

progress through the South and West, which he describes as wofully wasted by war, both town and country. The earldom of the loyal Ormond was far from being well ordered; and the other great nobles were even less favourably reported; the Earl of Desmond could neither rule nor be ruled; the Earl of Clancarty "wanted force and credit;" the Earl of Thomond had neither wit to govern "nor grace to learn of others;" the Earl of Clanrickarde was well intentioned, but controlled wholly by his wife. Many districts had but "one-twentieth" of their ancient population; Galway was in a state of perpetual defence. Athenry had but four respectable householders left, and these presented him with the rusty keys of their once famous town, which they confessed themselves unable to defend, impoverished as they were by the extortions of their lords. All this to the eye of the able Englishman had been the result of that "cowardly policy, or lack of policy," whose sole maxims had been to play off the great lords against each other and to retard the growth of population, least "through their quiet might follow" future dangers to the English interest. His own policy was based on very different principles. He proposed to make the highest heads bow to the supremacy of the royal sword—to punish with exemplary rigour every sign of insubordination, especially in the great—and, at the same time, to encourage with ample rewards, adventurers, and enterprises of all kinds. He proposed to himself precisely the part Lord Strafford acted sixty years later, and he entered on it with a will which would have won the admiration of that unbending despot. He prided himself on the number of military executions which marked his progress. "Down they go in every corner," he writes, "and down they shall go, God willing!" He seized the Earl of Desmond in his own town of Kilmallock; he took the sons of Clanrickarde, in Connaught, and carried them prisoners to Dublin. Elizabeth became alarmed at these extreme measures, and Sidney obtained leave to explain his new policy in person to her Majesty. Accordingly in October he sailed for England, taking with him the Earl and his brother John of Desmond, who had been invited to Dublin, and were detained as prisoners of State; Hugh O'Neil, as yet known by no other title than Baron of Dungannon; the O'Conor Sligo, and other chiefs and noblemen. He seems to have carried his policy triumphantly with the Queen, and from henceforth for many a long year "the dulce ways" and "politic drifts" recommended by the great Cardinal Statesman of Henry VIII. were to give