

CHAPTER VI.

ULSTER FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE UNION.

THE story of the Scots of Ulster during the century and a half which succeed the Restoration would indeed be almost too dreary for a Scotsman to tell, were it not closed by the promise of brightness and prosperity in the future. It is like a day of cruel storm and grey leaden skies, which clears at sundown, with the earnest of sunshine for the morrow. The possibility of a brighter future which the Union gave, has certainly been fulfilled in Ulster. When this chapter of their history closed, the Scots of Ulster were deeply discontented, were in great measure disloyal to the Government, and desirous of a radical change of institutions ; they are now among the most loyal subjects of the British Crown. The country was wretchedly poor, with waning trade and manufactures ; it is now filled with a well-to-do population, while its trade and staple manufactures show what a strong race can do, even when it works under disadvantages, if it be but blessed with good government

and free laws. The material prosperity of Ulster is a thing very evident; it can be proved by statistics, or seen with the eye. It shows in the humble prosperity of the small farmers of County Down, with their carefully whitewashed cottages, and their carefully tended farms, cut up with their many hedge-rows; in their balances in the bank at Belfast; their belief in the Orange Society; their deep attachment to the Presbyterian Church; their supreme ambition, like their brethren in Scotland, if it be possible, to breed a son who may "wag his pow in the pu'pit." King James was right when he insisted that the colonists should be fixed to the soil by leases for long terms of years, or for life. It shows in the well-ordered little country towns, with their broad streets, and well-built churches adorned with handsome spires; their busy weekly markets; and that surest sign of a high-class population,—their well-washed, clean-pinafores children. It shows in the perfervid energy of her greater towns, especially Belfast; in the genius which their inhabitants evince for business of all kinds; in their zeal for religion,—call it sectarianism if you will, the zeal shows at least vigour and intensity; in their desire for education, which must in course of time bring culture and refinement in its train. There may be many faults of passion and headstrong zeal in this Scottish Ulster, but there is what far more than compensates, there is the first necessity for a living organism,—abounding life.

The master-mind of Oliver Cromwell grasped the

position in which the three kingdoms must stand if they are to remain at peace with one another, and by the exercise of his own strong, despotic will, swept away their separate Parliaments, and made them in reality one Commonwealth. The Restoration brought back their separate Parliament to Ireland as well as to Scotland; to both they were to prove a curse instead of a blessing. Fortunately for Scotland, the early years of the eighteenth century saw its Parliament ended; the nineteenth was to be begun before Ireland was united with its greater sister kingdoms. With the Restoration ceased the intimate connection which had existed between Scotland and her colony in Ulster; they had been kept together, in very great measure, by their common religion, and now in both the Presbyterian Churches fell on evil days, and had to fight a long fight for very existence. In Ireland the Scottish Church had not to wait long before it received its *quietus*. Charles II. landed at Dover on the 25th May 1660; his restoration brought back Episcopacy as a matter of course; but if the Irish bishops had been wise men it need not have brought any persecution of the Northern Presbyterians, for it was insanity for the two parties of Protestants to quarrel in face of the enormous mass of opposing Catholics. There was no Archbishop Ussher now to restrain the bishops, so they went to work with a will; and within a year of the Restoration every Presbyterian minister, save six or seven who recanted, were driven from their churches; they

were forbidden to preach, baptise, marry, or exercise any function of the ministry. The old Scottish writer Woodrow, in his 'History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland,' gives a list of the ejected clergy. The numbers show approximately how the Scottish colony had recovered from the effects of the Rebellion of 1641, and grown in strength during the nine quiet years of Cromwell's government. There were in 1660, sixty-eight Presbyterian ministers in Ireland, all save one in Ulster, and of these sixty-one left their churches, and seven conformed to the Established Church.¹ Woodrow gives his reason for quoting the list: "Because I have always found the elder Presbyterian ministers in Ireland reckoning themselves upon the same bottom with, and as it were a branch of, the Church of Scotland."² The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, although it soon got back its liberty to some extent, did not entirely recover the blow of 1661, until the next century was nearly run out. The number of Presbyterian churches in Ulster gives some indication of the population of Scottish origin, although a moiety of the Presbyterians were English. The extent of the emigration from Scotland is, however, more exactly given by Sir William Petty in his 'Political Survey of Ireland in 1672.'³ He takes the total population of

¹ Reid's History, vol. ii. p. 266.

² Woodrow's History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, vol. i. p. 155.

³ Sir William Petty's Political Survey of Ireland (London, 1719), pp. 9, 18, 20.

the country at 1,100,000, and calculates that 800,000 were Irish, 200,000 English, and 100,000 Scots,—of course the English were scattered all over Ireland, the Scots concentrated in Ulster. Petty divides the English into "100,000 legal Protestants or Conformists, and the rest are Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, and Quakers." He states distinctly that a very large emigration had taken place from Scotland, after Cromwell settled the country in 1652. The power of the Scots must, indeed, have been so considerable and so much feared as to be greatly exaggerated, for it was asserted in Parliament in 1656, that they "are able to raise 40,000 fighting men at any time."¹

Charles II.'s reign brought many remarkable changes, which had much effect on Ulster as well as on the rest of Ireland. It saw the beginning of the "Regium Donum," the State grant to the Presbyterians. The persecution did not continue as hotly as it was begun in 1661; gradually the Presbyterians recovered a portion of their freedom; gradually their ministers returned. In 1672 the Presbyterian clergy approached the King directly. The good-natured monarch received them kindly, and granted them from the Irish revenues a sum of £1200, to be given annually towards their support. It was the beginning of the State aid to the Irish Presbyterian Church, which continued with a slight interval until put an end to by the Disestablishment Act of 1869.²

¹ Montgomery MSS., p. 65, note.

² Reid's History, vol. ii. p. 334.

The other and deeper mark made on Irish history was the beginning of that repression of Irish industries which was to come into full force in Queen Anne's time. The first blow struck was an Act which forbade the exportation of cattle from Ireland to England;¹ the second, when by the fifteenth of Charles II., Ireland, which up to this time in commercial matters had been held as part of England, was brought under the Navigation Acts, and her ships treated as if belonging to foreigners.²

The Revolution of 1688 was accomplished almost without bloodshed in England; in Scotland the struggle really finished at Killiecrankie; in Ireland it was long and bloody. Once more it was the old race difference—a cleavage in race made more bitter by that terrible land question, the creation of the great settlements of Elizabeth and James's time, and of the yet more violent settlement of Cromwell. The Revolution in England of necessity brought civil war to Ireland. The greater portion of Ireland remained loyal to James II.; the north at once declared for William III. The Protestants of Ulster universally took arms, but their raw militia had little chance against the army which Tyrconnel, the Lord-Deputy, had got together in support of James II.³ Rapidly he overran Ulster, until only at two points was the cause of Protestantism and of William of Orange

¹ Leland's History of Ireland, vol. iii. p. 448.

² Macpherson's History of Commerce, vol. iii. p. 621.

³ Reid's History, chap. xix.

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upheld—at Enniskillen and at Londonderry. It is not possible to retell the story of the heroic defence they made, for it has been told by Macaulay in a chapter among the noblest in our historical literature, and inferior pen dare not meddle with the theme.¹ It is war on a small scale, but, like the struggle of the Greeks at Thermopylæ or at Marathon, it is a fight of heroes. Nor is it necessary to recount the war by which William III. regained Ireland in 1690, save to regret that the great Dutchman's broad-minded scheme of religious toleration was not carried out, and the disgraceful repressive measures of the next reign rendered impossible. One lasting benefit William III. conferred on Ulster; he did his best to encourage the linen manufacture, especially by inducing colonies of French Protestant refugees, driven from France by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to settle in north-east Ireland, with Lisburn as their centre. These Huguenots seem to have been men of skill and enterprise, many of them of rank and education. They received inducements to settle, their churches having special privileges, even when in the next reign the most severe laws were passed against Dissent.²

One strange memorial of this reign we have—the list of the survivors of the brave men who defended Londonderry, and who signed an address to William and Mary on the 29th July 1689, immediately after the siege was raised. The names are so strikingly

¹ Macaulay's History of England, chap. xii.

² See series of articles in 'Ulster Journal of Archaeology.'

familiar to a Scotsman, that the list might be taken from an Edinburgh Directory. Of course there are many good English names, like that delightful surname which Thackeray has made beloved as long as the English language lasts—Dobbin; but the Scottish surnames are very numerous. There are five Hamiltons, and three Stewarts, and three Cunninghams, and three Mansons, besides representatives of very many of our Lowland Scottish surnames. One very Scottish name, too—as if to act as a commentary on the manner in which Ulster was treated in the Separation Bill of 1886—that of Gladstone, spelled in the old Scottish way, “Ja. Gledstanes.”¹

The end of the seventeenth century probably saw the last of the emigration of Scots into Ulster; while for years that were to follow the Scots were to leave Ulster in thousands for America. “For some years after the Revolution a steady stream of Scotch Presbyterians had poured into the country, attracted by the cheapness of the farms and by the new openings for trade.” “In 1715, Archbishop Synge estimated that 50,000 Scotch families had settled in Ulster since the Revolution.”²

We now come to two groups of measures which were to mould the history of Ireland during the eighteenth century, and whose baneful effects are still felt in the country—the repression of her woollen manufac-

¹ Walker's True Account of the Siege of Londonderry: London, 1689.

² Lecky's History, vol. ii, pp. 400, 401.

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tures, and the penal laws in matters of religion. The commerce of Ireland, after two devastating civil wars, cannot have been extensive, or of a magnitude which ought to have excited the envy or fear of England; but in the end of the seventeenth century the state of England was not a prosperous one, and her woollen manufacturers imagined that competition from Ireland was injuring them. The consequence was that in 1698, Parliament petitioned William III. to have laws enacted for the protection of the English woollen manufacture by the suppression of the Irish; and accordingly, next year Government passed an Act through the Irish Parliament, which was utterly subservient, forbidding any exportation of Irish woollens from the country. It was afterwards followed by Acts forbidding the Irish to export their wool to any country save England — the English manufacturers desiring to get the wool of the sister kingdom at their own price.¹

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 The penal laws against Roman Catholics and Presbyterians are the special glory of Queen Anne's time; hers was essentially a High Church *régime*, and in the Irish Parliament the High Church party ruled supreme. The Acts against Roman Catholics denied them the exercise of their worship, and laid the great body of the people of Ireland under pains and penalties so cruel and degrading that the laws could not in reality be put in force to their full extent. Those against Presbyterians were not so severe, but

¹ Lecky's History, vol. ii. p. 210.

were sufficiently galling, and strangely unreasonable, as being applied against the very men who had been the stoutest bulwark of Protestantism not twenty years before. The blow against the Protestant Dissenters was delivered through a Test Act, which compelled all serving in any capacity under Government, all practising before the law courts, all acting in any town council, to take the Communion of the Established Church. The Act at once emptied the town councils of the Ulster towns; it deprived of their commissions many who were serving as magistrates in the counties. It drove out of the Corporation of Londonderry several of the very men who had fought through the siege of 1689.¹ A strange commentary on the Test Act was given in 1715, when Scotland was in ferment owing to the Jacobite Rebellion, and trouble was feared in Ireland. The services of the Presbyterians were accepted for the militia, and then Government passed an Act of Indemnity to free them from the penalties they had incurred by serving their country and breaking the Test Act.²

These two groups of repressive measures fashioned the history of Ireland during the first seventy years of the last century. The country was utterly wretched, fairly broken-hearted. Its agriculture was miserable, and chronic scarcity alternated with actual famine; it had little commerce, and no manufactures, save the slowly increasing linen manufacture of Ulster. It is hard to say whether the gloom is illumined or intensified

¹ Reid's History, vol. ii. p. 511. ² Ibid., vol. iii. p. 69.

during the early years of the eighteenth century by the lurid splendour of Dean Swift. His genius grasped the facts with regard to the material needs of Ireland; either his madness or his clerical profession rendered him blind to the utter barbarity of the religious position. With regard to Ulster there are two outstanding facts in her history besides the rise of the linen manufacture—the steady emigration, and the rise of the Secession Church. The latter is a strong proof of the kinship to Scotland; the former is, perhaps, even a stronger of the blood which was in her sons, for they left Ulster, as their forefathers had come to it, in search of a more kindly home across the seas. The emigration from Ulster is one of the most striking features of Irish history, and one which had a most marked effect on the vital force of the United States of America, which drew some of its best blood from the Presbyterians of the North of Ireland. There was nothing to induce the active-minded men of the North to remain in Ireland, and they left in crowds, going away with wives and children, never to return. In 1718, we have mention of “both ministers and people going off.” In 1728, Archbishop Boulter states “that above 4200 men, women, and children have been shipped off from hence for the West Indies within three years.” He regrets, too, that almost all were Protestants. In consequence of the famine of 1740, it is stated that for “several years afterwards, 12,000 emigrants annually left Ulster for the American plantations;” while, from 1771 to

1773, "the whole emigration from Ulster is estimated at 30,000, of whom 10,000 are weavers."¹

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland moved in parallel lines to that of the mother country during the whole of the century. There was no training college in Ireland, and most of the licentiates for the Irish Church studied at Glasgow. Naturally they took their theology from the school in which they were trained, and as it was the age of the Moderates in Scotland, so it was the time of the Non-subscribers in Ireland. In 1708, when the vials of the wrath of the High Church party were opened on the heads of the devoted Presbyterians, there were one hundred and thirty Presbyterian congregations in Ulster;² but there was not much life or heart in the Church. In 1726 the Non-subscribers—that is to say, the party who refused to sign the Scottish Confession of Faith—formed a separate synod, which weakened the Church and lowered its tone. Then followed in Scotland the secession of Ralph Erskine and his brethren, and in 1747 this Secession Church planted her first congregation in Ireland; soon the Isle of Saints was blessed with both Burghers and Anti-burghers. These titles are but names in Scotland now, where once they were the watchwords of bitter sectarian strife. The Secession Church in Ireland, as in the mother country, was the Church of the poor;

¹ Lecky's History, vol. ii. p. 260. Reid's History, chap. xxvi. Froude's English in Ireland, vol. i. p. 436.

² Reid's History, vol. iii. p. 2.

and in Ireland the poor were so very poor, that it was with difficulty that ordinances were kept up. Presbyterian dissent was, in truth, the protest from the humble members of the body, against the non-orthodox doctrines which the "New Light" movement had introduced into the Church. This constant intercommunication between the Presbyterian Churches in Ireland and Scotland is a fact worthy of careful attention.

Meanwhile the linen manufacture was growing in Ulster. In William III.'s time the exports amounted to £6000 annually; in 1741 they had risen to £480,000; in 1771, to £1,691,000.¹ Then came a check, and they fell considerably, causing great distress among the weaving population of Ulster. Shortly after this last date we have a very vivid and minute picture of Ireland given in Arthur Young's 'Tour in Ireland.'² He visited Ulster in the years when the American War was beginning, in the result of which Ulster was deeply interested, for in it many of her sons fought bravely against England; when Paul Jones showed the weakness of England, for he ranged the coast, and actually took a man-of-war out of Belfast Lough.³ Young did not find Ulster in a very happy condition. "The increase of the people is very great, extravagantly so; and is felt severely

¹ Macpherson's History of Commerce, vol. iii. p. 228.

² A Tour in Ireland, made in the years 1776-77-78, by Arthur Young.

³ Benn's History of Belfast, p. 620.

by emigration being stopped at present"—stopped, America being closed on account of the war. Rents were very low, "had fallen in four years 3s. an acre, and are but just beginning to get up again." The people were very poor, living chiefly "on potatoes and milk and oat bread;" their little farms divided and subdivided until "the portions are so small they cannot live on them." In almost every cottage, from Newry northwards to Loch Swilly, he found the weaving or spinning of flax going on. "A weaver will earn from 1s. to 1s. 4d., a farming labourer 8d."

Ulster was, indeed, poor and miserable in these years. Her staple trade had suffered one of those collapses which come occasionally to all manufactures, and the exports of linen had fallen from 25,000,000 yards in 1771, to 17,000,000 in 1774.¹ Hundreds of weavers were out of work; and to add to the misery, there had been additions to rents made on some of the great estates, especially Lord Donegal's, and many tenants were turned from their holdings.² The misery was greater than they could bear, and the Protestants of the North had recourse to deeds of violence. "Armed bands of misguided individuals, calling themselves 'Hearts of Oak' and 'Hearts of Steel,' traversed the country, administered unlawful oaths, dictated terms as to rents and tithes to the proprietors, and perpetrated many other acts

¹ Macpherson's *History of Commerce*, vol. iv. p. 60.

² Froude's *Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 130.

of insubordination and outrage.”¹ On a people so situated, the news of the Rebellion of the American colonies had a tremendous effect, all the greater because so many thousands had left Ulster during the last twenty years for the American colonies, and because so many of the “Hearts of Steel” were among the staunchest soldiers in the American army.² The Protestants of Ulster became strongly republican, intensely sympathetic with the revolted colonies, and sternly set on obtaining redress of their own political grievances. The condition of the country pointed to the necessity for the abolition of the restrictions on trade; the temper of the people demanded the abolition of the religious disabilities. The reforms were obtained in a strange way. The strain of the war with France and America compelled the British Government to strip Ireland of troops, so that when rumours of a threatened invasion reached the country, she seemed as if she would be an easy prey to a French army. The emergency roused the spirit of the people; and in 1778, all over the North of Ireland, the Protestants, high and low, began to arm and form themselves into volunteer regiments.³ Meanwhile the Irish Parliament, under the influence of that group of orators whom Grattan led, awoke out of the sleep of a century, and, close corporation though it was, began to move for reform. The Vol-

¹ Reid's History, vol. iii. p. 338.

² Lecky's History, vol. iv. p. 350.

³ Froude's Ireland, vol. ii. p. 254. Benn's Belfast, p. 630.

unteers threw their weight into the same scale, and made themselves a serious political power by uniting into a common organisation which embraced all the corps of Ulster. The Government yielded, and by a series of Acts passed through the Westminster Parliament from 1780 to 1782, Ireland was freed from the restrictions which had destroyed her woollen trade, while her shipping was accorded the same privileges as English. At the same time the penal Acts against the Catholics were abolished, and the Presbyterians were freed from the Test Act, so that public life was reopened to them once more. This, however, did not satisfy the Ulster men. At a great assembly of delegates from the volunteer corps, representing 25,000 men, which met in uniform in the great church of Dungannon, a series of resolutions were passed demanding the independence of the Irish Parliament.¹ This, too, the Government yielded; and in 1782 there began to sit what is usually known as Grattan's Parliament.

The Volunteers reached the height of their power and fame in the Dungannon meeting; and although they intended to keep up their organisation for the purpose of retaining political power, they gradually decayed, and passed out of sight. For the rest of the century Ulster was greatly excited by political feeling, the French Revolution fanning the flame which the revolt of the American colonies had kindled. The North became mad for fraternity,

¹ Froude's Ireland, vol. ii. p. 334.

and the Society of the "United Irishmen" was inaugurated at Belfast in 1791.¹ There was to be no more Catholic or Protestant—all were to be united in one brotherhood of equality and fraternity. The Society at first embraced all who desired reform, and many of the best of the North of Ireland Presbyterians joined it; but gradually the old cleavage between Protestant and Catholic began in its midst, and as its more violent members hurried it downwards towards open rebellion, the split became wider, and in 1795 the association of Orangemen sprang into existence. In this way, when rebellion actually broke out in 1798, the struggle was not so severe in Ulster as it would otherwise have been, although much good blood was spilt of the Presbyterians of Down and Antrim. The Rebellion of 1798 brought in its train, and as its inevitable issue, the Union, which once again united the English and Scottish settlers of Ulster under a common Government with the race from which they spring. The Union rendered possible that enormous advance in contentment and prosperity which Ulster has made during this century.

¹ Benn's Belfast, p. 643.