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The Father of Richard Hooker

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THE
IRISH CHURCH QUARTERLY.
OCTOBER, 1913.

THE FATHER OF RICHARD HOOKER.

THE present Dean of Leighlin (Very Rev. J. W. Abbott) wrote a letter to the *Church of Ireland Gazette* of 29 September, 1911, in which he mentioned that the late Colonel Philip Vigors believed that the father of Richard Hooker, the famous author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, had been Dean of Leighlin in the sixteenth century. The evidence for this was not very clear, and as it has cost me some trouble to search it out I think it may be worth while to set down the facts which establish this interesting point, and thus furnish a link between the Church of Ireland and one of the greatest of Anglican theologians, if not the greatest of all.

So far as is known, the register of Richard Hooker's baptism is not extant; and Isaak Walton when he wrote the life of that famous person does not seem to have known much about his parents (whose Christian names he does not give) except that they were "not so remarkable in their extraction or riches, as for their virtue." Walton adds that "the estate of his parents was so narrow that they were unable to give him the advantage of learning." The Hooker pedigree however, has been printed in Keble's edition of Hooker's works and also

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in John Maclean's *Life of Sir Peter Carew*,¹ a valuable repertory of Irish history in the days of Elizabeth, which was published in 1857. It appears that a certain John Hooker was Mayor of Exeter in 1490; he had a son Roger (or Robert) who was also Mayor of Exeter (in 1529) and who married as his third wife, Agnes Doble. This Roger (or Robert) and Agnes Hooker had three children: John, Roger, and Anthony. Anthony died without issue, and we are concerned only with John and Roger, who was the father of Richard.

John Hooker was a sound scholar, as well as a man of affairs. He was born in 1524 and became Chamberlain of Exeter in 1555, and Member of Parliament for that city. He was appointed agent to Sir Peter Carew, a well-known Devonshire man, who came over to Ireland in the Queen's service, and with the view of establishing claims on certain lands in Munster. Hooker, as a competent antiquary, would have been useful to him in the decipherment of charters. Sir Peter was for some time resident at St. Mary's Abbey, Dublin,² and then established himself at Leighlin in the County Carlow, where he was given charge of the royal garrison by a commission from the Lord Deputy in 1568. He was accompanied to Ireland by John Hooker (*alias* Vowell), who wrote an interesting life of his patron, which was printed by John Maclean in 1857 from the autograph in the Lambeth Library (MSS. no. 605). Several letters are to be found in this volume from John Hooker to Sir Peter Carew, written from Dublin and Leighlin, when Sir Peter was absent. The valley of the Barrow was the scene of perpetual skirmishes between the English garrison and the Irishry, headed by the Kavanaghs, and in a Petition to the Privy Council Sir Peter Carew claimed that he had kept "the Quene's

¹ I learnt of the existence of this interesting book through information kindly supplied by the Rev. Ronald Bayne.

² See Gilbert's *Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey*, vol. ii., p. xlvi.

Mates Castle of Leghlyn " for a year and three-quarters at a cost to his private purse of £3,000. Hooker says that Carew was very hospitable and kind to " his tenants," the Kavanaghs,—presumably when he was not leading his soldiers against them. Carew was granted for his services the barony of Odrone, and died at New Ross in 1575. In all his affairs, John Hooker was his right-hand man, and had as intimate a knowledge of Irish matters as any Englishman then in Ireland. For some time he sat in the Irish Parliament as member for Athenry. He acted as one of the collaborators of Holinshed in the production of his Chronicle, and died in 1601.

We now turn to his brother Roger. Roger Hooker was " servant and steward " of Sir Thomas Chaloner, and was afterwards in the service of the Lady Mountjoy. In 1568 he was introduced by his brother John (the latter is extant) to Sir Peter Carew, who took him also into his employment in Ireland. A very lively picture of the state of affairs at Leighlin is given in the following letter, preserved in the State Paper Office (Irish Correspondence) from Roger Hooker to the Lord Chancellor, Robert Weston :-

ROGER HOKER TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR.

Right Honorable,

It may please your Honour for the savegarde of hir Mats house here at Laughlin, I am constrayned to request some ayde of your honour, for that we doe understand there is arryved at Dublin fyftie souldiers out of England this last weke past. Yf it shall please your Honour to send them hither with as convenient spede as may be the soner the better. For upon Tewesdaie in the mornyng last, one houre before daie, Peirs Butler, with divers other rebells to the number of thirtie horsemen and twoe hundred Carne, spoiled the whole towne of Lawghlin of all their goodes and cattell to the number of one thousand marks, and burned a lxx houses, killed ix men and hurt thre or foure, and burned foure younge children. And not being satisfied with this, but doth every daie threaten us to besiege the house, and myndeth to assault yt very shortlie. Therefore I humblie request your goode L. to consider of yt,

that the enemye may not have that advantage to gette this house from us, for we are very weake to withstand there force. My Lord Deputie leftte, at his goyng from hence towards the west partes, one hundred Carne to garde and kepe the countrie from spoiling, and not any one for the keping of the house but my Mrs owne housholde seruantes, which are not above xii persons servisable men, which is a small company for this house. We are scant able to defend one quarter of yt yf we be very feirsleie sette upon. I wolde surelie have written unto my L. Deputie in this behalfe but that the streightes are kept, for the passing of any messengers with letters, by the rebelles that either they be hanged, spoiled, and ther letters loked in and torne. Thus goode my L. I humblie beseech your honour to consider of our estate here, and send us your men that are there, and they shall have victualls provided for them that they shall not want. Thus being bolde to troble your honoure with my scribed letter craving your helpe for the Quene's Majesty's better service. And yf your L. doe send these men, as our hope is your L. will, that they be furnyshed with munycion and powder as apperteineth. Thus praieng to Almightye god for the safe retourne of my L. Deputie with all his hoste, and for the encrease of your honour's prosperitie and healthe, with my humble and bounden dewtie.

From Laughlin this xth of August, 1569.

Your Honour's humble and faithfull
to commaunde, as your dailie Orator,

ROGER HOOKER.

The Hooker pedigree, as established by Maclean, tells us that this Roger Hooker and his wife Joan were the parents of Richard Hooker, "the judicious" author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, who was born at Heavitree, near Exeter, in March, 1554. Walton is our authority for the interesting fact that Richard owed his education to his rich uncle John, who was then Chamberlain of Exeter, and by whom he was introduced to Bishop Jewel, who sent him to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1567. The next year, as we have seen, his father Roger went to Ireland, but Richard Hooker does not seem to have ever come to our side of the Channel. Walton tells of a journey which Richard took in 1571 on foot "from Oxford to Exeter, to satisfy and see his good mother," his father not being mentioned, the reason

plainly being that he was then at Leighlin, looking after Sir Peter Carew's interests.

We now turn for information to the *Annals of Ireland* by Thady Dowling, who was Chancellor of Leighlin from 1591 to 1628, and who has left us a particularly full and vivacious account of the disputes between the English and Irish in the County Carlow during his own time. Of the troubles described in Roger Hooker's letter given above, he writes under the year 1569: "Lagenienses omnibus enormitatibus dediti, quidam dixere Peter Carew his warres, alii dixere Edmund Butlers warres. Cavanenses hic diaboli contra Petrum Carew"—a terse and pregnant sentence. And under the year 1580 Dowling notes that the Irishry under "Feagh McHugh de Balyncorr in Cowlrainald, per procuracionem Mauritiu Oge Kavenagh de Garrovcheill" took captive "Magistrum Wood et Rogerum Hooker decanum Leighlin et alios Anglicanos."

Here we find Roger Hooker, Sir Peter Carew's agent and steward, in a new capacity, for he is described as "Dean of Leighlin." It is not to be supposed, however, that he was in Holy Orders. His patrons, the Carews, who were paramount in the County Carlow, doubtless secured the emoluments of the deanery for him, when it became vacant after the death or preferment of his predecessor.³ It was no uncommon thing for laymen to hold deaneries in the reign of Elizabeth. Robert Weston, who was Lord Chancellor of Ireland (see p. 267 above), was Dean of St. Patrick's from 1567 to 1576, and was also Dean of Wells; and William Gerrard, another Chancellor of Ireland, was Dean of St. Patrick's from

³ In a commission issued in 1572 for the survey of the barony of Odrone in co. Carlow, among the "Gentlemen's names of the inhabitants that were the mearers of the barony of Odrone," is mentioned "Denby Cauanaghe, Deane of Leighlin." (This list is printed in Maclean's *Life of Sir Peter Carew*.) Cotton in his *Fasti* sets down Dermot Cavanagh as Dean from 1541 to 1563, and this may be the same man. But there were many Kavanaghs.

1576 to 1581, so that we need not be surprised that the less important Deanery of Leighlin should have been held at the same period by a respectable layman. Whether Roger Hooker ever returned to England or not, we do not know. He seems to have been succeeded in the Deanery of Leighlin by Richard Poell,⁴ who in his turn was succeeded by one Walter Harpoll, a member of a family with whom Trinity College, Dublin, has had honourable association of recent years in the person of William Edward Hartpole Lecky.

Richard Hooker, the great divine, did not owe much to his father in regard to his education, and it does not appear that he ever saw him after he left school; but it is not without interest to Irishmen that his father had at least a titular connexion with the Irish Church, and that during the last years of his life he enjoyed the position and the emoluments of the Deanery of Leighlin.

JOHN OSSORY.

⁴ *Fiants of Elizabeth*, nos. 5103, 5354. I owe this reference to Dr. Lawlor. Cotton does not give Poell's name in the list of the Deans; but he seems to have resigned in 1589, when Harpoll succeeded.