

The Plantation of Ireland and the Early Baptist Churches.

THE regular policy with regard to "rebellions" in Ireland against English, Welsh, or Scots kings was to confiscate the land of the rebels, and plant new settlers there instead. One of the most thorough plantations was in 1652, under authority of an Act of king and parliament in 1642, one of the latest to which Charles I. assented. In the carrying out of its provisions, Baptists took such an unexpected share, and to such an extent, that it had a double claim on our attention.

The rebels consisted first of the "mere Irish," and afterwards of the Catholic gentry of the Pale, English or Norman by descent, largely Irish in feeling. They had been opposed first by a fine little army of three thousand, organised capitally by Wentworth, then by a parliamentary force which replaced this, and also by an army of Scots who landed in Ulster. The last act of the suppression opened when a magnificent army arrived in 1649, which had, first and last, twenty-seven regiments of foot with fifteen of horse, each numbering about 1,500 men, the finest in Europe. Under such successive Generals as Oliver Cromwell, Ireton, Ludlow, Henry Cromwell, the rebels were crushed, and the settlement contemplated in 1642 was actually carried out after ten years' delay.

The army abounded in Baptists, both rank and file. Among the captains may be mentioned Baker, Bolton, Doyley, Draper, Heydon, Holcroft, Peter Rowe, Stopford, and Wade. Among the majors were Thomas Adams, Thomas Davis, William Moore, John Reade, and Brian Smith. There were at least three lieutenant-colonels, Robert Doyley of Dalwood in Devon, Thomas Throgmorton, William Walker. The colonels included Daniel Axtell, Robert Barrow, Thomas Cooper, Richard Lawrence, William Leigh, William Moore, John Nelson, Jerome Sankey. There were also Major-general Desborough from Fenstanton, Scout-master Henry Jones, the cavalry drill-master John Vernon, and his bosom friend Adjutant-general William Allen. On the civil side of the army were Store-master Clarke, Treasurer Richard Deane, Auditor-general Edward Roberts, Advocate-general Philip Carteret. Quite possibly a careful scanning of the muster-rolls might reveal more, but this list is enough to show

that in this superb army, which had sister armies in Scotland and England, there was a large number of most influential Baptists who have largely escaped notice from the habit of writing ecclesiastical history as if only ministers counted. That is not the case among those who believe in the priesthood of all believers and act upon it.

As the rebellion was being gradually suppressed, a speeding up was due to the initiative of some of these officers, who accepted the surrender of one guerrilla band on terms. Their action was ratified, and turned into a precedent. The military operations drew to an end on the general principle that only the leaders should be shot, the bulk should be transported to Spain at the cost of the English; and about forty thousand fighting men were thus cleared out of the country. The three provinces of Ulster, Leinster, Munster were then divided into Precincts, sixteen, then fourteen in number; of the commanders, nine were Baptists. The stage was thus set for the transplantation under Act of Parliament of 1642, not an ordinance of the truncated Long or of the mere Rump, but under authority of Charles and the full Long Parliament.

The first principle was that every rebel was to be transplanted to Connaught; and as by this time the Catholics of the Pale had been in rebellion, even against Charles, the effect would be such a removal as even Sargon and Nebuchadnezzar had hardly carried out. The presumption was that all had rebelled, but fair courts were set up for men to prove their loyalty. Otherwise preparations were made to shift seven hundred thousand people.

The second principle was that even the Scots settled in Ulster were somewhat suspect of loyalty to the new powers. Scottish armies invading England had been destroyed at Preston and at Worcester, and in retaliation their home land was now under the heel of another part of the invincible New-Model army. Therefore the Scots settlers were to be, so far as possible, dispersed in the three provinces and shepherded by trustworthy English.

The positive side was that three-quarters of Ireland was to be effectively occupied with Englishmen, both in forty-four garrison towns, and on farms. They were to pen the Irish into Connaught by occupying a belt all along the Shannon, and every town in it, leaving the Irish only the open country. But mainly the rest of Ireland was to be surveyed and allotted. First to the soldiers who had conquered it, paying them eleven acres for every £10 due; this was likely to absorb a great deal of land, for the army cost anything up to £47,000 a month, and there was not much hard cash, so that they were being paid in debentures, redeemable in land. Secondly, to the adventurers of 1642, who

had subscribed hard cash, but were now decidedly like holders of deferred shares.

When the surveyors actually got to work, they realized many difficulties; and the results of the early allotments disclosed more. This led to discussion and revision. The fundamental policy of transplantation was impugned by Vincent Gookin, a surveyor, one of the old families of Cork, whose father had bitterly attacked the Irish; the son had come to see that it was contrary to religion, to profit, and to safety, to uproot them from their immemorial homes. He was answered by Richard Lawrence, and in the various pamphlets of these two men may be studied the mental attitudes of two typical classes. Gookin was quite unable to reverse the settled policy of centuries, by which his own family had been brought to Ireland.

Another difficulty was that even if all the regiments were disbanded and settled, there were not seventy thousand men among them to occupy lands vacated by seven hundred thousand; and the Adventurers were not promoting immigration to the extent needed. From every quarter there arose private requests that some Irish might be left, even if as only hewers of wood and drawers of water; and it was hard to enforce the ruthless clearing away of the aborigines, when their conquerors wished to have their cheap labour in iron works or other industries.

A third difficulty was that the drawing of lots for farms might ensure fairness, but it severed comrades. And presently the regiments came forward with definite proposals that a barony be allotted to each regiment, and that it should be so surveyed that the old military organisation be imitated in the actual sub-division. But this was complicated by the fact that not every man wished to settle in Ireland; many preferred to sell their debentures, or the actual farms, and return to England. In this way many officers, and even many privates seem to have acquired large estates. Thus Jerome Sankey, who was first knighted by Cromwell, then put into his upper house, founded the family of Sankey at Coolmore in Tipperary.

There are many interesting stories connected with this settlement, and with the political changes in the years 1652-1660; how the Irish army was divided on the question whether Cromwell was right in accepting the resignation of the Nominated Parliament, in taking the title Protector, in refusing the title of King, how some officers resigned rather than countenance him; how Allen and Vernon expostulated with him privately on his desertion of principle and his ambition; how they married into the Doyley family and returned to England, founding the Loughwood church, which at once excited the anxiety of Cromwell as an opposition centre; how two colonels in England not merely wrote a pamphlet advocating the killing of Cromwell as a

renegade, "no murder," but just vengeance, but had the meanness to publish it with Allen's name; how he at once disavowed it; how Cromwell got several London Baptists to send over a quieting letter to the Irish Baptists urging them to acquiesce in the new constitution; how Allen and Vernon preached throughout Ireland against it, and Cromwell found London Baptists to go over and preach for it; how he placated them, appointing the Baptist Recorder of London to the Irish chancellorship, and letting him appoint another Baptist as a master in Chancery; how pro-Cromwell ministers were picked out and sent over, others were appointed to test similar applicants, and others were even intruded into a Scots church in Ulster to the indignation of the presbytery. Let it suffice to take three points: the brotherliness of the churches, the model of Baptist organization evolved in Ireland and extended wherever Baptists go, the decay of the churches.

Allen and Vernon took to Loughwood many papers, a few of which were seen and printed after 150 years by John Rippon of Tiverton, then reprinted by Ivimey; a few other papers that came into Milton's custody were printed by Nickolls rather earlier; and from the vast correspondence of Thurloe, still extant in manuscript, seven volumes were published, in which much may be gleaned. Ten years ago Robert Dunlop published many more documents as to Ireland at this time. Thus there is a wealth of information that few Baptists have noticed, and fewer still have understood, or cared to bring to the notice of others.

We find that by midsummer of 1653 there were ten Baptist churches, almost entirely of soldiers settled in the military precincts. There were similar military churches in the army occupying Scotland, but they all marched away with Monk in what became the Coldstream Guards, whereas there was no such wholesale emigration from Ireland. A beautiful feature in the correspondence is that we read simply of "brother Dix, Nelson, and Browne; and brother Chambers speaks to them." (Rippon, indeed, mis-read two letters, and Ivimey copied him exactly.) Who would think from this modest description that the Governor of the Precinct of Kerry and Desmond and the second in command were members? When we read that the church at Kilkenny included brethren Blackwood, Caxe, Axtell, Gough, and several others, some might indeed recognize the former clergyman of Kent, Christopher Blackwood, long an army chaplain, who had helped or founded Baptist Churches wherever his regiment went; others might guess that here we have filled the blank in the English record of Benjamin Cox, of London, Bedford, and Coventry; but no one has discerned under the democratic description of the others, Colonel Daniel Axtell, who was one of the few exempted from pardon because he had commanded the guards at the trial of Charles, and Colonel William Goffe, who sat on the bench and

condemned Charles, who commanded Cromwell's regiment at Dunbar, who smote Charles II.'s army at Worcester, who was to hold down Berkshire, Sussex, and Hants as major-general, who was made one of Cromwell's lords, who escaped at the Restoration, lived on in Massachusetts and made a dramatic re-appearance at a crisis in the Indian wars. When we read simply that several brethren at Dublin are walking comfortably together through grace, we have not recognized that these included—beyond the mere minister—Colonel Richard Lawrence, who was actively concerned in everything done in Ireland for years, Adjutant-General Vernon, Auditor-General Roberts, Advocate-General Carteret, with many others of lower, but high, rank. In the army and in the council they were great, but in the church they were brethren of plain people like Daniel Fossey, from England, Lynch of the older families, Murphy of the "mere Irish." The lions and the lambs were lying down together. This plain Christian nomenclature has concealed from Baptists the quality of these Baptist churches, and from historians of Ireland the moral and religious temper of many of its governors.

In June, 1653, there were several important meetings. The army had grown accustomed to each regiment electing two representatives, who should assemble, decide on the army policy, and appoint spokesmen: Allen had first come into notice thus, when his comrades chose him, a plain trooper, to represent them at fateful conclaves. The Irish army kept up the practice, and it welded the regiments into one. Now the custom, already being transferred to the settlement of the country-side, was deliberately imitated with the churches formed from this regiments, and the ten churches held a joint meeting; more, they carried over to this the very name Association, which had long been familiar in army circles, the Eastern Association of the counties being one of the best known, for it contained the original Ironsides. Thus a Baptist Association of Churches was organised. And it sent a letter to London urging similar organisation there, and throughout the country. Within five years the suggestion was adopted widely, and the Western Association of Baptist Churches, in which Allen and Vernon were personally present, has a long and glorious history, while the Association type of organization has been carried by English Baptists all over the world. Rippon recorded the very genesis of the institution, but did not discern its significance.

Outside Ulster and Dublin there were, two years ago, three Baptist Churches surviving from this period, with fewer than a hundred members. What led to the decay? Two things chiefly. While this plantation was by authority of Charles I., so that Charles II. could not disclaim it, yet it had no sympathy from him; he offered no

obstacle to the Irish filtering back from Connaught; he lodged all power in hostile hands. An actual rising took place in 1663, in which Sankey lost his life: and before ever James II. connived at a renewed Catholic outburst, many Baptists preferred to sell out and face Red Indians rather than "paddies and gossoons and Tories." Lower Dublin Church in Pennsylvania was planted from the work of Thomas Dungan; many churches in New Jersey were simply emigrants from Cloughkeating or Clough-jordan. For the rest there had been no sustained effort to take over Englishwomen to marry the English settlers, and some who went disliked or could not bear the privations of the wild country: Henry Cromwell sent an amusing account of how he went to the funeral of one, and found the minister work round to prove the iniquity of infant baptism! English Baptist planters found few available wives except Catholic Irish. In two generations the population of the three provinces was chiefly Catholic again. A striking commentary on the religious neglect of the apostolic injunction to wed in the Lord.

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The Baptist Board

The Baptist Board has been taking a leaf out of the book of the ex-Kaiser. He celebrated 31st December, 1899, with a great procession to mark the end of the century, which most people thought came just one year later. Similarly, the Board celebrated its bi-centenary in January, 1923, though it began only in January, 1724. Evidently it was forgotten that what was then written January 1723, meant the month after December 1723, written more fully January 1723/4, and by us called 1724. Yet we had printed the Minutes in full for all to read, with dates obvious.