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Dermot O'Hurley's Last Visit To Tipperary

By William Hayes

Attempts through a limited archaeological dig to locate the burial-place of Dermot O'Hurley, Archbishop of Cashel, in the old church of St. Kevin, off Camden Street in Dublin, in the mid-60s failed. The chancel of the church was regarded as the most likely place to have been chosen as the secret burial of the archbishop, who was hanged in Hoggens Green, somewhere in the vicinity of present-day St. Stephen's Green, on 20 June 1584. The medieval church of St. Kevin, later incorporated in the present roofless edifice in the old graveyard, was out of use at the time of his burial.

In the 1970s the Dublin Diocesan Commission on Causes revived the cause of the Irish Martyrs, of whom Dermot O'Hurley was the most prominent. This necessitated an exhaustive investigation into all the available documentation relating to him and the other Irish martyrs beatified this year. It was only then that the full data relating to O'Hurley's unusual promotion to ordination in Rome came to light. Nearing his 50th year he was, on the authority of Pope Gregory X111, promoted to the priesthood within a space of 16 days in the summer of 1581. This hasty promotion was arranged so that O'Hurley could be ordained Archbishop of Cashel, to which see he was officially provided on 11 September 1581.¹

The letters of the crown officials in Dublin to their superiors in London are the principal source of what is known of Dermot O'Hurley's movements in Ireland, culminating in his imprisonment in Dublin Castle after being barely two months in the country.² These letters provide the most reliable insights into the motives which led these officials to have him pursued, imprisoned, interrogated over a period of months and condemned to death on a charge of treason.

The other principal source of information on O'Hurley's life, his movements in Ireland and his death, is David Rothe's *Analecta Sacra*, first published in 1617 just 33 years after the Archbishop's execution.³ The author, who was papal bishop of Ossory, was very close in time to the events and in a position to meet contemporaries. His account of what took place dovetails the State papers with such remarkable accuracy that it can be taken as providing reliable fleshing out of the prejudicial and sometimes crytic evidence in the State papers.

Although O'Hurley was rushed through minor and major orders and ordained archbishop of Cashel shortly after being officially nominated to the see in 1581, he did not arrive in Ireland until two years later. There is evidence that he suffered a serious illness while at Rheims *en route* to Ireland.⁴ When he did eventually arrive he was only about eight to ten weeks in the country before he was arrested. The amount of journeying he managed to get in after his arrival near Skerries leads one to conclude that he could scarcely have had an opportunity to perform any arranged episcopal function in the Cashel diocese, with the possible exception of a brief visit to Holy Cross for which we have Rothe's authority.⁵

The State papers supply the information that O'Hurley was imprisoned in Dublin Castle on 7 October 1583, and he arrived in Ireland about six weeks previously.⁶ The six weeks may refer to the time the Lords Justices in Dublin got knowledge of his presence in the country. Such an interpretation would fit in with the imprisonment, references to which are in both the State papers and in Rothe's *Analecta*.

Holmpatrick, a harbour near Skerries, was chosen as a safe place for O'Hurley to disembark, as



it was privately owned and outside of the jurisdiction of Dublin Corporation.⁷ Rothe states that he had negotiated the passage to Ireland with the captain of a Drogheda ship at the port of Le Croisic, at the mouth of the Loire in Brittany. The captain of the vessel would have been familiar with the east coast, particularly the Drogheda area; it was probably he who recommended Holmpatrick as the disembarkation place.

On arrival *incognito* around the middle of August 1583 at Holmpatrick O'Hurley was met by Fr. John Dillon SJ, who initially acted as companion and guide.⁸ His first concern was to put some distance between himself and Dublin. He took the road to Drogheda, presumably travelling the twelve miles or so by horse.

Slane Castle was their first objective following a strategy which seems to have been recommended by Fr. Dillon, a first cousin of the Baron of Slane, Thomas Fleming. He may also have known that Piers Butler, an illegitimate son of Thomas Butler, Earl of Ormond, and married to a daughter of the Baron of Slane, was then staying at Slane.

O'Hurley would have welcomed the chance to become acquainted without delay with both Fleming, one of the senior nobles of Meath, and Piers Butler, who would be an intermediary between himself and the Earl of Ormond, the most powerful figure in Munster. Seeking the protection of nobility loyal to catholicism was a strategy of some bishops and priests coming into England and Ireland at that period.

The protection of the Earl of Ormond would prove a significant safeguard for O'Hurley's safety. The Dublin officials later described this strategy as going into Munster "craving protection at his (Ormond's) hands".⁹ But there was another important reason why O'Hurley wanted an urgent meeting with Ormond—to entreat him to spare the Earl of Desmond, the leader of the Desmond rebellion, which went on from 1578 to 1582. Even before O'Hurley arrived the rebellion was wholly suppressed; and Garrett, the hunchback 15th Earl, then a fugitive, was still being hunted down in mountainous country around Castlemaine.

O'Hurley also hoped to meet Desmond if at all possible and to do whatever he could for him. Before O'Hurley left Rome Gregory XIII had entrusted him with a letter to Desmond and his allies, dated 3 February 1582. In this the Pope encouraged the leaders in the course they had embarked on for the defence of the Catholic religion against the "heretical" Elizabethan government in Ireland. The letter concluded: "other things you will learn from him who bears these letters, which we hope will be of great benefit and merit to you. Give all credence to these words."¹⁰

Besides wishing to convey to Desmond the Pope's appreciation of the stand he had taken to preserve catholicism in Ireland, O'Hurley would have had a family loyalty to the house of Desmond. His father, William O'Hurley, was an agent of the Desmonds when the O'Hurleys lived in the tower house of Lickadoon, in the parish of Donaghmore, Ballyneety. The family had previously lived in or near Emly, where Dermot was born around 1530.¹¹

The archbishop had taken the precaution of sending on a Wexford merchant ship the papal rescript of his episcopal ordination and other documents. Little did he suspect that the Dublin officials would soon have in their possession all these documents, including his letter of appointment as archbishop. The ship was intercepted by pirates and O'Hurley's bundle of documents found their way into the hands of the lords justices in Dublin, doubtless for a handsome reward.

Besides that letter the lords justices had "the confessions" of the informer Christopher Barnewall even before O'Hurley arrived in Ireland.¹² According to these Barnewall went to Rome in 1581 as an agent for James FitzEustace, Viscount Baltinglass, who had come out in rebellion in 1580, and while in Rome was at a conference between Archbishop O'Hurley and Cardinal Como, the papal secretary of state, which O'Hurley acted as interpreter. Barnewall later turned informer for the Dublin government in order to be pardoned.

Before laying eyes on O'Hurley the lords justices, who were running the affairs of the country in the absence of the lord deputy, considered they had serious charges against him. One was that he was the bearer of a papal letter, "letters of comfort" as they called it, to leaders of a rebellion against her majesty's government in Ireland.¹³ The other was that he acted as interpreter in Rome on behalf of representatives of some of those leaders when they met the papal secretary of the state.

There were two lords justices, who held office from July 1582 to June 1584, an interim arrangement until a new lord deputy was appointed. Both were at pains to demonstrate their concern for "her majesty's proceedings in this realm" and their efficiency as substitutes for the lord deputy.¹⁴ The senior member was Archbishop Adam Loftus (1533—1605), a Yorkshire-born Cambridge graduate, who had been appointed Archbishop of Armagh by Queen Elizabeth in 1561, and who had arranged for a transfer to Dublin in 1567.

Although the state papal letters show him to have been tactful and judicious in his dealings with affairs of state, he displayed decisiveness and determination in pursuing Archbishop O'Hurley. He had strong puritan views; these, and his scant toleration for catholicism, meant that O'Hurley, as papal appointee, could hardly expect any sympathy from him. Loftus was lord chancellor from 1581—1605 and the first provost of Trinity College.

The other lord justice was Henry Wallop (1540—99), also English and with religious views as radical as Loftus. He had been in Ireland only since 1579 and had been vice treasurer to the Earl of Ormond during the early part of the Desmond rebellion. He had little time for either the Gaelic or Anglo-Irish of the country, including Ormond himself, and was intolerant of any display of non-conformism.

The experiences of these two crown officials in the previous few years had done nothing to make them regard O'Hurley with anything less than suspicion and even alarm. Rebellion had erupted in different parts of the country since 1578. The rising of Viscount Baltinglass in 1580 had brought rebellion within a stone-throw of their doors, and Loftus himself was briefly a virtual prisoner in the Lord Deputy's house.

Although that rebellion and the one in Munster had been effectively dealt with, there were still revelations of conspiracy among the gentry of Meath, and reports of further rebellion in Wicklow, Offaly and Kildare. Many of the letters of the lords justices to London during their term of office contain references to their fears for their own safety, to fears that there were many more stirrings of rebellion and to feelings of isolation in Dublin.

Little wonder that the lords justices regarded with apprehension the arrival of the papal archbishop of Cashel from Rome, which they had come to look on as a hotbed of anti-Elizabethan counter-reformation intrigue. They were determined to track him down as soon as they could ascertain his whereabouts.

While resting in a hostelry in Drogheda, Archbishop O'Hurley's identity was suspected by an informer; this necessitated a hasty journey to Slane Castle, ten miles away.¹⁵ The castle on its splendid site overlooking the Boyne presented a far different appearance from that of today, which is mainly a 19th-century facade design by Johnston. The baron's wife, Catherine Preston, daughter of viscount Gormanston, secreted O'Hurley in a secret chamber of the castle. Only a few days in his native country, he was now a virtual fugitive.

In those quiet days in Slane, O'Hurley made the acquaintance of Piers Butler of Duiske, the eldest illegitimate son of the Earl of Ormond, who had at least twelve illegitimate children. As eldest son Piers stood high in his father's affections; some Butler historians claim that there is circumstantial evidence supporting the theory that his mother was no less a person than Queen Elizabeth herself.¹⁶

While at Slane the Archbishop made a journey to co. Cavan to meet some priests he was acquainted with on the continent.¹⁷ Although O'Hurley was a layman until his promotion to orders





in the summer of 1581, he would have got to know well many Irish students studying for the priesthood on the continent through his years as a professor of law in the universities of Louvain and Rheims, and finally in Rome, where there is some tenuous evidence at least that he also taught.

The journey to O'Reilly country and back to Slane involved some 60 or 70 miles, which must have taken at least a week allowing for periods of rest and time spent seeking out and spending time with acquaintances — a strenuous undertaking. No doubt Fr. Dillon continued to be his guide and companion.

The crown officials in Dublin later put their own interpretation on O'Hurley's visit to Cavan. He had been appointed by the pope to "poison the hearts of the people with disobedience to her majesty's government".¹⁸

Back in Slane, O'Hurley and Dillon began to act with more freedom; while maintaining their disguise they behaved as normal guests. Then Robert Dillon, a brother of the Archbishop's companion, arrived. He was one of the chief lawyers of the Queen's bench, in which office he had succeeded Nicholas Nugent, who had been executed on a charge of taking part in the 1582 rebellion in the Pale. He would, of course, have recognised his brother John.

While at dinner a serious discussion took place during which O'Hurley showed "flashes of learning", as Rothe put it!¹⁹ This aroused Robert Dillon's suspicions, and on discovering who O'Hurley was he decided to betray him. Suspecting Robert Dillon's undue curiosity regarding himself, O'Hurley set out for Munster without delay to meet Ormond. Piers Butler had by now been taken into the Archbishop's confidence and became his new guide and companion.

The urgency of their journey would have recommended a more direct route to Carrick-on-Suir, the principal residence of the Earl of Ormond. From Slane they would probably have taken the road to Navan and then to Trim, where there was a bridge across the Boyne. From there the more direct route would have been through Clane, Naas, Knockaulin Hillfort (the ancient Dun Ailinne), Moone, and then across the Barrow probably at Carlow. From there they could follow the Barrow valley to Leighlinbridge, from where they could have veered away from the Barrow to follow the road to Thomastown, which had a stone bridge across the Nore.

Passing close to Jerpoint, they would have got at least a distant view of the graceful bell-tower of the Cistercian Abbey, already dissolved and on lease to the Earl of Ormond. From there they would have continued on a south-westerly line to Gowran, a manor town founded by the first Butler, Theobald Walter. There the Butler Castle would have been a likely place for the last overnight stop before the final leg of the journey to Carrick-on-Suir.

This last phase of the journey would have taken them through Kilmaganny, and through the hilly country in the vicinity of Ahenny. Shortly afterwards they would have entered the Suir valley and county Tipperary. After some 30 years Dermot O'Hurley was back in his native county, but now as a fugitive ecclesiastic.

Before them was Carrick-on-Suir, a walled town which the Butlers, Earls of Carrick and Ormond, had created. The Butler Castle dominated the town. The twin towers of the 15th century castle with its high crenellations loomed over the gabled Tudor manor-house which Black Tom had

Before them was Carrick-on-Suir, a walled town which the Butlers, Earls of Carrick and Ormond, had created. The Butler Castle dominated the town. The twin towers of the 15th century castle with its high crenellations loomed over the gabled Tudor manor-house which Black Tom had

built on to it in the early 1570s, copying the Tudor dwellings which were then the fashion in England.

New Gate gave access to the New Street which ran at right angles into the High Street.²⁰ The first concern of the travellers to find safe accommodation for O'Hurley in the town. Since leaving Slane they had journeyed some 130 miles, which must have taken them at least three to four days. It was now early in September 1583.

No doubt Piers Butler went directly to the castle to meet his father and privately acquaint him of the arrival in the town of the new archbishop of Cashel, who had come such a long specifically to meet him. Rothe supplies interesting information on the encounter between earl and archbishop. He records that Ormond immediately got a liking for O'Hurley, and became impressed with his qualities and dignity. He even gave instructions that victual and other necessities be supplied from the Castle to his lodgings.

Rothe carefully qualifies the next item of information. "It is claimed by some that he secretly sent for him to confirm his newly born son James who later prematurely died in England".²¹ This child was the son of Ormond's second wife, and his first legitimate son and heir.

The Earl was then in his early 50s, a man of striking appearance who from his youth had been nicknamed Black Tom because of his raven-black hair and his sallow complexion. He had been brought up in England, where he was educated as a protestant with the future Edward VI; but his religious allegiance lay lightly on him. He professed catholicism under Queen Mary, but swung back to the protestant allegiance again when his cousin Elizabeth 1, with whom he was close terms all his life, came to throne

Whatever about his religious allegiances, his political loyalties and devotion to the crown and to Elizabeth personally were paramount. Ranking next on his priorities was the maintenance of the power and possessions of the Butlers. His personality and career established him as the greatest of the Ormond earls.

The Earl and the archbishop finally came face to face, with young Piers introducing them, probably in the great oak panelled hall of the Tudor mansion. The great fireplaces displaying the arms of Ormond quartered with those of Desmond were a reminder of the family and marriage links between the two great families. The carved Latin inscription listed the titles of the Earl, "Viscount Thurles, Earl of Ormond and Ossory, Lord Palatine of Co. Tipperary", to which could be added Lord General and Governor of Munster. He certainly was in a position to give O'Hurley the protection he sorely needed and judging from Rothe, was prepared to extend that protection.

But the Earl was not persuaded to spare Desmond, who at that stage was hiding in a wooded glen near the head of Dingle Bay with only a few followers. Ormond had tried to prevent Desmond coming out in rebellion, but when he did and was proclaimed traitor, Ormond was appointed Governor of Munster to conduct the campaign to crush the rebellion — and the Desmond Geraldines as well.

Although sick of the war, the bloodshed and the famine which the rebellion caused, Ormond, who played a big part in causing it, would not extend mercy to Desmond. He knew it was only a matter of time before Desmond would be flushed out of hiding. When that finally happened and Desmond was killed, Ormond wrote to Burghley in London: "so now is this traitor come to the end I have long looked for".²²

Although O'Hurley failed to help Desmond, he felt secure enough with Ormond's assurance of protection to fulfil another obligation he was committed to — to visit Holy Cross Abbey to offer thanksgiving before the True Cross. Rothe records that at some moment of danger in his journey through the continent O'Hurley vowed that if he emerged safely he would make a pilgrimage to the abbey, and records the visit without any further details.²³



In, nonnulli vultu indigno vultu amovita et pax
 revere ac foveam pudes, si quod veni ut tibi p'standant
 me amabib et vna d'ca ego te ut tuob, si vobis in ra
 me ad vobis si d'ca vobis tuis, plura siquidē fieri possimūb
 que p'iplo t'omittat p'and est tuis. Sane vobis
 vobis d'ca p'ia. Dominatio vna sub d'ca d'ca p'p'ia d'ca
 ant ut d'ca p'ia vna d'ca d'ca d'ca 1583

Dermotus D. O. Hurley
 Dermotus Hurley

Reproduction of portion of the only known surviving letter of Dermot O'Hurley showing his signature and the date.

O'Hurley's most direct route to Holy Cross would have been along the Suir valley to Kilsheelan, then north-westwards to follow the course of the Anner River under the western foothills of Slievenamon and on towards the walled town of Fethard. He was entering his diocese probably for the first time, and of course still *incognito*. He was probably anxious preserve his anonymity at least for the present.

He would have skirted the south wall of Fethard by the Valley, a small road that ran along the south bank of the Clashawley, and which continued past the medieval parish church of Rathcoole. As he approached Cashel he was seeing for the first time the magnificent cluster of buildings intact on the Rock. The Queen's appointed archbishop Miler Magrath was entrenched there since 1571 and in firm control of the temporalities of the see as well as that as Waterford.

The only letter of O'Hurley known to have survived gives an insight into how he viewed his Elizabethan-counterpart.²⁴ It is a letter O'Hurley wrote to Miler on 20 September 1583, probably after his pilgrimage to Holy Cross. This unique document provides valued insights into the conciliatory approach he wished to bring to his mission and to show towards Miler in particular.

This is also the only known letter from the Reformation period addressed by a papal bishop to a Reformation counterpart in the same diocese. It is a striking foreshadowing of what in more modern times was to become the norm in the country — the mutually tolerated coexistence of a Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland episcopacy, a small ray of ecumenism from a period when ecumenism was still a vision of the distant future.

The approach which O'Hurley showed in this letter was in strong contrast with his predecessor, Maurice McGibbon, a cousin of the Earl at Desmond, or Fitzgibbon, appointed by the Pope in 1567. According to some accounts he succeeded with the help of some local chiefs in ousting the Queen's first appointee to Cashel, James Mac Cagwell.

Shortly afterwards McGibbon, a cousin of the Earl of Desmond, left for Spain to seek military assistance from Philip II for the rebellion that was being initiated in Ireland against Tudor policies. This rebellion came to be looked on by some Catholic military leaders, as well as by the pope and church leaders, as a crusade in defence of the Catholic religion in Ireland.

Munster had endured the savage and protracted crushing of the Desmond Rebellion, and O'Hurley must have witnessed much evidence of the plight to which the ordinary people were reduced as he went across Tipperary. The evidences of the famine, poverty and unsettlement which resulted from Ormond's military campaign all during 1582 and into 1583 would have been vivid in O'Hurley's mind as he penned his letter in Latin to Miler.

"Would that we could speak face to face and address our words to one another. Then it would be clear how much I am your friend, and how far from the truth it is that there is anything plotted that would be the cause of sorrow to you or injurious to your status. For myself I am content with the academic title, or to be called to my own name. I am not trying to declare war on anyone, but I try to promote and foster friendship and peace. If I can persuade that this is true, you will be on friendly terms with me, and I with you and yours"

[English translation by the Author].

In the first part of the letter O'Hurley mentions his sister, without naming her. Rothe supplies the information that she was his only sister and that Hanora was her name.²⁵ O'Hurley's primary purpose in writing the letter was to thank Miler Magrath for some form of assistance he had rendered his sister. There is no reference in the letter to what kind of way Magrath was of assistance to her.

Perhaps Magrath had used his influence to arrange some support or compensation for her when the O'Hurley lands were confiscated during the Desmond rebellion. The "William Oge Hurley" who got a royal pardon on 6 November 1581 may have been an elder brother of Dermot, and there was at least one other brother, Andrew, who was much younger than Dermot and was an officer in the Spanish service.²⁶

As Dermot wanted to remain *incognito* for safety as he made for Holy Cross he would not need to go through the walled town of Cashel but could skirt it and take the road to Holy Cross that led him by Toberadora. The abbey lands of Holy Cross, then dissolved, were the property of the Earl of Ormond since 1562, and in 1583 the church buildings were on lease to John Cantwell Fitz Pierse of Killeens, Killenaule.²⁷ The buildings were probably in a reasonable state of repair, since one of the terms of the lease was that the lessee ensure their maintenance.

Another term of the lease required Cantwell to find "a curate to serve to the parishioners according to the Queen's proceedings, not permitting any service or ceremony contrary to these proceedings to be used in the church". This latter condition of the lease was part of the form for leases at the time that involved church buildings; but as regards Holy Cross there is no evidence that it was put into practice.

There is indeed evidence indicating that the abbey continued to be a catholic centre and a popular place of pilgrimage. There is mention of a Shane MacDonnell O'Mulryan, a cistercian monk who had a lease of "a chamber in the cloister", where he lived until at least 1581.²⁸ The existence of records of continuing pilgrimages in the closing decades of the 16th century implies that the relic of the True Cross was there, with at least one monk acting as its custodian.

The Earl of Ormond, in whose ownership the abbey and its property were, was financially benefiting from them all. He was willing to close his eyes to whatever religious proceedings were going at Holy Cross as long as these were not used by his enemies to discredit him. He did not have the religious intolerance of his crown officials in Dublin, with whom he was at odds, and his respect for O'Hurley showed that he retained some leanings towards the old faith which showed more strongly later on.

Neither did Miler Magrath care about the kind of religious services going on at Holy Cross. It would have been one of the least of his concerns. But he was no friend of the earl and would miss few opportunities to discredit him.



Despite the need to lie low and preserve anonymity, did Archbishop O'Hurley use the opportunity presented at Holy Cross to exercise any episcopal ministry? He was in one of the few religious sites in his diocese still functioning in part of at least, and people were converging there. A report by one Captain Williams Piers, a English soldier serving in Ireland, dated 15 September 1583, has a notable reference to Holy Cross: "pilgrims from all parts repair to the abbey of the Holy Cross", and there was "general exception of foreign aid arriving".²⁹

Could the converging of people there around the middle of September be linked with news going around quietly that the new papal archbishop had arrived there? The diocese had not seen a papal archbishop since 1570, and the scanty evidence there is relating to O'Hurley suggests that he was primarily zealous about his spiritual mission.

There is, however, no evidence of any wider travelling by O'Hurley in Tipperary. He was back in Carrick-on-Suir by 20 September at the latest, the date on which he wrote to Magrath. That there had been a recent meeting with his sister, or at least some form of correspondence with her, is implied in this opening section of his letter:

"If times would allow it, Most Reverend Lord. I would come nearer so as to thank Your Lordship for the generosity you have shown to my sister, showing her every favour whenever opportunity required it. Indeed she herself informed me of this, and I have learned it from others also. For this reason I affirm that I am naturally obliged to reciprocate. For although S. (i.e. soror, [my] sister) consulted F (i.e. Dr. Ambrose Forth, a master in chancery) regarding the petition for inheritance, insofar as she was destitute of all help, I regard it (i.e. the help you gave her) as if done to myself."

O'Hurley goes on to request Miler to provide whatever further help he can for his sister, and ends his letter with the words:

"if you send for me for the purposes of a colloquy — I will trust your word — there are many things we could say to each other which it would not be safe to commit to writing. Farewell, Your Most Reverend Lordship. these calends of September, or as others would put it, 20 September 1583.

Your Most Reverend Lordship's poor friend
Dermitius Hurrileus."

This formal and fulsomely respectful letter gives the impression of having been written in haste. This poses the question whether the haste was due to the arrival in Carrick of the Baron of Slane, urging O'Hurley to accompany him to Dublin to appear before the council so that (as Rothe records) he could "prove the baron's innocence and show that he himself had come to Ireland with a true ecclesiastical spirit and to preach the faith."³⁰

This was a turn of events O'Hurley could hardly have anticipated. Some time after the archbishop had left Slane the lords justices, acting on tip-offs from their informers, had established that he had been "entertained" in the house of the Baron of Slane and some others of good account in the Pale."³¹ They summoned Slane to Dublin, and probably the other nobles as well, as they put it, "so dealt with the Baron of Slane as he travelled presently to the earl for the apprehension of the said Hurley."

Slane, being the most important of the nobles in question and related by marriage with Ormond, was the one the lord justices cunningly picked to negotiate with the earl for the apprehension of the archbishop. It was a well sprung trap. Both the baron and earl were placed in compromised positions, not only because of their connection with the papally appointed bishop, but also because the taint of involvement in conspiracy could hang over them.

The baron must have felt his standing with the crown officials to be under threat, and needed to show himself in a good light and free himself of any taint of treason. The earl also had little option



except to play into the hands of the lords justices, or else lose face not only with the Dublin officials but with the London authorities and the queen herself.

The compliance of the baron throws some light on the stance many of the nobility and gentry, especially in the Pale, were then adopting. Their inner allegiance was to catholicism and their sympathies with O'Hurley; but they were determined to keep their personal convictions separate from matters of state and self-preservation.

As for the earl, it was one thing to turn a blind eye to catholic practices going on in places in his palatinate like Holy Cross. It was an entirely different matter to be seen to be shielding a papal archbishop. Whatever hope Ormond may have had at that stage of being somehow able to help him in the future, the lords justices held the trump card.

Before agreeing to leave Carrick with the baron, O'Hurley entrusted his letter to Miler Magrath to the earl; but it was never forwarded. The earl may have had some misgivings that the devious and wily Miler would use it in some way to discredit him.

O'Hurley's letter, extending the hand of friendship to his Elizabethan counterpart in Cashel, remained with other Ormond papers and eventually found its way into the Carte MSS in the Bodleian Library. It is interesting to surmise what Miler's thoughts were when he became acquainted with the treatment meted out to O'Hurley by the Elizabethan authorities, Miler's own superiors.

That O'Hurley was prepared to accompany Slane to Dublin to try to exonerate him from any charge is confirmed by a contemporary chronicle, which records that before the lords justices put O'Hurley to torture "many ways were sought to charge the Lord of Slane with somewhat, but he denying to charge him or any man else, was in the end tortured many ways". The chronicle goes on to say that even under torture he would not "accuse the lord of Slane or any other against his conscience."³²

Dermot O'Hurley was on the road again, now as a prisoner. The small party, including Slane and his escort, rode out through the New Gate and on to the Kilkenny road, which (according to Rothe) was the one chosen for the fateful journey to Dublin. Rothe also records the surprising information that the archbishop was chained, which would mean that he was conveyed in some form of horse-drawn transport, and that whenever a resting place was decided upon, he was lodged in the local prison.³³

According to Rothe he spent a night in the public jail in Kilkenny, and a certain catholic came to see him to obtain the benefit of his ministry. Their conversation turned on Bishop Peter Power of Ferns, who had been appointed in 1582, but who while trying to carry out his mission was imprisoned and ill-treated in Dublin Castle. While there he had wavered and had taken the oath of allegiance.

O'Hurley is recorded to have said "many who are lions before the battle are timid stags when the hour of trial comes. Lest this prove true of me I daily pray to God for strength, for let him who thinks himself to stand take heed lest he fall." If these are substantially the words of O'Hurley he was in no doubt as to his precarious position. It is a coincidence that Miler Magrath ends the enigmatic inscription he is said to have composed for his wall-tomb in the cathedral chancel on the Rock with the same scriptural quotation: "let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall".

The State Papers, — the principal documentary evidence for the imprisonment of O'Hurley in Dublin Castle, the series of interrogations he was subjected to, the brutal torturing meted out to him and his condemnation to death by martial law — also reveal that the two crown officials who engineered it all in time became aware of the political miscalculation they had made.

The series of interrogations, once under the brutal torture of "the hot boots", and the offers of pardon they extended if he would supply the kind of information they were expecting him to have,



made them realise that he was innocent of any political manoeuvrings or intrigues, had little or no knowledge of such, and that (as he himself claimed) he had come to Ireland solely to do the work of an archbishop. There is also evidence that the lords justices, besides dangling offers of pardon before O'Hurley, went to some lengths to pressurise him into renouncing the primacy of the Pope and to acknowledge the queen's supremacy.³⁴

In the end all they got from O'Hurley that they could put forward as incriminating in their eyes was that many newly-trained priests and bishops were ready to come to Ireland and follow the same course as he had done. On 7 March 1584 they wrote to chief secretary Walshingham: "We doubt not but Your Honour will discern how many ways Hurley is to be overtaken with treason in his own person and with what bad mind he came to Ireland instructed from Rome to poison the hearts of the people with disobedience to her Majesty's government."³⁵

If the lords justices could not charge O'Hurley with any implication in military plots, their final trump card was that they could bring a charge of coming to Ireland as papal bishop to rally opposition to the government's policy of imposing the reformed religion on the country. In their 7 March letter they asked Walshingham for approval to put O'Hurley to death by martial law on that account, and so that his execution would serve as a deterrent to others.

"We desire your honour to consider how he may speedily receive his deserts so that not only his own evil may die with himself and thereby the realm delivered of a perilous member, but that also his punishment serve for an example ad terrorem to many others who we find by his own confession are prepared at Rome to tun the same course both here and for England".

The lords justices followed that letter with another on the following day, 8 March, which reveals the alarm they felt when they intercepted two letters written by O'Hurley which he attempted to smuggle out of the castle. One was addressed to the Earl of Ormond, the other to a kinsman of his own in Dublin, who was in the employment of Dr. Andrew Forth, the doctor of laws and master in chancery mentioned in O'Hurley's letter to Miler MaGrath.

These two letters were forwarded to London with the lords justices' letter, (they are now untraceable), so that Walshingham could see that favour "these Romish runagates [vagabonds] have with our great potentates here." The chief potentate they were pointing at was the Earl of Ormond, whom they criticised at every opportunity and whom they referred to in an earlier letter as a "patron and favourer" of O'Hurley, adding snidely, "They that will not see let them be blind still".³⁶

In their letter of July 1584 the lords justices, reporting the carrying out of the execution of the archbishop, said that up to the end he was "continually in hopes and in an assured expectation of his enlargement (release) if he might have found that favour to have his time prolonged but to the end of our government."³⁷ The lords justices were only too aware that the new viceroy, Sir John Perrot, who was to replace them in government in Dublin, was a good friend of Ormond.

When (they knew) he would take up office officially on 23 June 1584, Ormond would be in a better position to use his influence to save O'Hurley. That that was O'Hurley's own hope they knew from his intercepted letter to the earl. As they clinically (and cynically) put it "for our farewell, two days before we delivered over the sword, being the 19th of the last (i.e. June), with the consent of the Lord Deputy we gave warrant to the knight marshal in her majesty's name to do execution upon him, which was accordingly performed upon him and thereby the realm well rid of a most pestilent member".³⁸

Even Dermot O'Hurley's final hope that he would have at least the justice of a trial in open court was denied him. He was condemned by martial law to execution by hanging. It took place very early on the morning of Saturday, 20 June 1584, in order to keep his death as obscure as possible. The swearing in of the Lord Deputy, Sir John Perrot, took place the following day.

Despite the desire of the officials to keep the archbishop's execution obscure, it immediately became widely known in Dublin. By at least early September it was known in Paris and in Portugal by the end of October.³⁹ Archbishop Dermot O'Hurley had only at best a few furtive chances to perform any episcopal mission in Tipperary. But the witness of his suffering and death was far-reaching in time and place, well beyond the confines of his native county.

FOOTNOTES

1. Benignus Millet, OFM: *The Ordination of Dermot O'Hurley, 1581*, in *Collectanea Hibernica*, Vol. 25, 1983, pp.15-21.
2. These letters were published by W. M. Brady in his *State Papers concerning the Irish Church in the time of Queen Elizabeth*, (London, 1868).
3. David Rothe: *Analecta Sacra Nova et Mira*, (Cologne, 1617), reprinted with introduction by P. F. Moran, Dublin, 1884.
4. T. F. Knox: *Letters and Memorials of Cardinal Allen*, (London, 1882), pp.151-162.
5. Rothe, p.430.
6. Brady, p.71.
7. *Cause for the Beatification and Canonisation of the Servants of God 1579-1651* (Congregation for The Causes of Saints, 1988, Rome). p.257.
8. Rothe, p.424.
9. Brady, p.71.
10. A. Theiner: *Annales Ecclesiastica* (Rome, 1864), Vol. III, p.369.
11. *Cause for the Beatification*, pp.255, 272; David Rothe: *De Processu Martyriali* (Cologne, 1619), p.48.
12. Brady, pp.65-67.
13. Brady, pp.71 and 74.
14. *Ibid*, p.85.
15. Rothe, p.427.
16. Lord Dunboyne: *Butler Family History*, Second Edition (Kilkenny, 1966), p.13; Cyril Falls: *Black Tom of Ormonde, in Ormonde Castle, Carrick-on-Suir*, ed. James Maher (Mullinahone), p.35.
17. Brady, p.71.
18. *Ibid*, p.75.
19. Rothe, p.425.
20. Patrick C. Power: *Carrick-on-Suir and its People* (Dun Laoghaire, 1976), p.35; John Bradley: "The Medieval Towns of Tipperary", in *Tipperary History and Society*, ed. W. Nolan and T. McGrath, (Dublin, 1985), p.40.
21. Rothe, p.430.
22. Brady, p.68.
23. Rothe, p.430.
24. Carte MSS, 55 f546, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
25. Rothe, p.434.
26. *Cause for the Beatification*, p.255; *Fiants, Ireland, Eliz.*, No.3767.
27. *Irish Monastic and Episcopal Deeds*, ed. Newport B. White, (Dublin, 1936), p.269.
28. *Calendar of Ormond Deeds*, Vol. VI, p.469.
29. Rothe, p.429.
30. Brady, p.69.
31. *Cause for the Beatification*, p.264.
32. Rothe, p.431.
33. *Ibid*, p.434.
34. Brady, pp.74-76.
35. *Ibid*, p.77.
36. *Ibid*, pp.84-85.
37. *Ibid*.
38. *Cause for the Beatification*, pp.268, 269.

