

Mr. Cheke and other young gentlemen of that ilk won their spurs on that eventful day:—

“Don Bastian with the officers came out with ensigns trailing and gave themselves up as prisoners. The men piled their arms outside the walls, and waited defenseless to learn the pleasure of their conquerors. They were strangers and by this time alone. *The officers were reserved for their ransom.*” (How characteristically English! Modern Greek and Italian brigands do the same thing) Common prisoners were inconvenient and expensive” (it is an Englishman who writes) “and it was thought desirable to read a severe lesson to Catholic sympathizers in Ireland.” “The Lord of hosts” wrote Grey “had delivered the enemy to us, none of us being hurt, Mr. Cheke alone excepted. Then put I in certain bands, who fell straight to execution.” A certain number of the original party had fallen sick and had been sent back to Spain. With the exception of these *the entire party was slaughtered. A few women, some of them pregnant were hanged.* A servant of Sanders, an Irish gentleman and a priest were hanged also. The bodies, six hundred in all, were stripped and laid upon the “sands, as gallant goodly personages” said Grey “as over were beheld.”

This amiable picture of British rule is suggestive and representative. My Lord Deputy Grey de Wilton is said to have shed tears at the victory. If so, his tears must have dried up long before he wrote his matter of fact account of the butchery. It has been suggested that his tears (Queen Elizabeth wished that the cruelty had been undone) were for the subjects of the king of Spain, not for the wives—“some of them pregnant”—and babes of the Irish chiefs.

To the credit of one English gentleman, however, be it recorded, that the brave old tar, Admiral Winter, took no part in this “horrid massacre but granted “protection to a few, that escaped to his fleet.” But who then was to blame? Lord Grey does not say what orders he gave to the “certain bands he put in” His tears, if any, were after the event. Hooker’s supplement to the chronicles of Holinshed sets the matter at rest. “In the fort Sir James Fitzgerald, Knight and “Lord of the Decies was a prisoner by the order of the “Earl of Desmond; and one Plunket, an Irishman, and “one Englishman which came and accompanied the “traitors out of Spain. The Knight was set at liberty, “but the other two were executed. When the captain “had yielded himself and the fort appointed to be “surrendered, captain Raleigh, together with captain “Macworth, (brave names these!) who had the ward “of that day, entered into the castle and made a great “slaughter, many or most part of them being put to “the sword.”

Here our Knight of the velvet cloak acts a somewhat different part from that of ferrying a queen over a London mud-hole with a velvet cloak. England’s queen must be shielded even to her slippers from London mud, but the wives of Ireland’s chiefs some of them

pregnant, must be slaughtered to have their bodies stripped and laid out upon the sands, as gallant goodly personages as ever were beheld.

The exact number slain by these gallant Englishmen is nowhere stated. Holinshed brings us nearest the mark. “The fort was yielded, all the Irish men and “women hanged; and more than four hundred Spaniards, Italians and Biscayas put to the sword: the “coronel, captains, secretaries, and others to the number “of twenty saved for ransome.”

How much of this “ransome” went into the pockets of these young gallants (who massacred Irish women as a pastime) history recordeth not. Doubtless it was meant to eke out their poor pay withal.

How did it happen that Elizabeth’s captains with such small bodies of soldiers succeeded in the Desmond wars in routing such large bodies of Irish? Not counting the women and children “deliberately and systematically butchered” (Lecky Eighteenth Century, vol. II, p. 105) they routed over and over again five times—if we are to believe Hooker—sometimes ten times their number. This is all the more astonishing, as in Raleigh’s own life time the success was reversed, and we find under Hugh O’Neil, Owen Roe and the still later Sarsfield that Irish troops were a match for superior numbers of English forces. Raleigh supplies the explanation. It was a case of needle guns over flint locks.

“I myself remember” writes Raleigh “that within “these thirty years two of Her Majesty’s ships would “have commanded 100 sail of the Spaniards. I remember also when I was captain in Ireland, 100 foot and “100 horses would have beaten all the forces of the “strongest province. But of late I have known an “easterling fight hand to hand with one of her Majesty’s ships, and the Irish in this last war have been “victorious with an equal, or even with an inferior “force. And what is the reason? The Netherlands in “those days had *wooden guns* and the Irish had *darts*, “but the one is now furnished with as great a number “of English ordinance as ourselves, and the other with “as good pikes and muskets as England hath.”

That the Irish in the Desmond wars were badly armed is corroborated by Hooker, the chronicler and friend of Raleigh, who mentions the fact how the Spaniards (who surrendered at Smorwick castle) had brought armor and munitions of war for five thousand men, because they knew that the Irishmen were of bodies sufficient but that they lacked furniture (armor and arms) and training: and in these things they minded to furnish them. But there is another reason for this superiority of the English troops little creditable to the English character. Elizabeth’s captains introduced an infamous system into their warfare as new in Ireland in Raleigh’s days as English muskets. This new “ordinance” was “horrid assassination.” In the fifth book of his history of the world, Raleigh discusses the difference between killing a man in open field with