

Kilfane

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Kilfane's long tale may be divided into three parts . . . the early story of its religious foundation, the medieval era with its medley of religion, war, human conflict, mystery, even magic; and the modern period, simpler to follow, because being nearer to us, it is better documented.

ST: PAAN

Kilfane is the church of Paan, a Welshman who came over in the train of his compatriot, Patrick. That alone tells of the long tradition of religion in this area, but the time span makes it difficult to find out much about him, for since Paan accompanied Patrick over 'the blue Slieve Margy' and past the Druidic stronghold at Leighlinbridge, over fifteen hundred years have passed.

Paan was the son of Bracan and Dina, the mother being daughter of a petty Saxon king. This mixed pedigree is jumbled that bit further because Bracan was the son of Braichaineog also known as Hualuph and Aulach who was the son of an Irish king. This chieftain was a typical son of Eireann, for he was a bandit who went to plunder Wales. There among his other trophies he captured Marcella, daughter of King Teindrig of Garthnamathrin in Brecknockshire. He married her and fathered the family of which Bracan became 'one of the most prominent princes in Britain' as Cardinal Moran described him. This 'Britain' is most important, for despite his alien blood, Bracan was regarded not as a foreign prince but as one of the hereditary chieftains of Wales.

It is also said that St. Brenach converted Bracan 'to the mild yoke of the Gospel' and that then 'with true Christian ardour he devoted himself to every practice of heroic piety.' He trained his numerous family so well in the paths of Christian perfection that it came to be regarded as one of the three holy families of Wales.

Rev. John Francis Shearman in 'Patrician Missionaries in Leinster' spells the name Phian and also uses Mophioc and Papay, which is the Cambrian form of the name. He says the Paan built his church in the territory of the Ogenti, which was this part of Ossory.

We know quite a bit about Paan's relations. One of his sisters was the mother of the great David, patron of Wales. A brother was Mochorog of Delgany, Co. Wicklow. Another was known as Dubhan who had his cell at Rinn Dubhain, or Dubhan's Point. This sound was later corrupted and thus wrongly translated. It is the place we call Hook Head in Co. Wexford, for dubhan is a fishing hook. Shearman also states that Paan had a church dedicated to him in Ardcamross on the margin of Loch Garman and another at Moycullen in Co. Galway. Yet this high ancestry and warm sanctity is all we know of Paan. When Bishop Phelan who 'was a devoted student of Irish history' compiled his list of patrons of Ossory churches in the late 17th century, he said that Kilfane was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

In 1615 the Rectory formed part of the corps of the arch-deaconry of

Ossory, and this seems to have been in accordance with the pre Reformation pattern. The arch deacons of Ossory were always parish priests of Kilfane, a fact that underlines its importance. Today Kilfane is in the parish of Tullagherin.

THE CHURCH

There is a roofless church which Canon Carrigan says is some 600 years old. He further states that all the original doors are either modernized or else built up, but the beautifully cut ogee shaped lintels are identical with the window frames in the presbytery/castle, and therefore must be original. As doorways they are both elegant and unusual, slightly evocative of Holy Cross Abbey. Entrance now is through a modern doorway in the west wall, one which damaged the whole gable. There is a slit window on the right outside, and it is just possible that once there was a corresponding one on the left. The high gable had a belfry with a staircase leading up to it from the inside. There are four of the original doorways, one in each of the north and south walls, each with its holy water font inside. There is also a very narrow doorway in the south wall of the chancel, leading to the outside, and a much changed and much damaged entrance from chancel to sacristy. A little Gothic credence recess was near the sedilia of which, in Canon Carrigan's time, the central mullion was gone, but it is now in position, even if the repair job is a bit botched. Such a sedilia, one divided into two sections only, is most unusual, as generally there were three seats for the principal celebrants at High Mass. Still to be seen here are traces of the ancient plaster work, in a rich pink colour. In the north wall of the chancel there is a low and deep recess that seems to have had an eyehole slit into the sacristy. What this was for it is difficult to decide, for it certainly seems too big for a tabernacle. On each side of the altar there is a niche. The most unexplainable object, however, is the reading desk. What kind of book its shallow frame would have supported is a puzzle, as is also the odd position a reader would have to assume, sideways to both altar and congregation.

These are all quite obvious features, as are the windows which clearly were enlarged. But faint and dim and most rare are the traces of the consecration crosses, one each side of the west doorway and two each on the north and south walls near the doorways. These traces of the plaster work remain because the building was used till well into the last century, and after it was abandoned as a place of worship it was used as a schoolhouse.

THE CASTLE

Attached to this medieval church, indeed built onto it, is a castle with remarkably thick walls and some pleasant stone work, the first floor having a really lovely window.

The ground floor apartment which is vaulted but which has corbels suggesting a ceiling, has one slit of a window above the remains of what seems to have been an altar. To the right is the recess with the aperture to the church. From the doorway to the outside, the stairway, not a winding one, leads to the first floor. There are two alcoves at ground level, one large enough for a man to sleep in and the other possibly a cupboard.

The main first floor window gives a superb view of the gorgeous countryside of this wonderful county, hunting territory without any doubt, green and gently rolling. Beside the massive fireplace was the garde robe, and opposite was the staircase to the upper floors, all now gone. The walls very definitely tapered as they rose. They possibly were battlemented, for there are traces of a 'a walk', and in the thickness of the stout walls of this sacristy cum castle there is machicolation, proof that those days were war ridden too. In Ossory castle/presbyteries like this are to be seen at Three Castles, Rathbeigh and Clashacrow.

CANTWELL FADA

But the glory of Kilfane is the incredible Cantwell Fada. Merely to look at him is to be plunged into the heart, soul, mystery of the Middle Ages, the so called, so incorrectly called, Dark Ages. These are the days that produced this effigy of might and militancy, of human arrogance mingled with human sorrow. Here too is the contradiction of those days, the man of war in the house of peace. Cantwell Fada is no ordinary figure, indifferently hacked by a journeyman stonecutter. This is a living face, face of a man who drank deep into the cup of living.

PARIS ANDERSON

Who was he? Paris Anderson wrote about him in 'Warden of the Marshes' which he said in the introduction, was a story of 'some remarkable events which undoubtedly occurred in 1335': He said that he gleaned the tragic tale 'partly from hoary tradition . . . and in part from documents which cannot err, the dry skeleton monkish annals and the drier patent rolls and inventories'. All this had meant much research and toil for Paris, but he said he discovered that Cantwell was aged about 30 when the events, he was to recount, started, and that he was then the terror of O'Brennans, O'Nolans and MacMurroughs on the Irish side, and of the de la Rupes and de la Fraines on the other. But he was morose and gloomy, the result of an unhappy marriage and a guilty conscience. The disastrous alliance had taken place in the church of the Reparata in Florence, to Beatrice Donati 'whose silly beauty kept him from winning the scalloped shell of the pilgrim'. In other words his infatuation had made him abandon the crusade he had set out on. Returning home he seems to have neglected his inamorata whom he left 'to pine in the solitude of his castle in Kilfane'. Poor lonely stranger, she soon got into bad company, the worst! the worst then being that of Dame Alice Kyteler and her associates. However, she escaped the first purge of Bishop Ledrede. Anderson's narrative states that on the feast of St. Lucia 1335, the day the great Market Cross of Kilkenny was solemnly blessed was also the day that Cantwell learned that the two de la Fraine brothers attempted to 'lift' Beatrice from Kilfane, a lift that she seems adequately to have facilitated. But the abduction failed because Seneschal La Poer 'rescued' the lady and lodged her in the castle of Kilkenny and imprisoned the brothers in the dungeons. At the same time a rising took the Seneschal from Kilkenny, to the north of the county 'to punish the murderous treachery of the O'Moores', and Cantwell was put in charge of the castle garrison. Beatrice effected escape for

herself and Oliver de la Fraine, a neat bit of effrontery which showed her cunning. Her paramour took her to Graignamanagh Abbey where Lord Abbot Cornwalsh gave her but reluctant sanctuary, while Oliver set off to get help from a bored young knight, de la Rupe of Coolhill. Delighted with the prospect of a fight de la Rupe collected his kerns and hobblers and led them on Kilkenny Castle where the other de la Fraine was still incarcerated. The Seneschal being absent the strength of the garrison was low but a fierce fight developed. Leading an assault Oliver was seriously injured, but Fulco who was released managed to flee bearing the wounded man with him. Five months later, Oliver fully convalescent in a rustic paradise by the Barrow and more deeply in love than ever with Beatrice was suddenly attacked and savagely assassinated by Cantwell, who the deed accomplished, spurred back to Rathcoole with the more than ever unwilling lady. If she had disliked him previously she had good reason to fear him now, and not just because of his mad jealousy. The Bishop of Ossory was in the second stage of his witch-hunt and was demanding that Beatrice be surrendered to him on charges of heresy and witchcraft. Cantwell was just in the mood to obey. They had barely reached the gloomy fortress, chief residence of the Cantwells, when Beatrice killed the man she had once sworn to love, honour and obey, puncturing him in the heart with a gold bodkin which she usually used as a hair-pin. Thus most dismally ended the life of this above life-sized knight.

Beatrice died even more dramatically during her inquisition in the castle. While Seneschal la Poer and Bishop de Ledrede acrimoniously quarrelled over whether she was to be executed for the murder of her husband, which she admitted, or burnt for heresy, which she denied, she took the all important matter into her own hands and simply died, 'died a victim of her own guilty passions'. So ended the tragic tale.

Whether Anderson is historically accurate or romantically as creative as Horace Walpole, the statue remains a magnificent testimony to two men, a soldier and a sculptor, both Kilkenny men.

GRAVES'S DESCRIPTION :

Graves wrote "The figure has a suit of mail without any portion of plate . . . (which) defends the body. The head and shoulders are protected by a chaperon of mail which falls over the hauberk. The chaperon is flattened at the top presenting the appearance of a slightly flattened cone. A long triangular shield very much curved and charged in relief with the arms is supported on the left side by a shoulder strap passing over the right shoulder, and some acorns with oak leaves are carved in the stone as support for the point. A surcoat is worn over the hauberk, confined by the sword-belt at the waist, and the sword lies under the body, the end appearing between the legs, the right arm, the hand being bare and the mailed gauntlet hanging by, is extended by the side and the right leg crossed over the left. The feet are supported by well carved clusters of oak leaves with acorns and the spurs are broadly rowelled. The effigy is well sculptured in Kilkenny marble. The folds of the surcoat show considerable elegance. The shoulders are narrow, the chest flat, the right arm is badly designed.

The entire absence of plate armour prevents us from assigning the effigy to the successor of Thomas de Cantwell, as he was not dead in 1319, but as he was an old man the effigy cannot be his predecessor because of the rowelled spurs. The character of the foliage suggests the decorated style of around 1319."

CASTS

When James Graves wrote the quoted passage the old building was being used as a schoolroom, and the effigy prone on the floor was used as an instrument of punishment, for idle scholars were often compelled to kiss the stone and stony lips. No wonder Hamlet spoke of the 'base uses' to which we come! Mr. Graves himself worked with spade and shovel to disinter the knight . . . 'for the purpose of obtaining a drawing'. but he adds, 'this was no common monument'.

A subscription of 10/- per member was started to raise funds to remove the slab to St. Canice's Cathedral, but fortunately this was not done. Local lore agrees that the stone got heavier and heavier and so signified its intention not to budge. Graves's scientific explanation is less picturesque but its effect was the same. He feared that the statue would be damaged because of its weight and the unsuitable transport facilities of the day.

In 1852 four casts were made. One went to the Royal Irish Academy where it aroused 'much interest'. A second was for the museum of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society where it was the chief attraction of the meeting held July 5th, 1852. Graves commented on 'the almost unique relic' casts of which would tend to make the Society favourably known to the Irish public as being alive to the importance of saving the monuments of the past from demolition. 'Unfortunately exhortations like this are even more necessary over a century later. A third cast went to the National Exhibition at Cork, and later a letter was received from the Royal Cork Institution thanking the Kilkenny Society and stating that the cast would have a prominent place in its museum. A fourth was shown in the Court of Irish Art in the Great Industrial Exhibition of 1873.

THE CANTWELL FAMILY

The Cantwells were early Norman arrivals, probably from Suffolk, originally known as de Cantville, and settling here in Kilkenny and Tipperary counties. Thomas de Kenitwall was one of the witnesses of a charter granted by Theobald Walter, first chief Butler of Ireland, to the town of Gowran in the reign of Henry II: This shows both their early appearance in Ireland and their immediate importance in their new territory. Soon they had land commensurate with their importance, their principal castles being at Stroan, Cloghsreg and Cantwell's Court near Rathcoole. Tighe in his 1802 Survey says that the first two mentioned were Purcell property, but as they are in the immediate vicinity of Kilfane, he seems to be in error. MacLysaght says that soon the Cantwells became hibernicized and Carew in the reign of Queen Elizabeth refers to them as a sept of Eliogarthy and Slievedaragh.

There is no outstanding Cantwell but the family played its part in the history of our country, particularly in Church affairs.

Two John Cantwells were arch-bishops of Cashel, spanning between them the years from 1406 to 1452. A contemporary was bishop of Waterford and Lismore. Oliver was made bishop of Ossory, just before the beginning of the 16th century in the troublesome and troubled days of Henry VII. Lambert Simnel's pretensions made life difficult for him, a Dominican and elevated to this See by Pope Innocent VIII. He was instructed to quell the unrest against the king. He must have done so, but royal confirmation of his appointment did not come till 1495 when he was also restored to the temporalities of the See, a fact that suggests that Oliver was no mere king's man, no Tudor sycophant. In fact to be installed he was obliged in the presence of the Bishop of Bangor who was also both Lord Justice and Lord Chancellor of Ireland, to sue for royal pardon for having accepted the Pope's Bull without sanction from the king.

As bishop he 'considerably promoted the interests of the Basilica' as Bishop Phelan says. He repaired the episcopal palaces at Aghor (Freshford) and Freneystown and got letters patent for the holding of a weekly market in Irishtown. He is also believed to have re-built the great bridge of Kilkenny, that is Greensbridge, which had been swept away by a flood. He died in 1526, and wrapped in the black and white of the Dominican habit, which he had never discarded for episcopal purple, he was buried in the precincts of the Black Abbey.

The last abbot of this same beloved abbey was Peter Cantwell who was driven out by the dissolution of 1540. Sadly similar was the fate of one Richard Cantwell who was prior of the Augustinian Priory when it was suppressed on March 19th, 1539 and its temporalities handed over to the Corporation.

Hanmer's Chronicle, as stated in Carrigan, related that Richard Marshall was buried in the Black Abbey in 1234. At dissolution his tomb and others were defaced and only one stone left of a knight bearing a shield about his neck 'wherein the Cantwell arms were insculpted'.

(The Cantwell shield is charged with a bearing which without the tinctures may be described as four amulets, a canton ermine).

A 'noted' Cantwell priest said Mass in Kilkenny on May 23rd, 1714. Burke refers to him in 'Irish Priests in Penal Times'. A vigilant mayor was anxious to catch and arrest all priests, but as there is no more information given it may be assumed that Fr. Cantwell got away. More than a century later the Bishop of Meath was John Cantwell, a trusty and staunch supporter of Daniel O'Connell and The Tenants' League. It is time to mention a woman, a Mrs. Cantwell 'who keepes schooles in St. Mary's parish', as a spy reported to the archbishop of Armagh in May, 1667.

CANTWELL'S COURT:

The main residence of the head of the family was Cantwell's Court. At the time of the Confederation of Kilkenny it was owned by John who was Provost Marshal of the Confederates. In this capacity he discharged his duty so well that he earned the immortal hate of his enemies. In fact he was reputed to have hanged an Englishman who said 'he would believe the divvil

as soon as the Pope'. It was a bad time to have enemies in high places. Therefore he was excepted from pardon of life or estates by the Settlement of 1652. His father, Thomas, had been a man of vast property. All this went when John and his relations were transplanted to Connacht, from where he himself later joined Charles II in exile, fought like so many expatriates of the time on the far foreign fields, especially under the Prince of Conde, and so fades from the screen. He lost the Cantwell inheritance, one item of which was listed as . . . 'Kilfane with the ruins of an old abbey or church and a stone house'.

However not all the Cantwells had gone. Like the Rothés some remained and served as officers in the army of James II; some to be attainted in 1691. One of the last recorded abroad was Andrew, 1744-1802, a well known librarian in Paris and an author of repute.

In the main castle on the present-day road to Johnswell, is a recess known as the bed of Cantwell Fada, leabha chaol cruadh an Channtulaigh. It is long and narrow and is entered by means of a low and narrow doorway.

his castle, of course, has its Cromwell story. John led it into defiance of the Roundheads who failing to breach its walls with their cannon, had to resort to making a deal with a local turfman who revealed the entrance to a secret passage. After their victory in capturing the keep when he asked for the promised reward they hanged him, virtuously proclaiming that as he had betrayed his own, he was no friend for them to associate with. This nice bit of back-sliding on a debt is still remembered because the hill on which he was hanged overlooking the castle is called Inisacoirce, the hill of the cock, the symbol of betrayal.

AFTER CROMWELL

The Cantwells gone, Kilfane went to the Bushe family. In December, 1670 Col. John Bushe had a grant confirmed of the Cantwell property which included 770 acres in Kilfane. One of his sons, Arthur, became an M.P. His eldest son, Amyas, also called Moses, was attainted by James II's Act of 1689. He was great-grandfather of Gervase Parker Bushe who in turn was father of the most famous of the family, Charles Kendal Bushe, who as his brother-in-law Grattan said 'spoke with the lips of an angel'. He was the 'Incorruptible' in the venal pre-Union days, refusing all bribes to vote for the death of the Irish Parliament. Gervase married Mary Grattan, sister of Henry after whom one . . . the greatest? . . . of our parliaments is named. Their daughter married John Power, later created first Baronet of Kilfane.

THE POWER FAMILY:

The background of the Powers is similar to the Cantwells'. Powers came over under Strongbow and early on settled in County Waterford, which is still known as Power county. They became Barons of Dunoye or Dunhill behind the beach at Annestown. The name, Le Poer, is said to be derived from the French, 'pauvre' or the later word, pauper, but if this is so the family fortunes definitely improved after the change of address to this side of the Irish Sea. The name soon became hibernicized and the family is often now considered 100 per cent Irish. They regarded themselves as being in this

category. Like the Cantwells many Poowers became bishops. They also had two serving members on the Supreme Council of the Confederation of Kilkenny. Some also served under James II; but in the Williamite Plantation some, anyway, managed to retain their lands. There was, long before Hollywood, an actor called Tyrone Power. There was a novelist, Marguerite, who became Countess of Blessington. Whiskey is made by the Powers! Powerscourt House was originally a Power castle built by Eustace in the reign of Edward I:

ARNOLD LE POER

But to us in Kilkenny the most colourful of these early Powers was Arnold, Seneschal of the county during Alice Kyteler's regime of 'diabolical sorceries, incantations and other nefarious heretical offences'. As Alice is reputed to have spent some time in Kilfane, Arnold who championed her is by this fact entitled to a place in our story. James Morrin wrote: 'The voice which bore testimony to the piety of the Irish people was an Englishman's, Sir Arnold Le Poer's, Seneschal of Kilkenny'. Arnold supported Alice even though her fourth husband was John Le Poer who in time became totally emaciated, deprived of nails, without any hair on his body. According to the indictment he reached this pitiable state because his wife made sacrifice to demons with living animals and also cried, 'Fi! Fi! Amen'. One of these was Artius Filium, one of the inferior devils roaming around our town and this story in company with Art and Robin, the cat and the great black hairy dog. For good measure the good lady also gave her man 'powders and pixides' to bring him to 'such stolidity of his senses' . . . that he 'perpetually pauperized his sons and heirs.' In actual fact Alice was charged with poisoning all four husbands. Yet Arnold championed her against Bishop de Ledrede whom he ordered bailiff Stephen Le Poer to arrest. This act was perpetrated at Kells from where the Bishop was taken to Kilkenny for imprisonment. There were tremendous and dramatic scenes as seneschal surrounded by knights, nobles and free tenants was confronted in the Judicial Hall by Bishop phalanxed by Dominicans, Franciscans, chaplains and clergy. This show of dignity did not prevent Le Poer from referring to him as 'that vile rustic peasant man from England!' The episcopal reply was: 'Knight, since you are somewhat literate, read'. Three times in both English and French, Arnold was ordered to arrest 'pestiferous persons'; that is, Alice and company. He refused and later declared, ' . . . that in Ireland there never was found heretics for it was wont to be called the Island of Saints. Now a stranger from England says we are all heretics!' Later in Dublin confronted by Peers, Bishops, Abbots, Mayors, Sherrifs and Seneschals he humbled himself and asked the bishop's pardon but neither asked for nor obtained absolution. Though declared orthodox he was put into prison and there remained till his death in 1331, after which because he was unabsolved, he was not buried for a long time.

His protagonist, the bishop, was later accused of being an accomplice in the murder of Hugh Le Poer and the burning of Moycober Castle. For this he got the King's pardon. Arnold's son was hanged for high treason. But the family survived these tribulations.

JOHN POWER

We now take an enormous jump almost to the 19th century to meet the two best loved of the Powers in this locality, the brothers, John and Richard, who moved in from Tullemaine Castle in Co. Tipperary at the end of the 18th century. John is reputed to have first settled with hound, horse, horn and hunting gear near Knocktopher, but when he won the hand of Harriet Bushe he moved himself and his equipage to Kilfane, and among other things did immediate and extensive work on the house. Tighe's Survey states that he added a new front rendering it 'not only an excellent house but a good specimen of architecture'. According to Sir Hercules Langrishe in 'Records of the Kilkenny Hunt' it was Sir Wheeler Cuffe who persuaded Power to settle in Kilkenny and to try to hunt it in the Leicestershire fashion. Power being a man of great ability did just that, buying most valuable dogs and having on his doorstep some of the most pleasant land in the world. Miss Muriel Bowen wrote that he said 'he found the country so unenclosed he could ride from the Welsh mountains to Waterford bridge without having to jump a single fence'. Moreover there was but one mountain, heather-clad Brandon, a mere 1,694 feet, and just one river. To improve this paradise Power planted fox coverts, an especially fine one in Clara, and had makeshift kennels in various places so that the dogs never had too far to travel. He was extremely anxious about them always because they were of best English fox-hound stock. 'A superlatively bred pack' is one description, going back to Merkin, a kind of Master MacGrath foxhound regarded as the fastest of her day.

Sir John, he was knighted in 1836, used to leave home at dead of night to be ready for the dawn Meet, so as not to miss a second's sport. 'Sport' is the operative word. Emphatically that he always was, not a butcher. Once in Clara when a gallant vixen rose to the dogs, he ordered the opening of all the earths to give her a chance to escape. One run lasted five hours and thirty minutes, only four huntsmen being left for the kill. Two of the animals died on the spot, but Sir John's 'Barley Corn' was later sold to the Marquis of Waterford, and renamed 'Sir John', under which title it came second in the Aintree Grand National of 1841.

Sir John, the man, in the best Melton tradition established a Club. This was domiciled in what used to be known as Rice's Hotel, but was re-named The Club House. The hounds came to town for the Theatre Festival. What rooms they occupied is not known. Sir John saw carefully to their comfort, and mirth filled the hotel and the town twice a year. The dinners excellent as they were established good fellowship among the huntsmen, and reckless wagers were laid. On one occasion Lord Waterford's horse was challenged to jump the diningroom table. Easy victory ! There was nocturnal and matutinal revelry in those 19th century days. Yet Sir John was no mere Jorrock. A strong supporter of Catholic Emancipation, he was a personal friend of Daniel O'Connell whose description of him was : "No man has seen Ireland who has not seen John Power". High praise, indeed !

THE SECOND BARONET

His son, also John, succeeded as Master of the pack at a time when a

journalist commented that Kilkenny was a 'hot shop'. Then often up to 150 pink coats mustered at a single meet. Like father, like son . . . only maybe moreso ! John fils was more than an enthusiast, he was an addict. Because of his extremely short sight, he had an eye-glass fixed to the peak of his cap to give him the vision he needed. Once he led a chase towards the Suir, over some 12 miles, so that when he reached the river bank, like Sir Walter Scott's famous huntsman, he was alone. The fox having taken to the water, the Master commandeered a boat, put three couple of dogs aboard, rowed across and continued the chase on foot.

It was during his Mastership that ladies were permitted to join the hunt for the first time. Among these initiators were the Misses Langrishe of Knocktopher, Miss Smithwick of Kilcreene and the Duchess of Beaufort. It was the Duke of Beaufort who said that he had never had better sport than when quartered in Kilkenny, for 'Johnny Power had quite a first rate pack of hounds'.

TRAGEDY

But the beginning of the 20th century brought the weary weight of grief to Kilfane, and the tombstones are perpetual reminders of that sorrow. 'The Irish Times' of January 25th, 1900, reported that the Kilkenny meet was at Kilfane, residence of Sir John Elliott Power, 4th Baronet, who was out hunting for the last time before joining his regiment, the Imperial Yeomanry, en route for South Africa. Mrs. Langrishe had made an appeal to the Hunt whose 'numbers had been greatly reduced by war,' for funds to equip a bed at the Base hospital. Poor Sir John, aged 23, died a heroic death at Lindley on June 1st, 1900. He had owned some 10,000 acres.

SIR DERRICK

Worse was to come for his brother, Sir Derrick, died early in 1902 from enteric fever. This was a loss not only to county and hunting field but also a cruel blow to the bereft relatives. 'Land and Water' commented that 'as became a Power of Kilfane, Sir Derrick was keenly fond of the chase and rode well and fearlessly to the hounds'. As he had no brother the title went to his uncle.

In the tiny private cemetery there is also the grave of Mary Wilmot Beatrice Power who died in 1966, aged 90 years. For a long time she had been almost a recluse, living in a cottage on the estate, and selling off some of the pictures and other valuables. A superb 'Napoleon' from Kilfane hangs now in the elegant Smithwick drawingroom in Kilcreene.

According to MacLysaght the Power coat of arms is quite plain . . . Argent a chief indented argent. A visit to St. Canice's Cathedral introduces the visitor to a rich and glorious coat-of-arms in the stained-glass window in the north transept. This forms part of the memorial erected to John Elliott, 4th Baronet, 'a true hearted gentleman', the tribute to his friends in Kilkenny. The device on the glass is a stag head as crest, three scallop shells, a red hand and two very ferocious looking animals, dogs of heraldic pedigree.

RICHARD POWER

In any family story time becomes a switchback which must sometimes

be travelled in reverse. Therefore back, back to happier days, the halcyon days of the Kilkenny Theatre, the dream-child-come-true of Richard Power, brother of the first baronet, who opened his play-house doors in February, 1802. A unique theatre this, unique to Ireland and not merely to Kilkenny. The actors were nearly all amateurs, the actresses mainly professional. What was really new about the venture was that Richard acquired a special building for his theatricals, one later known as the Athaneum. In the late 18th century drama and theatre were widely respected, honoured and loved here in Kilkenny, and members of the great families helped in the productions.

Read a programme . . . read Hansard ! Grattan, Flood, Langrishe and Bushe figure in both. Great was the stage that these honoured names graced. For many years the Rt. Hon. Henry Flood of Farnley had presented dramas in his own house, as had Sir Hercules Langrishe in Knocktopher Abbey, as had the Bushes in Kilfane, they proudly showing off their most eminent relation, their brother-in-law, Henry Grattan, giant of the Irish Parliament. Other well known names in these productions included Rothe, Tighe, Bryan, Butler . . . all great locals . . . and Tom Moore, the guest artiste who wooed his Betsy here and immortalised Jenkinstown's Last Rose of Summer. The plays were as varied as the cast . . . little known Otway, uproarious Sheridan, ever-with-us Shakespeare, even mighty Milton with the Masque, 'Comus'. It is reported that Langrishe loved female parts, especially indomitable and massive Mrs. Malaprop. Richard Power reserved for himself the role of Hamlet and as the melancholy prince, no doubt under the heady influence of the Romantic Revival had himself painted in the part for the drawing-room in Kilfane.

THE PRIVATE THEATRE

The opening night of The Private Theatre was in February, 1802. From then a tradition developed that each play would have its prologue and its epilogue. Mr. Langrishe wrote many of these, and they often provide pithy comment on theatre, town, country and universe. The final one composed by way of valediction goes :

“This town shall still remain our island's boast,
Nor mourn one glory set, one laurel lost . . .
Here Berkeley, Congreve, Swift in days of yore
Lisp'd the first accents of their classic lore,
Here Bushe, here Flood were born, here Grattan planned
In early youth the welfare of the land”.

These words which are still capable of rousing a Kilkenny heart, were originally heard by an audience that included no fewer than seventeen peers and peeresses and Mr. and Mrs. Edgeworth and Maria, author of 'The Absentee' and 'Castle Rackrent'.

The decision to close came at the end of the 10th season in 1810. Perhaps because it was to be the last, the season was particularly fine. Tom Moore appeared on the stage and produced a Melalogue on National Music. The warmth of his reception was unbounded and his epilogue was enthusiastically received, especially the comment on Richard Power. The lines . . .

“Wits at his request

Are changed to fools, and dull dogs learn to jest;
Soldiers for him good trembling cowards make
And beaux turned clowns look ugly for his sake”.

show what a splendid producer and manager he was. So he revised his decision to close and another season kept Kilkenny merry in October, 1812 with a bigger male cast, a new actress called Miss O'Neill and double receipts on opening night. Unfortunately ill health for a period forced Richard to go abroad . . . to Italy . . . but his interest in the theatre did not diminish. In fact many improvements were done on the building, a new green-room being built and also a new proscenium arch. The costs were paid out of subscription, not from door receipts. However the final season was from October 11th to 29th, 1819. It would appear that Power's poor health forced him into the decision, for the business was flourishing, the cast alone consisting of 38 men and 8 ladies.

Of the venture it must be emphasised that it was not merely a theatre for the entertainment of an educated audience, an audience feeling perhaps a bit bored in provincial Ireland, recently stripped of its Parliament. It was really a social endeavour.

First of all it was non denominational, showing thus a remarkably unusual attitude for the early 19th century. At the same time it had the support of the church. In fact one of the highlights of the season was the Charity Sermon usually preached in St. Mary's, one of the things 'one had to do'. Other 'musts' were supper at the Palace, a Fete Champetre, a Garden Party and Balls and Routs galore in the manner of Jane Austen, or maybe Georgette Heyer. All the proceeds were distributed to various charities and it is estimated that £4,500 were raised for such purposes in 15 seasons. The actual amount of £1,678-11-6 was the distributed profit of seven seasons, and this after expenses had been paid, and these included fees for the orchestra from the Theatre Royal, Dublin.

Another very happy story of this activity is the romance of the marriage of Miss O'Neill, the principal lady, to Mr. Beecher. The ceremony took place in Kilfane and was kept a pretty secret till the pair were almost in the church. However it was by no means a quiet affair after that, for John Power hearing of it turned up with hounds and huntsmen, while the theatre fraternity honoured the occasion with the gay flamboyance of their stage attire. It must have been as cheerful a bridal as ever Hymen 'in saffron robe and taper clear' attended, and better still, bride and groom lived in bliss ever after, Mr. Beecher in time becoming a baronet.

TOMBS

One of the most remarkable tombs connected with the subject matter of this paper is not in Kilfane, but in St. Canice's Cathedral, and well worthy of note. It is the slab which forms one of the sides of the Piers and Margaret monument. It is most superbly carved with the Scourging, insignia of the Passion, a Crucifixion where the figure of Christ is draped in wide flowing ribbons like a Jerpoint tomb, and Mary in a wimple and Beloved John are beside

Him. Then there are two shields, identical in shape and bearing easily recognised armorial insignia . . . Butler cups and Cantwell ermine, and each in turn correctly named. The arms are not quartered, they are simply side by side. Dr. Rae points out that the tomb is a composite one and that some of the present pieces were not in it originally, but there is no doubt these coats of arms were always side by side. Whose are they ? That is the question, but in Kilcooley Abbey there is another Cantwell/Butler tomb. The Rev. William Healy says that it is 'one of the nicest gems' he has seen in carving, 'a raised sculpture cross' and commemorates William Cantwell who died **XXLL** (luc) and Margareta Butler who died **MCCCXXVLL**.

Phelan's 'Monuments in St. Canice's' has a sketch of a beautiful stone, a delightful floriated cross of seven branches, a Maltese cross in the centre, the whole surrounded by script. It commemorates Richard Power who died 1583 and Isabella Roth, his wife for whose date only the first two figures are given, i.e. 15 . . .

GRAVEYARD

In the ruins of Kilfane there are a few tombs of great interest. One is a pleasant early 18th century stone to Richard Lee of Co. Clare, whose father was from Cheshire, and who died in 1707 from small-pox, in his 42nd year. There is an acrostic account of his virtues

Rarely is Justice done unto the Just.
 In his case of necessity it must
 Cause you'll speake well or you must silent be.
 He was composed of Love and Charity
 A Bright example to Posterity.
 Reader if in his paths you rightly tread.
 Doubt not of being Hapy when your Dead.
 Life her below he did but little Prize
 E'r haveing Life Above before his Eyes
 Ever remembering that the Soul ne'r dyes.

In the wilderness of neglect which is the graveyard there are several Mottley graves. One of this family was Parish Priest of Rathcoole and Kilderry and he lived in Cantwell's Court till he was moved to St. John's in the City. He had been ordained by Dr. William Daton in 1697, and had as his sureties at £50 each James Archdekin and Vincent Nash. This later link between Kilfane and Cantwell's Court is worthy of note.

In a tiny nook outside the old cemetery are the recent Power graves or Memorial Stones. The row makes sad reading . . .

Richard Crampton Power, 3rd Baronet, died 1892, aged 49 . . .

John Elliott Power, aged 23, died 1900 during the Boer War . . .

Derek Elliott died 1902, also in South Africa . . .

Kathleen Mab Power, daughter of the Rev. Geo. Power and Constances, died 1903, aged 22; she was drowned in the Nore . . .

Florence Anna Maria, wife of the 3rd Baronet, died 1909 . . .

George Beresford Power, Canon of St. Canice's and Rector of Kilfane, died 1931 . . .

Mary Wilmot Beatrice Power, eldest daughter of Richard, 3rd Baronet, died 1966, aged 90 years.

PARIS ANDERSON

Paris Anderson's name will always be associated with Kilfane. The 1852 Journal of The Kilkenny Archaeological Society contains a sonnet of his in which he describes seeing the 'ancient tower furrowed by angry blast'.

It concludes . . . I

Drew near to that great pile. And Lo! I found

'Neath it the tomb of a Crusader bold

Half hidden in the ruin cumbered ground.

Ah me! said I, men's hearts are hard and cold,

Else would they move the rubbish gathered round

And cherish this, the Piety of old!

It is good and hopeful to be able to report that Kilfane House is being cherished and restored by its present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Hal Clarke, who bought it because they fell in love with it. They come over from the U.S.A. every summer to work on it and so save it from the dereliction overtaking so many beautiful old residences.

KILFANE

multi-storeyed complex of

Paan, Cantwell, Power and Clarke . . .

Ireland in miniature.