spies of the Lord Deputy. Fr. Archer was captured in 1590 and imprisoned in London, but escaped. He landed in Waterford in 1596 under the name of Bowman, which was another version

of his own name. In the same year he was tracked to Co. Wexford "and was near being taken by a draught, laid by the Lord Lieutenant, but escaped." He seems to have borne a charmed life, and his adversaries believed that he could walk on water, fly through the air and do other superhuman things, and said that he should be called Archdevil instead of Archer. In April, 1600, Black Thomas 10th Earl of Ormonde, the Earl of Thomond and the President of Munster, Sir George Carew, met Owen MacRory O'More near Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny, for a parley between the Earl of Ormonde and O'More, the Irish Chief. As the discussion proceeded and no agreement being come to, Ormonde's friends advised him to depart, but he asked to see the Jesuit Archer, who was with the O'Mores. As soon as he came, the Earl and he fell into an argument, wherein he called Fr. Archer a traitor and accused him of inciting Her Majesty's subjects to rebellion. On hearing this, the O'Mores took Black Thomas prisoner and he was pulled from his horse by MacLoughlin O'More. The Earl, though treated well, was kept prisoner for one year and his constant companion was Fr. Archer, who acted as his secretary. It was a great tribute to Fr. Archer's zeal and influence that he converted the Earl Black Thomas, who had been reared at the English Court with his cousin, Queen Elizabeth, and had been the playmate of Edward VI. The subsequent behaviour of the Earl gave great edification and every sign of a true conversion. He regretted that in his youth he had ruined his Fatherland and that in his old age, when he had become blind, he was unable to defend his religion nor the liberty of his country. In the following year the Earl was released by O'More on payment of a large ransom.

Fr. Archer was to meet Sir George Carew again at Dunboy. In 1602 the Castle of Dunboy was besieged by Carew's army. Donnel O'Sullivan Beare with some Spaniards, Fr. Archer and another Jesuit, Fr. Dominic Collins, who had been an officer in the French service, defended the castle on Bere Island with great valour. In a scortee made by the defenders and in which they were

badly worsted, Fr. Archer was practically the only one who escaped, and it was well for him that he did, as not one of the brave defenders of Dunboy survived. Fr. Archer returned to Spain and in time founded the Irish College in Salamanca in 1592. In 1609 he was Prefect of the Mission in Spain, where he died about 1617 aged sixty-eight, after a most eventful life.

In the General Assembly of Confederates which met at Kilkenny in 1647, Walter and Patrick Archer sat as Commons. The subsequent forfeitures under Cromwell followed, and a long list of Archers lost their property. The subsequent history of many of the Archers must have taken place beyond the Shannon river.

COWLEYS

There is mention of the Cowley family in Kilkenny as far back as 1407, when Walter Cowley was Portreeve. In 1496 John Cowley was granted the office of gauger of Ireland and in 1505 Robert Cowley was appointed Customer of the Port of Dublin and Clerk of the Crown in Chancery. He was a Lawyer of much professional skill and ability, and was selected by Piers Earl of Ormonde as his Legal Adviser and Agent. Robert Cowley brought up his son Walter to the Law, and between them and the patronage and great influence of the Ormonde family, they gradually advanced from minor situations to important public offices in Dublin and Drogheda. In 1537 Walter was made Solicitor-General of Ireland and Robert Master of the Rolls. The Cowleys were staunch adherents to their patrons the Ormondes in all the vicissitudes of their feud, then at its height, with the house of Kildare, and the name Cowley occurs again and again in the State correspondence of the time, between such men as Cardinal Wolsey, Lord Leonard Grey, the Earl of Kildare, etc. In 1528 we have Robert Cowley in correspondence with Cardinal Wolsey giving him private information as to the doings of the various Irish Government Officials, and he is very free in offering suggestions about them. After the downfall of Cardinal Wolsey both

the Cowleys kept up a correspondence with the King's Secretary upon the condition of Ireland, but always with the favourable word for the Ormondes. There are frequent propositions sent over under the title of "Devices of Robert Cowley for the furtherance of His Majesty's affaires in His Grace's land of Ireland." He is very anxious to have the Irish Abbeys dissolved, as he had been appointed Commissioner for selling the lands, and procured for himself the Manor of Holmpatrick.

Their devotion to the interests of the Ormonde family was nearly their undoing and perhaps was indirectly the cause of the murder of the Earl of Ormonde in London. Sir Anthony St. Leger who succeeded to the Government of Ireland after Lord Leonard Gray, and whose policy of support of the Desmonds he continued, was the cause of a letter of complaint sent by Robert Cowley to London. Lord Deputy St. Leger retaliated by accusing Robert Cowley of various offences, in a letter to King Henry VIII, resulting in Cowley being committed to the Fleet prison and was dismissed from his offices. He was, however, released the following year, but did not long survive, being then an old man. Three years later the quarrel between the Lord Deputy and the Earl of Ormonde, which Cowley started, broke out again. All parties were summoned before the English Council. The Archbishop of Dublin in a letter to the King described Lord Ormonde as "more like a Prince than a subject, more like a Governor than an obedient servant." Whilst the Lord Deputy begged to be relieved of his unpleasant office and said he would rather be sent to Turkey than remain in Dublin. The various parties having come to London, Lord Ormonde's enemies it is generally supposed went to the length of having him murdered there. The Earl and eighteen of his followers and servants died after a banquet which he gave at Ely House, Holton, London. His faithful ally Walter Cowley only escaped their fate by being committed to the Tower of London on St. Leger's charges. He was released on the death of Henry VIII. and appointed by the Government of Edward VI to the

office of Surveyor-General of Ireland, at a large salary, which office he held until his death in 1551. He had two sons, Henry and Walter. Henry was a Captain in the Queen's Army, was knighted and received a grant of Castlecarbery in Co. Meath. From him descended the Mornington family from whom was descended the Iron Duke of Wellington. The junior branch of the family, which remained in Kilkenny and which descended from Nicholas, brother of Walter the Surveyor-General, who was a merchant and was Sovereign of Kilkenny in 1551, continued as wealthy traders and owned property in the County at Rathardmore, Killamory, Radestown and Dunamaggin. Some of them seem to have continued in the Legal profession, as they are mentioned at various dates as Lawyers and their names occur as Aldermen and Sheriffs. According to their monuments in St. John's and St. Patrick's they seem to have intermarried with the other families—the Rothes, Raggets and Shees, etc. The last of the Kilkenny branch was James Cowley, Rathardmore, who died in 1720.

LANGTONS

Indeed, all these families seem to have intermarried, as we find their names coupled again and again, and the strange point is that these ten rarely married any member of the other Anglo-Norman families in the City or about the County, as we will see in the account of the Langtons, who trace their descent from the Langtons of Low in Lancashire, who claimed relationship with Cardinal Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. The Register of the Langton Family is a most interesting document in which each generation renders an account of themselves, giving a vivid picture of the family and life in "the fair City."

John Langton came to Ireland in 1486 to avoid the fate of those who adhered to the house of York. He settled in Kilkenny and married in 1491 Lettice, daughter of Jenkin Rothe of Callan. Their grandson, Nicholas Langton, who was born on Lammas Day, 1562, married



firstly Lettice Danill (whose father was agent to Lord Ormonde) on Midsummer Eve, 1588, but he lost her by "the great infection" which swept the country in the year 1604. He lost his mother the same month from the same cause. Many times great plagues and infections are mentioned which swept whole families and households away, even to their servants. Both ladies are buried in St. John's Abbey. Nicholas Langton wrote: "This was a doleful day having lost the rarest jewel of a wife yet any man of my rank had, time out of mind." However, in April of the following year he married again. His second wife was Nichol Archer. He seems to have been the first of his family to come into prominence in Kilkenny and was a man of means and ability, becoming Sovereign of the town in 1606. Kilkenny then being only a borough town, sending two representatives to Parliament but locally governed by a Corporate body, constituted by 12 chief and 12 lesser Burgesses, known as the upper 12 and the second 12, who annually elected from among themselves a Sovereign as Chief Magistrate and two Portreeves, whose duty seems to have been very much those of the more modern Civic Sheriff.

They, however, became more ambitious of a larger state and extended franchise. At the beginning of his reign, James I. granted the Corporation a new Charter in which the adjoining borough of Irishtown was included and the Parishes of St. Canice, St. John, St. Mary and St. Patrick to be designated by the name of the town and free borough of Kilkenny. However, the municipal magistrates of the day were anxious for more civic state and dignity, and they commissioned Nicholas Langton to go to London to negotiate the matter. Langton succeeded to the full extent of their wishes, bringing back with him that which is since known as "The Great Charter of Kilkenny," elevating the town and liberty to the dignity of a City, to be governed by a Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council with Recorder, Sheriffs, Sword and Mace bearers and various merchants' guilds, fairs, markets and other rights and immunities. This Charter named

Nicholas Langton himself one of the 18 first Aldermen, and both Nicholas and his eldest son, James, were also nominated among the first 37 members of the Society of Merchantstaple. In 1613 the father was elected Mayor and the son was elected Sheriff and Coroner in 1616. Nicholas Langton built the family Mansion of The Great Stone House of the Langtons, as it is called, on a piece of land called the "Freren Land" (which was Abbey property confiscated by Henry VIII.) and which adjoined the house in which he was then living. His original intention was to erect on the ground a public shambles and commarket, binding himself at the time to leave open through it a public passage communicating between High Street and Low Lane (or Kieran's Street), a passage which exists to the present day, known as The Butter Slip. For some reason or other he changed his mind and erected instead of the market, the Great Stone House which continued to be the residence of the representatives of the Kilkenny family of Langtons till after 1866. A front view of the Mansion can best be seen accurately depicted in the picture of the old Market Cross in Canon Corrigan's history. Their Coat-of-Arms was originally displayed on the front of the house. Nicholas also built a country house at Grennan, situated by the River Nore near Durrow. He died there in 1632 and his remains were conveyed down the Nore river by boat to Kilkenny where he was buried in his own monument in the great quire of St. John's Abbey.

Nicholas Langton had tweney-five children by his two marriages and it was he who commenced writing the Register of the family. His son, Michael, who was born in 1606, married Ann Murphy, and he succeeded to the Family Mansion in High Street and from him the family now descends, the elder branch seem to have died out. Michael Langton lived in troubled times—the Confederation and the surrender of the City to Cromwell, which latter he only survived a single year. In 1654 his widow and younger children were banished to Ballinakill, Leix. Nicholas, eldest son of Michael, was apprenticed to a



merchant in New Ross and was sent to France on a trading voyage in 1649, but was taken with the ship, crew and cargo by Moorish pirates and kept as a slave for three years on the Coast of Barbary, but he escaped, and by the aid of the inhabitants of a Spanish port returned to Ireland and his mother. After the Restoration the Langtons in 1663 were restored to their property and resumed residence in the Great Stone House opposite the Market Cross. Nicholas, after his adventures abroad, married Jane Shee of Cloran, and his eldest son, Michael, married Eleanor Rothe. They had a son, Nicholas, born 1705, who settled as a merchant in Cadiz, Spain, who married Frances Carew of Cadiz, had a son, Michael, born in Cadiz 1737, who married Mary Dillon of Dublin. That branch of the family would probably still be settled in Cadiz but for Napoleon's invasion of Spain, in consequence of which Michael sent his family to England where he intended to follow them, but he died during the siege of Cadiz in July, 1810. His eldest son, Michael Theobald Langton, settled in Bath and married Mary Ryan of Waterford who was descended from the Comerfords of Danganmore. Their son, Capt. Henry Michael Faustainus Langton, came to be proprietor of Danganmore and the Great Stone House in High Street. He was Captain in the Louth Rifles and lived at 6 Southwick Place, Hyde Park, London, in the middle of the last century. Of the Kilkenny or junior branch, Silvester, youngest brother of Micheal FitzNicholas the 2nd, who was the first of the family to settle in Spain; Stephen and Michael were in trade, Michael in Cadiz and Stephen in the Marble City, which leads one to suppose that they may have been in the wine trade. Silvester was married to Ann Langton of Birr, a distant cousin, in 1712. Silvester was succeeded by his son Michael, who built and resided in Danville House and from whom the Family Mansion in High Street was rented by Mr. Michael Comerford of Kieran Street, his nephew. Michael Langton lived to an advanced age and, having never married, at his death the house at Danville and the leasehold interest in the house in High

Street came to Michael Comerford who was unmarried at the time of his death and was succeeded by his nephew, Father E. Madden, whose grandfather had married the eldest sister of Michael Comerford in 1781. Fr. Madden purchased from Capt. Langton his interest in the Family Mansion in High Street, and though it passed away from those bearing the name of Langton, who built it in 1609, it became the property of a descendant of the female line in 1864. It will be seen that this family held its place among the civic families from 1449 right down over five hundred years, almost to our own time.

It speaks well for this peace-loving City (in spite of our reputation of Kilkenny Cats) that a family could last so long.

LEYS

The narrow street now known as Abbey Street was once known as Ley's Lane, presumably called after the family of that name.

Thomas de Ley was one of the jurors who "extended" the Countess of Gloucester's Manor of Palmerstown in 1307. Thomas Ley, whose father was Alderman Nicholas Ley of the City of Waterford, died 1585, was the first Mayor of Kilkenny City, 1609. He died 1629 and was succeeded by his grandson, Thomas Ley.

Many of these names disappeared from the municipal records after the troubles of the 17th century with their sweeping attainders and confiscations. The Oath of supremacy disbanded Catholics from office, but Lord Clarendon had the oath removed in the reign of James II.

KNARESBOROUGH

The family of Knaresborough was of English origin. The name is found in Kilkenny in 1513, in which year Geoffrey Rothe married Margaret Knaresborough. Nicholas Knaresborough, and his wife, Rose Rothe, erected a family monument in St. Mary's Church in 1639.

William Knaresborough, a merchant of Kilkenny



City, married Barbara Smyth of Damma. The Smyths were an English Catholic family who were Secretaries to the Dukes of Ormonde. There are accounts of various wills in which a good deal of money and property are mentioned in the Knaresborough and Smyth families, setting out the names of relations among which occur Father Thomas Knaresborough, P.P., Windgap, who died 1741. Several of the family seem to have been buried at Ballycallan and Damma. The last male representatives of the Knaresborough family were Rev. P. J. Knaresborough, O.S.F., Army Chaplain in India, who died 1901; the Rev. Richard Knaresborough, P.P., Aghaboe, who died 1901, and Mr. John Knaresborough, Dunmore, brother of the latter, who died 1902.

LAWLESS

It is a noticeable fact that many of these families were Agents, Legal Advisors and Secretaries to the Ormonde family, and many of them intermarried with the Butlers. One of these, who was Agent to (Black) Thomas Earl of Ormonde, was Walter Lawless of Talbot's Inch, who was descended from Walter Lawless, Burgess of the town in 1396. Walter, the Earl's Agent, was Portreeve of Irishtown in 1605. He was married to a daughter of Robert Rothe; they were the parents of Richard Lawless, a prominent member of the Supreme Council of Confederate Catholics. Richard married Margaret Denn of Grenan, Thomastown, and died 1670, leaving two sons, Walter and Thomas. Walter married a daughter of John Bryan of Jenkinstown. They had five sons. In the Irish wars of 1689 Walter took a leading part in favour of James II. When King James fled hurriedly he deposited his royal plate with his staunch friend and supporter, Walter Lawless.

Richard, eldest son of Walter Lawless, fell at the siege of Limerick, 1691. Patrick, second son of Walter, served with distinction in the armies of the King of Spain and was appointed during the Orleans Regency, Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of France, created

Knight of the Equestrian Order and finally appointed Governor of Majorca.

The third son, John, and his father were attainted at the same time, both being supporters of James II. Thomas Lawless, younger brother of Walter, settled down in Puck's Castle, Co. Dublin. He married the daughter of James Butler of Kilkenny, their son, James, whose great grandson, Nicholas Lawless, was raised to the Peerage as first Lord Cloncurry in 1789.

RAGGET

It is said of Kilkenny that it is a place of—

“Fire without smoke, earth without bog,
Water without mud, air without fog,
And streets paved with marble.”

This “fair City” must have been a haven of peace immune from the storms which swept the country in the 16th and 17th centuries, with its lovely Nore River flowing between old orchards, as it still does, its mills and its dove cots.

Ballyragget, which is about eight miles up the river, belonged to Richard le Ragget in the early years of the 13th century. Patrick Ragget was Bishop of Ossory from 1417 to 1421. In the 16th century the name is of frequent occurrence in the lists of Burgesses and Citizens of Kilkenny. Alderman Richard Ragget is buried with his wife in St. Mary's Church in the south transept. He died 1614. He was father of Paul Ragget, famous Cistercian Monk and Abbot. Alderman Ragget possessed property at Thomastown as well as Ballyragget, and he lived in a house in High Street next to the Langton Mansion. He also owned a house in St. Mary's Churchyard called the Lombard Chamber. The name Ragget persists down to 1650, when Cromwell came with his hordes of needy followers and we find the Ragget property confiscated. After which the Merchant Princes of Kilkenny were more the exception than the rule.



ROTHES

One of the greatest of them were the Rothes who figure in the lists of Chief Magistrates from 1403 to 1690. Bishop Rothe, born at Kilcreene, 1572. Robert Rothe, Lawyer and another Agent of (Black) Thomas 10th Earl of Ormonde, wrote a very exhaustive Pedigree of the Rothe family in 1616.

He begins his account with Sir Walter Rothe of Norton Rothe in Lancaster, who was of Saxon origin. He says that John Rothe came to Ireland at the time of the invasion, but several generations of the family existed between him and his ancestor, Sir Walter.

John Rothe was father of Thomas Rothe, the first of his family, who was Sovereign of Kilkenny. He married Ellen Purcell of Ballyfoyle. A grandson of theirs, Jenkin, established a branch of the family at New Ross, and gave his name to Jenkin's Lane and Jenkinstown in Kilkenny. Among the 18 Aldermen in 1609 when Kilkenny was created a City, four were Rothes. John Fitz Piers was elected Mayor in 1613. It was he who built the Family Mansion in Parliament Street in 1594 with which every Kilkenny citizen is familiar and which the late Mr. T. O'Hanrahan restored to its present state. Mr. Graves says: "This building exhibits a most interesting and nearly perfect example of the urban architecture of the period, affording ample accommodation to the opulent merchant's family, his apprentices and servants, together with storage for his goods."

I will not describe in detail this, the most perfect example of a 16th century Kilkenny trader's mansion, still used as a residence, suffice to say that all the original timber was oak, with which some of the rooms were wainscotted. In the interior of the house there were no party walls, each floor runs the whole length of the building, resting on massive oak beams. The several internal partitions dividing the rooms were of oak timber. In the principal rooms capacious chimney-pieces of polished Kilkenny marble canopy the ample hearths.

There were the usual arches fronting the building, which was popular in the time of Elizabeth I. for exhibiting goods which are now displayed in glazed windows. High Street and the principal parts of Kilkenny must have presented a much more imposing and opulent appearance in those days than it has since. According to the old prints and pictures, the houses or mansions, built of cut-stone, with high gables and ornamental chimneys fronting the street, all more or less the same height with their definite design of architecture, had a grace and dignity we rarely see now. As well as the arched shop fronts there was a colonade of arches along the footpaths, so that the weather neither damaged the goods displayed nor inconvenienced the pedestrians or customers.

Peter Rothe, eldest son of John Rothe, was returned M.P. for Kilkenny in 1639. He joined the Confederates in 1642 and was a member of the General Assembly. He was consequently deprived of his great inheritance by Cromwell and banished beyond the Shannon, where he sank into his grave in 1654. He had married Leticia Lawless, daughter of Walter Lawless. They had no male issue.

Perhaps the most notable member of this great family was David Rothe, Bishop of Ossory, 1618-50. Son of John and Leticia Rothe, all of whom rest in St. Mary's. Dr. Rothe received his early education in his native city and, later, on the Continent, where he was ordained. He was a Doctor of Civil and Canon Law. Returning to Ireland as Guardian and Vice-General of the Archdiocese of Armagh and Bishop of Ossory, to which Sees he ministered in very troubled times, he wrote a splendid history of Kilkenny, and resided partly with his brother Edward in the city and partly with his cousin Richard 3rd Viscount Mountgarret at Balleen. Bishop Rothe was very old when Cromwell took the city, and he did not long survive the hardships put upon him, and is buried in the tomb of his ancestors in St. Mary's Church.

SHEES

The Rothes and the Shees are the last two of the ten families of the couplet. Last but not least, on the contrary, they are perhaps the most important. The Shees, like the Archdekins, were of Irish origin and also came from Co. Kerry, from which they came to Cloran, Co. Tipperary, and during the 15th century settled in Kilkenny. Robert Shee was Sovereign of Kilkenny in 1493 and 1496, and was slain in battle at Moyaliff, Co. Tipperary, in 1500 while leading 100 Kilkenny men under the standard of Sir Piers Butler, afterwards 8th Earl of Ormonde, against Turlough O'Brien.

He was succeeded by his son Richard, who was Sovereign of Kilkenny in 1522, 1532 and 1536, who married Joan Archer of New Ross. Their grandson, Henry Shee, Mayor of Kilkenny, 1610 and 1611, married first Frances Crisp and secondly — White, sister of Very Rev. Dr. White, S.J. Henry Shee built the Shee Mansion in High Street, now Messrs. Woolworths. A slab in the front wall bears the Coat-of-Arms. It is a most elaborate coat, which includes the arms of his two wives (consisting of eight quarterings).

Robert Shee, son and heir of Henry, married Catherine Archer. He died in 1615. He was succeeded by his eldest son Henry, who married Dorothy, daughter of Lucas Shee and grand-daughter of Sir Richard Shee, and died in 1638, leaving a son, Robert, who forfeited under Cromwell in 1653.

Robert Shee, son of Richard Shee and Joan Archer, was twice Mayor of Kilkenny as well as M.P. He married Margaret Rothe. They were the parents of Richard afterwards Sir Richard Shee. He was a Lawyer and was professionally engaged for many years by Thomas Earl of Ormonde. He succeeded in acquiring an immense amount of property in the city and county, and must be reckoned amongst the most famous of the old Citizens of Kilkenny. He was a student of Gray's Inn and a Bencher of the King's Inns, and was Senechal of Irish-town, 1568. In 1570 he had a grant from the Protestant

Bishop of Ossory of the Manor and the lands of Upper-court. He was Deputy to the Lord Treasurer of Ireland in 1582. He was founder of the Shee Alms House in Rose Inn Street, and died at his Castle at Bonnetstown in 1608 and, like most of his kind, is buried in St. Mary's.

Sir Richard resided in one of his town houses, Emling's Hall, until the marriage of his son and heir, Lucas Shee, with the Honourable Ellen Butler, daughter of Edmond 2nd Viscount Mountgarret, and sister of Helena, afterwards Countess of Ormonde, when he gave them Emling's Hall to live in until they should succeed to his property at his death. Emling's Hall was situated between where the National Bank now stands and the Courthouse, and it is said to have been used as the old Parliament House at the time of the Confederation. It was then occupied by Robert, grandson of Sir Richard Shee.

Marcus Shee of Sheestown, fifth son of Sir Richard, was ancestor of the Shees of Sheestown and Gardenmorris, who still survive, though their historic residence, Sheestown, has passed out of the family.

There are copies of Wills made by members of several of these old families, which make very interesting reading. They show their sense of property, princely gifts and great charity as well as their loving care and provision for their family and posterity.

Perhaps it is these Wills more than anything else which give us such an insight into their lives and property. Sir Richard Shee, "after a long and stormy life" which was evidently full of contentions, comes to a most exemplary end, reconciled to the Catholic Church, made one of these magnificent Wills, endowing the Alms House which he instituted, and providing abundantly for all his family, and leaving gold and silver in colossal amounts for the poor as well as grain and flocks and herds of cattle, also for the poor.

From the Wills of Sir Richard Shee and John Rothe, his cousin, we can see the kind of personal property they possessed and the magnificent manner in which these old

mansions were furnished. Amongst items mentioned are: Their wives' jewels of gold and silver, domestic utensils of solid silver, pewter, brass, and batry, carpets and tapestry, linen and holland, Cypress chests and counters and marquetry tables and cupboards, and various sums of money for gold memorial rings for relations and friends.

The furniture belonging to Emlyn's Hall was actually preserved within it down to the early part of the 19th century. One of the chairs should be in the National Museum.

The mortal remains of most of the members of these ten families rest, according to their monuments, in St. Mary's or one of the other three Parish Churches. I think it can be said that five of the names have completely died out in Kilkenny, though the other five have survived and are here still.

Most of that gallant company forfeited under Cromwell and laid down their great earthly heritages for a better one.

