

## David Rothe

Maureen Hegarty

DAVID ROTHE was born around 1570 — Dr. Moran and Canon Carrigan differing about the actual date. But there is no problem about the year of his death — 1650, the year of Cromwell in Kilkenny. However, dates of birth and death are common to all humanity. It is what happens in between that uniquely stamps the individual. And the stamp of greatness is imprinted on David Rothe, though his age is among the most violent, complex, disturbed, confused, dramatic and mis-understood in the history of our country.

In 1573, Canon Carrigan's date, Ireland was only emerging from the medieval. A few years earlier Shane O'Neill had died. A few years later Munster experienced the tragic rising of James FitzMaurice Fitzgerald and its terrible consequences — the Munster Plantation which introduced Spencer, Raleigh, tobacco and potato to the Irish scene. The Composition of Connacht was being planned. Failure to implement it was a major factor in what was to happen in the days of David Rothe. The Spanish Armada foundered to disaster in 1588 when he was still a boy. The Nine Years' War with victory at The Yellow Ford and debacle at Kinsale, the trickery at Mellifont and The Flight of The Earls coincided with his student days first at home and then abroad.

David was born in his parents' home on the north side of the Tholsel. It can be seen in the picture of the Market Cross familiar to visitors to Rothe House. Canon Carrigan taking his data from the tomb in St. Mary's, says that his father was John Rothe FitzRobert, his mother Lettice Rothe FitzPeter of New Ross. John died in 1590, she in 1602, the year David set off for the Continent to study in Douay, Salamanca and Rome, the typical Grand Tour programme of young men aiming at the priesthood in those later Tudor days. However, Dr. Moran asserts that David was born in 1568, that his father who died in 1570 was named Geoffry, and that he was the youngest of eight.

There is no doubt that his early education was here in Kilkenny. "private" both the experts say, but one authority mentioned that he did attend the Piers Ruadh school in St. Canice's, the school attended 20 years previously by Peter Lombard, Archbishop-to-be of Armagh

and great friend and admirer of Rothe. If David did attend this famous school in the shadow of St. Canice's it gave him a second link with the Butler family, for his grandmother was Ellen Butler of Paulstown, first cousin of Piers Ruadh, co-founder of the school with the thrice noble woman, Margaret of Kildare. Other great students were Luke Wadding, the Franciscan, and Fr. Archer, the Jesuit.

Certainly, if the youthful David attended the school the methods of the founder, Fr. Peter Whyte, worked, making him into a most remarkable scholar. And much later he repaid the debt to Kilkenny by establishing a school here after the Confederacy had ordered the setting up of a free school in every province for the advancement of learning. This was in Rose Inn Street, in a house left to him by his father. It got special mention from the Nuncio in 1645 when he reported to Rome on the wonderful welcome he got in Kilkenny and of the "band of some 50 students on horseback, all armed with pistols . . . who conveyed their greetings to him through one crowned with a laurel wreath and richly robed." Some good verses in Latin were delivered by this leader. During these happy school days Kilkenny was "a pleasant town, memorable for the civility of its inhabitants."

## THE BISHOP

One of the main dates of David Rothe's career was that on which he was made a bishop, and as with the date of his birth there is contention about this one too. But long before his elevation, while he was still in Rome, he was Professor of Theology in the Irish College and at the same time Secretary to Peter Lombard, Archbishop-in-exile of Armagh. Then around 1609, at his own request he returned to Ireland and came with many duties to perform. He was Protonotary, Vicar-General and later Deputy Primate for Peter Lombard. But his main duties were in and around his own Ossory. Soon his name became well known in circles where anonymity would have served him better. A government agent reported on "Davy Rothe, a most seditious instrument, one who takes on himself the name and authority of Protonotarius Apostolicus to the detriment of all ecclesiastical business for the king in Ireland. He has been North and South and is most assiduous in the discharge of his duties."

A document of 1618 stated that he was Bishop of Ossory. Dr. Moran accepts this date, as it and other Government lists of the time named him bishop. One

went so far as to state: "David Rothe, elected of Ossory, resident thereabouts, is relieved from friend to friend, and by his office of protonotaryship." But Canon Carrigan insists that the important year was 1620, and in proof quotes from a letter of 1636 in Rothe's own handwriting, to Rome requesting permission to have his resignation as Bishop accepted, or to be given release from some of his duties through the appointment of a coadjutor to aid him in "his advanced age and failing health." He pointed out that for 16 years he had watched over his diocese with all possible solicitude and care. Carrigan argues that in a document making such a request the cause would not be damaged by deliberate reduction of the number of years served. Indeed, the opposite would be more likely, and the number of years would be increased if that were possible. Of course the confusion is due to the fact that not only had he been working in the diocese, he had been of vast importance in it and in others in the land. In fact, when he was appointed he was consecrated in Paris because there was no bishop resident in Ireland to perform the ceremony. Therefore, the duties of many dioceses had fallen to him to perform. When he received the episcopal brief he was in Paris having gone there for temporary refuge during the penal campaign launched by Deputy Chichester. Laws against religion were particularly vigorously applied in Kilkenny, especially the recusancy fines for non-attendance at protestant service. These were collected with avidity. It is said that when the fire alarm went . . . and it did this all too often . . . the bailiffs would collect near the fire to pounce upon their victims, who then had a choice to make — escape from the fire and pay a severe fine or risk being burnt to death.

Yet for about six years before his elevation, David Rothe had relative freedom of movement. His main residences were with his brother, Edward, and with the 3rd Viscount Mountgarret at Balleen near Freshford. But however powerful his friends the whole atmosphere of Ireland in the 3rd decade of the 17th century was far different from that which he had enjoyed in Rome and which briefly came his way in Paris. The See of Ossory had been vacant since the death of Dr. Thomas Strong who died in 1601, but who had been in exile in Compostella since 1584. Therefore even in religious matters this diocese, like the whole of the country, was torn by dissensions. The Regulars were at loggerheads with the Seculars over certain privileges. There was a complicated three-sided affair in Drogheda, involving the parish priest,

Jesuits and Franciscans. Dr. Rothe solved this to the satisfaction of all parties. Even though it was said that he was "never clement to the Regulars" he spent much of his time dealing with their problems. There was the case of Holy Cross Abbey where the Archbishop of Cashel crossed swords with Fr. Paul Raggett, V.G., of the Cistercians in the British Isles, about the limits of jurisdiction. Dr. Rothe's intervention was so successful that the two formidable adversaries became firm friends, and when both were exiled they lived in the same house, the Archbishop seeking haven in the monastery of Bonlieu near Bordeaux where Fr. Raggett dispensed the famed Cistercian hospitality.

Obviously, prudence and circumspection were qualities as deeply rooted in our bishop at the roots of the oak tree of his coat-of-arms were planted in the mystic fields of heraldry. His contemporaries recognised his wisdom. Peter Lombard, who knew him well, gave him tremendous powers to deal with priests and their problems in the primatial See. But dealing so prudently with all these matters brought him under government surveillance, and so under constant suspicion. Friendship with Mountgarret was the cloak which protected him. Under it he was able to perform the manifold duties required of him. Long before he became bishop he convened several synods — in 1614 for the northern dioceses, in 1618 to draw up regulations concerning ecclesiastical discipline. It was because of these activities that the authorities thought him bishop.

Whether the date of consecration is 1618 or 1620 the situation in Ireland was bad. The dioceses either had no incumbents at all or had incumbents in exile only. Definitely by 1621 he was back in Ireland, back in a sad and desolate country, back to set about his awesome task with zeal and enthusiasm, unperturbed by the fact that he was on his own, the whole country his diocese. He took on himself "the solicitude of the churches," showing a nation-wide pastoral vigilance, being particularly concerned with the administration of Confirmation. The children were brought to him, not into grand Renaissance churches built by men, but to cathedrals made of forest trees and to tiny chapels whose roofs were tangled briars. But though life was harsh he had many friends, some in high places whose doors were always open to him. When he had a congregation he preached firmly and categorically. He "neither yielded to fatigue nor shunned peril," as his friend, Lynch

declared. Nor was he deterred by fear of death from performing the functions of his office. In the mood of the times Catholics were constantly watched and rigorously pursued, heavily fined, often imprisoned and tortured. To be a priest was dangerous. To be a bishop, to be the sole bishop in the land, providence-provoking. But he survived, respected, revered for his grave deportment, great piety, vast learning and genuine suavity of manner. The Irish Church needed such a man of prudence and wisdom, a man who silently and almost imperceptibly dealt with the multitude of knotty human problems among laity and clergy.

He issued instructions which now give insight into both church and social conditions. He condemned excessive luxury at funeral banquets and in the display of mourning garments. He referred to the detriment such expenditure did to the heirs and to the vain emulation it raised for persons in poor circumstances. He also condemned improper songs and plays at wakes, and extravagance in celebrating patron festivals. The strictures were also applied to weddings and christenings. The clergy were advised to refrain from political intrigue, to avoid giving offence to those in power, and to confine themselves to their religious duties. This wise policy for survival was one he himself practised. In 1629, Dr. Roche of Ferns reported to Rome that he himself with two Archbishops and two suffragan bishops stayed with Rothe in Kilkenny without any ostentation so that the government was in no way alarmed by their presence.

The leaders of religious orders were instructed to follow his example. They were told that they could if they tried, hold chapters and assemblies without unnecessary display and in "retired places" so as not to draw undue attention to themselves.

By 1622 matters were improving as Meath got a bishop who in time came to live in his see. Then two more bishops were appointed and were actually consecrated by Dr. Rothe in Kilkenny. In 1625 he was relieved of his duties in Armagh. In 1636, Dr. Roche of Ferns died suddenly in Kilkenny. It was then that David Rothe considering his age, service and infirmities applied to Rome for relief from his responsibilities — either full retirement or assistance from a coadjutor. He wished, he said, to devote himself to his own sanctification. This request was totally rejected. So he stayed on to deal with ordinary problems and then all the new ones the 1640's brought.

1641 showed how his mind was inclining. He established "A Pious Association" — the first of its kind — for the promotion of charity and peace. Though particularly created for Ossory it soon spread through the land and a silver reliquary crucifix is today tangible evidence of this work of hope. It bears the inscription: "Ad Usum Pacificae Congregationis."

Peace was the desideratum, but peace was not to be, for October 23rd, 1641, saw the beacon fires of war murkily aflame in Ulster. It was then that the weary man who five years previously had begged to be relieved of his office, took the initiative that was to make Kilkenny the capital city of Ireland for a brief few glorious years.

But before considering these developments we will take a look at Rothe — scholar, writer, orator, preacher.

### ROTHE'S WRITINGS :

First in importance is "ANALECTA." Pars Prima dated 1616 and dedicated to none other than the Prince of Wales, gives an account of the horrific sufferings of Irish catholics during the six months of Chichester's deputyship in 1615. This may be regarded as a current affairs account of the situation. It was published in Cologne, the expense borne by Lord Mountgarret.

Pars Secunda, dedicated grandly to the orthodox kings and princes of Europe, is an exhortatory letter dated December, 1611, to Cornelius Devany, Bishop of Down and Conor and other Irish clergymen and laymen who might have to suffer grievously for the faith.

Pars Tertia is the most important and interesting now. It is a history and vindication of distinguished members of the hierarchy, clergy and laity who suffered for religion during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. In it is to be found the account of the atrocious torture inflicted on Dr. Hurley, the heroic archbishop of Cashel.

The "Analecta" was probably written in Paris where its author was entertained by Jean Lescalopier, Baron St. Just. Chancellor of the Queen Mother, Marie de Medici. He was a friend of Ireland much involved in setting up the Irish College. During his stay, David Rothe preached a panegyric on St. Brigid. So impressed was the congregation he was encouraged to translate it into Latin, enlarge and publish it. It is entitled "BRIGIDA THAUMATURGA" and the initials of the author are given as D.R.E.O.V.H. — David Rothe, Episcopus Ossoriensis, Vice-Primas Hib. Dr. Moran said that an excellent copy was to be found in the Barberini College in Rome.

By the time the pamphlet was ready Lescalopier was dead, so the work was dedicated to his two sons.

In 1621, another formidable work was published, in Antwerp this time. The author's name was not printed but it was well known who D.R. was who had composed "*Hiberniae sive Antiquioris Scotiae Vindiciae.*" Part of this was a reply to Dempster, a Scottish Catholic who had annoyed him by endeavouring to rob ancient Ireland of its most illustrious saints and scholars by transferring them to Scotland. With a grand arrogance Rothe demanded — "Who will deny that the Bishop of Ossory is learned not in a few things?"

But the magnum opus, the life work, was never published. "*HIEROGRAPHIA HIBERNIAE,*" simply advertised as the greatest ecclesiastical history of Ireland, perished with so many other priceless objects during the visitation of the Roundheads to Rothe's city and ours. As early as 1640 the Superior of the Irish College in Paris spoke to Fr. Luke Wadding about this work. Though its author wanted to send it to him "the carriage so dear, the hazard of the way so great he waited for a better time" to dispatch it. The loss is ours, for the history planned to deal with every diocese — to describe sites and existing remains of abbeys, churches, schools, pilgrimages, hermitages and other holy places. It was also to supply a truthful narrative of the worthy deeds of remarkable persons.

No wonder Rothe laboured on this for nearly 50 years. One fragment of 22 pages survived. It is called "*De Ossoriensi Episcopatus*" and gives the famous description of St. Canice's Cathedral — "on a gentle eminence from whence as from a watch tower it looks freely abroad on the city lying beneath . . . a structure of the most solid nature, built of cut and polished stone . . . the choir is ample and splendid enough, adorned by a wonderfully large eastern window than which I do not know of any in the kingdom of greater size or more replete with ornament. It is divided by two piers furnished with columns of solid stone and the light streams in through painted glass in which is depicted most skilfully the history of the life, passion, resurrection and ascension of the Lord. Such is the elegance and splendour of this work, so great is the ornament it affords and so much does it become the building . . . that the iconoclasts . . . restrained their violent hands from it."

In 1644 in the thick of nation-making discussions, Dr. Rothe issued a prospectus in Waterford asking the mem-

bers of the Confederacy to help with the publication. Their interest was not great enough, and a second appeal to them also fell on deaf ears. Yet even in his lifetime, Rothe was regarded as a worthy scholar. Fr. Messingham of the Irish College in Paris said he was thoroughly familiar with every department of knowledge, being also an eloquent orator, acute reasoner, profound theologian, and defender of ecclesiastical liberty. Michael O'Clery, greatest of The Four Masters, consulted Rothe who passed on information he had collected.

### **BISHOP OF THE CONFEDERATION :**

The third heading under which Bishop Rothe may be considered is the unique one, Bishop of the Confederation.

The immediate cause of the bringing together of the Lords of Ireland into what was then called The Confederate Catholics of Ireland was the Rising of 1641 in Ulster led by Sir Phelim O'Neill which started with an abortive attack on Dublin Castle and continued with various forays, incidents, even massacres, throughout the country. Chaos grew, panic followed, but soon David Rothe, senior bishop of the land, assessed the situation and then issued an invitation to all members of the Episcopacy, Vicars General and Heads of Religious Orders to meet in conference at his residence in Kilkenny in 1642. This high-level assembly would examine the insurrection and its causes, and then judge it worthy of blessing or condemnation.

Dr. Rothe made it clear that it was at his invitation, not his command that three archbishops — O'Reilly of Armagh, Walsh of Cashel, and O'Queely of Tuam; four bishops — Rothe himself, MacEgan of Elphin, Comerford of Waterford and Lismore, and MacGeoghan of Kildare; two bishops elect — de Burgo of Clonfert and MacMahon of Down and Conor; with Procurators and Dignitaries from the Regular Clergy came to Kilkenny. Once here they unanimously elected him their host president of their deliberations.

This was the man who in 1636, weary and spent, had asked to be relieved of his onerous duties. Now he was undertaking work not even dreamed of then, never dreamed of before then, work that was to give Ireland its first ever chance of a national parliament.

Archdeacon Lynch, a great admirer of Rothe, said that choosing him for president was an extremely wise decision for he was a "prudent counsellor." It was he alone who had seen very little prospect for success for

the “rude uprising” in Ulster and all the subsequent events that fanned out from it. Therefore, it was he who had contacted the bishops to discuss the situation and to decide their attitude to it. This group met in his house for seven days. Twice daily they were sumptuously entertained at his table at his expense, and as soon as the main meal was over and before resuming the debate they walked in the Bishops’ garden, a description and a place well known to friends of Rothe House.

Great, solemn, serious and difficult as these discussions were, they did not lack the human touch. The Archbishop of Tuam was a sleepy head and one morning turned up late. His host reprimanded him, expressing astonishment that the groans of their expiring country had not been sufficient to get him out of bed in time. Tuam humbly admitted his weakness and promised full amendment. But like many another he fell again — to be admonished again. Who would not squirm in such a situation to be told that “the collective convenience of the rest should be put aside for his personal and selfish convenience?” It seems that poor Tuam deeply embarrassed promised to sit up all night rather than offend again. Later, however, when he died his solemn dirge in St. Canice’s was presided over by his critic.

But while this incident is introduced to interpose a little ease, the problems discussed were awesome, the decisions pending meant survival or annihilation. Decision making was all the more difficult because of the admixture present — even in that closed shop grouping which however was a mini representation of the nation at large.

There were two major sections — the Native Irish and the Old English. Rothe belonging to the second category. The Confederacy when ultimately established, set itself up as an effective union of the whole of the Irish nation, distinctions between racial groupings, provinces, town and country were to be swept away in one great embracing wave of oneness. But this was the ideal. This was theory only. At the meetings of the bishops the clashes that later reverberated through the din of disunity were heard quite clearly in the heat of discussion. Some averred that the war was an act of rebellion because carried on without the authority of the king. Others insisted that it was lawful because undertaken in defence of altars and homes — of religion and land in the ultimate issue — and against those doing their utmost to destroy religion, country and sovereign, the unjust aggressor being the Presbyterian population, the planters

who had Scottish connections and who favoured the Covenant, and who therefore were already causing serious trouble to King Charles on the home front. These Ulster presbyterians had an army, and a good one, soon to be made better by the arrival of the veteran Munroe.

But after the heat, the decision. It was that though a war might be initially unjust, causes could subsequently arise, or a notable change of circumstances could occur, to make it just to pursue it. Therefore as the overthrow of religion, king and country had become the aim and object of a rebellious foe, it was perfectly allowable by every law human and divine to take up arms to prevent such linked calamities. This decision was presented in a document signed by the Hierarchy mentioned already as being present and also by Fr. Archer, Abbot of Holy Cross and Fr. John Reily, Prior of Kilkenny.

It was then decided that a General Assembly composed of some 300 members from all Ireland should be convened to legislate on all matters affecting the public good. This was not just the considered opinion of the ecclesiastics alone. It reflected the tone of the whole country. All wanted what was called the Confederacy. It made the uprising nation-wide. To cement all together an Oath of Association was decided on. But though the Confederacy had its origin in the Ulster Rising, the General Assembly was soon dominated by the Old English, Mountgarret being proclaimed its President. It took on an Anglo-Irish atmosphere -- indeed it followed the English tradition of parliamentary practice.

The Anglo-Irish or Old English representatives were anxious for many reasons to make peace as quickly as possible with the king. The Irish had no such feeling of anxiety about reconciliation with a desperate monarch. In fact his predicament was their opportunity to harass him into acceptance of their terms — full restoration of their lands and full religious toleration. So the seeds of disunity were ploughed in from the start, to germinate freely, nourished as time went on by religious and racial animosity and the clash of personality. But as the dismal future was still decently draped in its impenetrable veils, hopes were high when on October 24th, 1642, the first session opened in the Town House of Robert Shee and the elected representatives appointed their cabinet or Supreme Council, six from each of the four provinces. These were to be directly responsible for the government of the kingdom. Their president was Lord Mountgarret, friend, relative and protector of David Rothe — his head-

quarters, Kilkenny Castle. Having achieved this objective, the establishment of The Assembly of the Confederate Catholics, Dr. Rothe withdrew as much as possible from the temporal, military and political concerns of the Assembly.

One of its first acts however was to acknowledge him as rightful Bishop of Ossory, therefore entitled to all the temporalities of the See, to the churches and particularly to the Cathedral of St. Canice. But though persistently urged to do so, the newly restored bishop neither immediately re-consecrated his cathedral nor took possession of the palace. *Festina lente* was always his policy, prudence his guide line. In his own good time the great re-entry and triumphant *Te Deum* of re-consecration gave joy to a vast concourse. Dr. Rothe lived at first in the Deanery and then in the *Nova Curia* built by his predecessor, Dr. de Ledrede. The tide had indeed turned, and life could become reasonably comfortable. But his sole desire was to be allowed to live a life of prayer, spirituality and dedication to the multitudinous needs of his flock. The palace was not just his own personal and private dwelling place. The clergy of the cathedral lived in it too, in community as it were, and their appointments to various offices were always of short duration, usually under six months, so that custom would not make for staleness. His decrees continued to be for prudence and calm. There was to be no ostentation, no extravagance. Money was not for hoarding; it was for spending on books — so thought the scholar — on the adornment of churches — and great was their need — and on the poor — whose problems in 17th century Ireland were of a magnitude that to-day would be classed Third World.

While Bishop Rothe retired to his palace formidable and nation-making or breaking discussions were taking place in Robert Shee's long-house-by-the-river. First of all the Oath, an essential ingredient of the Confederacy, was formulated — *Pro Deo, Pro Rege, Pro Patria Hibernia Unanimis*. All supporters were required to take this, and thousands did for it was believed the justness of the cause made it incumbent on all to form themselves into a Confederacy and to bind themselves to it by oath. All swore the same formula but with different bias, different understanding of the issues, different opinions about solution. For example, *Pro Deo* for the Native Irish meant fealty to the Catholic Church as represented undiluted in the connection with Rome. The Old English attitude was strongly salted with loyalty to a king who among other

things was according to his coronation oath head of a Church in conflict with Rome.

Pro Rege — these words give an even better pointer to the edge of imbalance. The O'Neills, and Phelim was prime mover of the rebellion of 1641, had never shown affection, even respect for the English monarch. Shane, proudly arrogant, was undisputed king of Ulster, and so asserted at Elizabeth's court. Hugh sleeping at last eternally coffined on Rome's Janiculum Hill, had been foiled by two monarchs, the clan robbed of the lands held since time immemorial and the Gap of the North thus left unprotected, its traditional defenders scattered to the corners of Europe. So when the chance came the O'Neills and their vassals still living in their province wanted to get their lands back. And so did the others, Eoin Roe among them, the emigrants returning from exile, their main aim being restoration of their lands. This was the essence of the Irish attitude. Therefore their feelings of duty toward a king in Whitehall differed radically from those of their neighbours, the Old English, who had always enjoyed the favour of the English Crown, a favour tangibly represented by the gift of land, a favour now in danger of dissolution, through danger to the donor. Worse was the possible future loss of land under a new regime hostile to the monarchy and its former supporters.

Pro Patria Hibernia was the third element of the oath. Religion and king-loyalty were so inter-knit with the land question that it was and is difficult to disentangle them. The Gordian Knot was the land, a real asset but very limited in supply, so that giving it to one meant taking it from another. Who owned it in the first half of the 17th century? In less than a century much of it had changed hands mainly through confiscations and plantations, abortive though some were. There were also the Church lands, the vast monastic demesnes so lavishly dowered on royal favourites of the hour. And not all holders of such estates were of the Established Church. Did not the Galmoys hold Graignamanagh, prize of prizes in this county?

These were only some of the facets of the many-sided problems of the oath. In simple terms it committed all who took it into maintaining the English connection. Therefore it was much more than an assertion of loyalty. How much those who subscribed to it understood its political meaning cannot be even guessed at. And there was also the problem of language to complicate things still further. Most of the Irish lords spoke their native

language and it only. So under every heading the situation was not a harmonious one because though unity was the ideal, political, economic and religious interests varied widely, therefore friction, rivalry and distrust soon reared their hydra heads.

All the foregoing presents a picture of the complexities of life that surrounded David Rothe in the last decade of his life, spent here in Kilkenny, his desire being for peace in his country, diocese and personal life. This was not to be though the rest of this story is the account of various attempts into the composition of a peace.

But the Confederacy had grown out of the Ulster Rising which had spread all over the country. This meant that there were several armies in existence. There was the King's under Ormonde, 12th Earl, later to be rewarded with a dukedom. It is surely one of the ironies of history that his "realm" was also the seat of the Confederacy. He loved his king so well that on hearing of the regicide he solemnly declared: "The world hath not seen the like since the Crucifixion of the Saviour." His aim was to serve this king for whom the Irish troubles spelt disaster, already so deeply trapped was he in the quagmire of English and Irish politics. Ormonde wanted peace for him, but peace on his own terms, and he failed till it was too late for all parties, especially for Charles who fell before the might of Cromwell, the Parliament and Round-heads as this country would do in time but with many more heads rolling, Ireland's pattern being always more complicated than England's.

The second army was the presbyterian one in Ulster under Tunroie, pro parliament in England and so anti-royal and anti-Confederacy.

The third was the army established by the Confederacy, with very little unity of purpose or command. The two great rivals, Eoin Roe O'Neill in Ulster and Preston in Leinster, would not co-operate with each other. And the trouble about armies is that their presence anywhere at best means an uneasy peace. The great Confederate victory was at Benburb in 1646, but it was a barren one. no follow up, however vast the booty taken, however spectacular the captured flags sent in triumph to Rome. By then the country was war-weary — men, money, munitions exhausted. In fact, Eoin Roe had soon to admit that he had not enough gunpowder to fire a single cannon. David Rothe was no friend of Eoin Roe — David, the anglo-Irishman, the man of peace — Eoin, the Ulster Mars, anxious to fight for the rights of his people in

land and religion, and soon to be staunchly supported by a new ally, Rinuccini, whose presence, sad to say, merely added further complexity to the multiplicity of problems. But when Jean Baptist Rinuccini, Archbishop of Fermo and Nuncio of Pope Innocent X arrived in Kilkenny on November 14th, 1645, it was glory, glory all the way as he rode into the affairs of the Confederation and the destiny of Ireland.

As we know he entered the city by the Patrick Street Gate and was met by crowds as enthusiastic as he was exotic in cappa and hat. Down streets aflame with hope he rode, past Shee's parliament house, this house of ours and up the hill to the cathedral where at the superbly ornamented door, the medieval angels gazing down on him, David Rothe stood beneath the medallion of Our Lady ready to present the aspersion and incense before conducting him to the high altar under the great glow of glass that so excited his desire. But this euphoria was not to last long. The Irish could not understand the situation. How then could a foreigner — a stubborn, unbending stranger who did not know the meaning of compromise? The two churchmen, bishop and nuncio, grew farther and farther apart. The final breach was fierce and definite. It rang the death knell of the Confederation.

The saddest aspect of the tragedy is that all, or nearly all, wanted peace. But all on their own terms. Eoin Roe's army was re-furnished by stores and supplies brought by the nuncio. Benburb was won, but soon the military situation was desperate, untenable. The army fought on, as did the parties in the political arenas. The Old English would be content with a measure of religious toleration and guarantees of their land titles. The Irish demands were much harder. They wanted the return of the lands they had lost through plantations and return to the full religious freedom they had enjoyed up to the 20th year of the reign of Henry VIII. They would not be fobbed off with empty promise of some future delivery day. So deadlock froze them all.

From the Cessation of 1643 there had been many attempts at negotiating peace, but it was the later efforts that involved Bishop Rothe. The 1st Ormonde Peace of March 1646 promised an army of 10,000 Irishmen to the king but guaranteed neither land restoration nor full religious toleration. This treaty was kept secret till July and when it was made public Ormonde was jubilant. Then the Nuncio roundly condemned it. Caught between the two, Rothe offered prayers in St. Canice's, prayers for

unity. The language of his plea was biblical and sincere. He prayed that they would not rend the seamless garment of Christ. But then he showed his loyalties by welcoming Ormonde back to Kilkenny, not actually joining in the civic celebration but by attending on him in the castle.

Rinuccini fulminated against the sell-out. In this he had the stalwart support of Eoin Roe still flushed with the victory at Benburb. Both made the same demands — full religious liberty, full land restoration. Anything less to them was violation of the Oath of Association. When after some time Ormonde's popularity waned and he left the city, Rothe accepted the Nuncio's censures and published the interdict closing all churches "in the city and the suburbs of Kilkenny, including all houses of the Regular Clergy." This order was given "at the Palace of the Nova Curia, August 18th, 1646, signed David Ossoriensis."

Most of the lords were quite ready to defy this ecclesiastical decree, but ordinary people and the rank and file of the army accepted it fully. Eoin Roe marched south to join up with Rinuccini. They deposed and imprisoned the Supreme Council and formed a new General Assembly. Its first act was to reject the terms of the treaty, an indication of the hard line attitude it was to follow. So peace became more remote.

In fact it was decided to pursue the war with vigour. Preston and Eoin Roe were to link up for an attack on Dublin. Preferring "protestants to recusants" Ormonde perpetrated the most heinous act of handing the capital city over to the enemies of the king, the parliamentarians. This accomplished he left the country, then in a state of chaos defying description. In this atmosphere the Inchiquin negotiations were initiated. These had little chance of success if trust in the negotiator was a pre-requisite, for Inchiquin was but a recent "convert" to the royal cause, having been up till then an active general on the parliamentary side. Belief in the king's power to negotiate and ratify terms were also slim for this was April 1648 — Marston Moor, Naseby, Oxford had been fought — all battles lost to the king.

But terms for this treaty, the 2nd Ormonde Peace, were drawn up. They included the formal dissolution of the Confederacy. Feelings ran so high that the Nuncio had to fly from Kilkenny and to seek refuge in Eoin Roe's camp near Portlaoise. From there once again he proclaimed interdict and excommunication against adherents and abettors of the peace. Authenticated copies

of his orders were nailed to the church doors. Dr. Rothe and his clergy proclaimed them from the altar, and copies were officially sent to all prelates in the town. Further, Rinuccini was informed of Ossory's willingness to lay down his life to proclaim them and to prove his reverence for the nuncio and so for Rome.

There is little point now in analysing the wisdom of the nuncio's uncompromising attitude. It is easy to decide three centuries later when the climate has changed. Truce was in the air. But peace of any kind did not exist, could not exist amidst the confusion and bitterness rampant. Peace was necessary, but hard-neck policy ruled.

The Supreme Council in a desperate effort to enforce the Truce appealed to Rome for a decision on the nuncio's power to proclaim interdict i.e., to publish the Censures. They also appealed to all the Irish bishops, but most especially to David of Ossory, the senior of them all. To him they addressed the famous Queries for himself and his clergy to consider. The main Queries concerned the position of Catholics in relation to the Inquisition Truce, the attitude of the Holy See to the Censures, the whole validity of the excommunication decree, the position of those who refused obedience to the Supreme Council. It was the answer of many present, including theologians of repute, that the nuncio was acting *ultra vires*. This opinion was the result of grave discussions lasting two months, two months despite the urgency of the situation. It was an almost unanimous opinion, strongly upheld by the Jesuits and Franciscans, but condemned by the Dominicans, and so Rothe withdrew the interdict and excommunication and ordered that an elaborate treatise be written explaining the decision. Because he was old and frail and tested beyond human limit, he handed over the composition of the treatise to Fr. Peter Walsh, O.S.F. When the nuncio read the explanation he interpreted some of the statements as offensive and disrespectful to the Pope, an angle strongly denied by Rothe. In fact the treatise which caused the furore was signed by Rothe himself, the Bishop of Meath, the Dean of St. Canice's, the Treasurer of St. Patrick's in Dublin, the Vicar-Forane of Fingal, the Arch-deacon of Ossory, and heads of many religious houses.

Dr. Rothe might be old and infirm — doting, some said — but he was still senior bishop, venerable, influential, widely respected. So his action lent weight to the Truce. Despite a reprimand from the Archbishop of Dublin, he issued a circular referring to “this green laurel

of happy peace." Co-signers were : Tuam, Meath, Killala, Ferns, Limerick, Kilmacduagh, Dromore and Kilfenora — a formidable batallion of support. The letter stated that the war had been undertaken for the sake of religion. As loyal people they were complying with his majesty in his greatest necessity. The peace would give "future favours in religion." Naturally, the nuncio exploded again at this truce which he labelled "destructive of religion." But Rothe and his cohort of bishops defended the truce to a senior Jesuit sent by the Superior General of the Order to inquire into the matter the Jesuits were so deeply embroiled in.

The whole storm blew itself out because the Truce was with the king. And at that time he was completely without power and soon to be without life itself when the drama was enacted in Whitehall in January, 1649. And Cromwell was already on the way, whetting his scythe of death to reap a harvest of blood and retribution for 1641.

The political game over for the moment, Rothe once again applied for a co-adjutor. But the end was near though the old man had yet much trial and tribulation to undergo. Two kinds of plague soon arrived to pay unwelcome visits to town and country, the one medical, the other military. August 1649 brought the terrible pestilence which was to devour many lives; it also brought Cromwell.

Strangely the old bishop now involved himself in domestic affairs, in a very minor key. His tenants refused to pay See rents and he applied for help to Ormonde. He said that if he did not get relief "he would be forced to break up house and live obscurely and meanly." This is a classic case of irony, for on March 23rd, 1650. Cromwell planted his veterans around the city walls, a city already racked by the grip of plague. When this horror had at first struck some months earlier, the bishop, feeble, reputed senile, had got out of his bed and had himself carried in a litter from house to house bringing spiritual aid and comfort to the stricken. He was described as a pale and wasted figure among people pale and wasted with the dread disease.

The defence of Kilkenny was heroic but unsuccessful. Terms of surrender were signed, among others by Edward Rothe, Alderman of the city, and relative of the bishop. These gave all inhabitants, none excepted, the right to depart with their goods. This David Rothe tried to do on March 28th with others in the train of remnants of the garrison. But he was only two miles outside the walls

when an enemy detachment attacked. They robbed everyone, even the old man whom they recognised and whose carriage they forcibly took as well as the £100 he had on him.

He returned home — it seems with Cromwell's permission — really home for tradition says that on April 20th he died in the house in which he had been born some 80 years previously. The greatness of this man may be measured in many ways. One is the ceremonial of his funeral. In a city clashing with the din of triumphant enemy troops, all Puritans . . . in the grip of famine, defeat, plague, he was carried to St. Mary's, most certainly the church of his baptism. Candles burned all night about his bier. Friends performed the obsequies and placed him in the family tomb. The gold-lettered black marble already prepared by himself in St. Canice's was never used. But neither was it hacked to smithereens as were so many splendid tombs during the Cromwellian occupation.

The See of Ossory remained vacant for 19 years in the desert days after 1650. Then Dr. Phelan was appointed. In time he made a will leaving to his successor articles he had got from "Mrs. Catherine Archdekin, alias Rothe" which had belonged to his predecessor. Her daughter, Rose, married James Bryan of Jenkinstown. It is to her descendants we owe the surviving relics — the portrait of the old man with flowing beard, in rochette and mozetta; silver reliquary Cross; silver monstrance; vestments in cloth of gold. These are museum objects precious and valuable. Much more important and enduring is the story of his life, his work in Ossory, his interest in Ireland.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Dr. Moran, "Transactions of the Ossory Archaeological Society."  
 Canon Carrigan, "History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory."  
 J. C. Beckett, "Confederation of Kilkenny Reviewed."  
 Curtis, "History of Ireland."  
 Meehan, "Confederation of Kilkenny."



### EXHIBITION SPACE AVAILABLE :

Exhibition space available at Rothe House all year round. Contact : MR. T. COYLE, Friary Street, Kilkenny.