

sionaries, Dr. Adams, Captain Dyer, and a board of gentlemen, who probably never visited the settlement, but who were induced to believe the mission was conferring practical benefits on the community.

Mr. Nangle's "Charity"

Having referred to the general failure of the mission, the backbone of which was to be the "infant school," or rather infamous "bird's nest," to which unfortunate unwanted children were sent from all parts of Ireland, the Halls continue: "Our suspicions of the beneficial results of the orphan asylum are founded upon substantial grounds. On our way to the Colony we met a poor wretched looking boy, of about 13 years, clothed in rags. He told us he had been dismissed from the school, and that Mr. Nangle had taken away his decent clothing, and given him three shillings to convey him a distance of sixty miles into the Co. Sligo, where his grandfather lived, both his parents being dead. We took him back to receive the forgiveness of the minister of Christ, but he declined to take him back. We took him on our car out of the island, and adding a few shillings to his scanty store, sent him on his way to Sligo. An incident the next day compelled us to the conclusion that the divine precept which teaches forgiveness had not been learned, if it was taught, at the Colony. Returning through Newport, the clergyman of that town brought to our inn door five other boys who had been dismissed from the orphan school of the settlement. Thus six helpless and deserted children were cast upon the world naked and penniless, without parents, homes or friends.

A Fruitless Effort

Summing up, these English Protestants have no hesitation in describing the mission a failure and worse — to gather in money by false pretences from people who believed they were doing it for the relief of starving peasants. "We make no apology for having devoted so much space to the investigation of the matter, they did," because it is annually made the topic of a public meeting in London to claim subscriptions, because a very large proportion of those who sustain the settlement now nothing about it except its name and because in Ireland it is a fruitful source of much discussion. Moreover, it is notorious that all accounts of the Colony have been derived from prejudiced sources. The experiments at Achill have been in vain. We have shown that there has been complete failure. The principles upon which it has been operated have not been in accordance with the divine precept of charity, for has the clergyman under whose control the establishment is placed been an example of that gentle, peace-loving and persuasive zeal which should distinguish humble workers of the Lord and Master."

Ribute To The Islanders

"It was impossible," they continue, "not to appreciate the magnanimity of the poor, miserable, utterly destitute and absolutely starving inhabitants of Achill, who were at the time of our visit enduring privations at which humanity shudders, and to know that by walking a couple of miles and professing to change their religion they would have been instantly supplied with food, clothes and lodging. Yet these hungry thousands — for it would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that nine-tenths of the population of this island were in the month of July last entirely without food — preferred patiently to endure their suffering rather than to submit what they considered a degradation. Such fortitude we do believe to be without parallel in the history of any people since the creation of the world."

They conclude with this extract from Newman's "Notes on Irish history," published in 1840: "The natives of Achill are charged with being thieves and murderers, and if I was to place full reliance on all I heard at the 'Settlement' they would appear to be so. Mr. Lang, a farmer in the neighbourhood, whose farm is productive, with everything constantly exposed, walls and hedges being there unknown, and living amongst a population from whom he had no power at all to defend himself, has never lost even a potato. Would that some unpolitical philanthropists — men who take a human view of the human wants and human feelings of the poor islanders — would settle amongst them and place in their hands the plough and the spade, teach the children to read and write, the boys to make shoes and coats, to fish and to dig, to rake, sow, reap and build houses, and the girls to knit, spin and make gowns, and use them like brothers, sisters and children.

The Colony Wound Up

The publication in 1841 of Mr. and Mrs. Hall's sketches, first in 26 monthly parts, and subsequently in three sumptuous volumes, brought the "Colony" to an ignominious end. The sham having been exposed in England, and bitterly commented on by many newspapers, the fanatics diverted their "charity" to other channels, and the Achill coffers having run dry, the Rev. Mr. Nangle accepted a call to Skreen, leaving the settlement deserted and the "converts" nil. For years after "the Achill Mission" because the most tyrannical set of landlords in Ireland, and it was only after years of spirited agitation that the British Government prevailed on the Trustees to clear out. Need I say that the relics of superstition were got rid of years ago, and the island with its churches, schools, convents and little industries is a credit, but be the season what it may, the chronic poverty can never be eradicated until the Government make it a national question, and as for Innishbiggle, the people should be wholly removed from it and leave it to nature to become a bird sanctuary or the haunt of the fox and the badger.

The Halls were enthusiastic in their praise of the scenery of Achill. They describe what they saw from the summit of Croaghuan. They say: "The hills are covered with flowers; two or three foxes ran along our path; many times the eagles rose from the eyrie and hovered above us; once we near trod upon a nest of grouse — the bird was setting and flew off on our close approach." They say: "The houses are heaps of rude stones and are un cemented. They are rounded at the gables and rooket with fern, heath and shingles, fastened on by straw bands. In the village of Downagh, consisting of about forty cabins, there is not a single chimney. "Today Downagh is as up-to-date as any village in the county. In recent years housing through public and private effort has shown a wonderful advance forward. The island is now honeycombed with excellent hotels and lodging houses for the accommodation of tourists, who grow in numbers annually.

Pagan Remains

"There are Pagan remains scattered throughout Achill", says Monsignor D'Alton. "Under the frowning shadow of Slievemore there is an ancient dolmen called from its peculiar shape the Spectacle Dolmen, approached by a causeway called the Danes' Ditch. Near Dookinelly there is a ring fort and a pagan cemetery. At Invel there is a Giant's Grave, a large cairn with chambers. And there are the cliff forts of Dun Kilmore and Dunanagh, ancient, rude and strong, defying, like Dun Aengus, in Aran, the full fury of the Atlantic.

"But there are no hoary Christian buildings, nothing to recall the earlier days of Christianity. Neither St. Patrick nor the saints of the following two centuries preached in Achill, or founded churches there. Nor did the Middle Ages witness the establishment of abbey or convent on this desolate island. It had no attraction except its wild beautiful scenery. It was not easy to approach, and it remained long untrudden by the footsteps of saint or missionary. In due time, following the lead of the mainland, it cast off its pagan belief and accepted Christianity as its creed. When it became a parish it was a poor one, and in the taxation of 1306 it was included with Burrishoole, and had as a parish no separate existence for taxation.

In Search Of Iron Dick

"Achill was part of Uimhall and belonged to the O'Malley chiefs, and on the sea shore near Achill Sound there still stands a small tower built by the O'Malleys about the same time that the Abbey of Burrishoole was built. After this we lose sight of Achill for nearly a century, and then it is mentioned in 1580 by Sir Nicholas Malbie, when he established his headquarters in the abbey of Burrishoole. He had sent ships also to Achill in pursuit of Grania Uaile's husband. But the tempestuous sea around Achill prevented any ship leaving the island, and Malbie was unable to pursue Richard Burke into those islands in Clew Bay, whither he had fled for shelter.

Cromwellians' Disdain

"The Cromwellians, who coveted the rich lands of Mayo, turned in disdain from the rocks and bogs of Achill and in the eighteenth century the landlords of the island were O'Donel of Newport and Brown of Westport. Both had come from Catholic stock, and both, to obtain honours and lands, had embraced Protestantism, and transmitted it to their descendants. The O'Malleys, and others who dwell on the island were, on the contrary, though sunk in poverty, faithful to the creed of their ancestors, and when Achill came into prominence in the nineteenth century it was because of the desperate efforts made to wean the people from their faith. Missionaries and money were plentifully used, and Sir Richard O'Donel, from his castle in Newport, was willing to lend his aid. But the poor people and the old faith won, and when the long and bitter fight was over the imported missionaries had to confess themselves beaten. A few, indeed, tempted by money and harassed by hunger, listened to Nangle and his army of bible-readers and earned for themselves the contempt of their neighbours and the appropriate name of jumpers, and in Dugort a Protestant colony arose. Long before the nineteenth century closed, however, the jumpers had become less; the Protestant school was deserted; the colony at Dugort had decayed; and though Achill remained poor, it was Catholic still."

The only remnants of landlordism on the island are the Pikes of Glendary, who have a nice seat a short distance from the Sound.

The Parish Of Aughagower

Aughagower I.

THIS large parish, now known as Aughagower — Achad-Tobhair, or the Field of the Spring Well — extending from Kilmaclasser to the Killerries, as remarkable for its lofty mountains, its numerous rivers and pretty lakes, and for the many notable historical objects, with which its chequered history is associated.

It is mentioned in ancient documents, was visited by the National Apostle has had many saints associated with it, has its ruined round tower and ruined church, was once a Bishopric, and is down to the present a place of historic note though hidden away in the embrace of the eternal hills.

Achad-Tobair, Donnac-Padraig, Ara-tia-Neeve, Fairce or Fair Hill, Ballyoney (if Forchern was a Bishop) may be reckoned owing the ancient suppressed Sees, also Cong. sometimes called Struthair (Shrule), Mayo and Annaghdown were other mediaeval suppressed Sees incorporated in Tuam Archdiocese. Even this does not exhaust the list, as Balla was also mentioned. In this connection it should be noted that the suppression of these Sees, some of them being merely nominal, led to much contention at the time, the territorial lords resisting what was regarded a loss of prestige, and the old records show that long after the suppression of these Sees some of them were revived, without apparent authority, merely for the retention of sinecures. Even when they were finally extinguished we find in the old records that some of the greedy territorial lords, like the Binghamms, set up bishops and kept them on the throne of Jarlath by the strength of their power. In the subsequent years the Crown appointed with disastrous results. In the contentions following the suppressions words like "usurpation" are absurd, as it is by virtue of the "Power of the Keys of Peter" the Holy See incorporates, erects, or suppresses a diocese. At the time of the Synod of Fiadh-Mic-Aenghusa, near Ushnagh, there were 38 Bishoprics. In a list of 25 suppressed Bishoprics only one of the above is mentioned, viz. Donnaugh-Padraig, of which St. Falertus was Bishop.

The Ancient Church

Archdall calls the ancient church of Aughagower an abbey, but it is not called an abbey in the mediaeval lists that are extant. About a hundred yards north of it are the slight remains of the convent chapel founded for Mathana by St. Patrick. There also stands the round tower in close proximity. Cloghnatrick and Patrick's Chair recall the saint's apostolic journey along the old Toghar-Padraig, which many claim to trace from Ballyburk, along by Aughagower, Lankill, Cloghnatrick, Patrick's Chair, and up to the summit of the saint's holy mountain. The ruins of MacPhilipin's castle and Doon Castle (another MacPhilipin fortress) also remain, and on Maun-na-Moher there was an O'Malley stronghold. This island in Moher Lake must have been an important place, inasmuch as in the Composition of 1585 it is used to designate the whole Murrisk principality of the O'Malleys. References to it will occur in this rapid sketch.