

Colonel Thomas Blood.

THIS striking figure has attracted three biographers this century, yet no one of them brings out his connection with Baptists. A scrutiny of the State Papers enables this to be done, and supplies a picture of a man whose career is quite coherent, by no means showing him a specially Bad Man.

His father was apparently of English descent, but settled ten miles out of Dublin at Dunboyne, within the Pale. He may have been one of the many colonists introduced by James I.; for he was a Presbyterian. He was an iron-worker. At Dunboyne, Thomas was born in 1628. If he be considered an Anglo-Irishman, many things in his career seem natural enough, which would not be natural for an Englishman.

For twenty years, Thomas made no mark. But his family would share the troubles of the colonists. The Lord of Dunboyne was one of the first to rebel when the strong hand of Wentworth was removed; before 1641 was out, he was in arms against the English government. Carlyle has depicted how, in Ireland there were soon five parties in arms, each fighting for its own shibboleth: we may probably rank the Bloods among the "Presbyterians, strong for king and covenant." Their little property was evidently laid waste.

There is no evidence when Thomas enlisted in any army: no early muster-roll has been discovered with his name. But it seems plausible to think he was in the forces under Lambert in south Lancashire, which assembled to check the Scottish invasion of 1648, and that then he met Mary Holcroft, of Holcroft Hall, four miles from Winwick, which a smart skirmish made famous; for two years later he married her in the parish church of Culcheth. Certainly he was in the army which annihilated the Scots in the three-days fight from Preston to Warrington.

He naturally went with the Parliamentary army, in 1649, to Ireland, first to Dublin. It has been said that he distinguished himself, and won rapid promotion from lieutenant to colonel; but no documents have been produced, and his name is absent from every likely place, such as Carlyle, the Clarke papers, Dunlop's Ireland under the Commonwealth. We must rest content with the fact of his marriage on 21st June, 1650, and

assume that he settled down again on his father's property at Dunboyne. Here were born children, including a Thomas and a Holcroft, destined to high rank under William of Orange.

Now Baptists were very numerous in the army that conquered Ireland, and when peace was restored, large numbers of them settled down in the land. A church was founded at Dublin, including such men as, Adjutant-General Vernon, Colonel Lawrence, Auditor-General Roberts, Major Smith. In the next few years, Blood came to know some of these. He made a mark in civil life, and became J.P.

At the Restoration, things altered. There arose a general expectation of fresh confiscations and new division of lands. It is often said that Blood's estates were now confiscated because he was a new settler; he was not a new settler, but born in Ireland; and no evidence is offered that he lost anything, though many of his friends suffered.

In 1662, the Duke of Ormande, newly thus created, came over to re-assume the lord-lieutenancy. All power was soon wielded by staunch royalists. Without any clear warrant of law, strong measures were taken against all others; ministers were ejected, settlers were unsettled. Under these circumstances, many thought of a new trial of strength. A spy reported that many members of parliament met daily in Dublin, working out a design to subvert the government and engage the three nations in a new war. He furnished Dublin Castle from time to time with details and lists of the conspirators, till 20th May, 1663, when it was decided to surprise the Castle next day. Ormonde took immediate steps, arrested many, tried and executed some, including Blood's brother-in-law. The spy expressly said that Lieutenant Blood was not the chief of the rebels, but only an agent sent on errands. His offence was however grave enough for him to be outlawed. From this time he was a homeless man; his son Holcroft escaped at the age of twelve, and entered on an adventurous career which ought to make him the hero of a first-class novel.

In this plot all manner of people had been concerned, including English officers newly settled, and ministers. One of the latter, closely allied with Blood, was Robert Chambers, formerly Baptist minister in Kerry, who had had much to do with advising the Commonwealth government in ecclesiastical matters.

For the next few months, Blood was ubiquitous. He was concerned with Captain Paul Hobson in planning a rising in Yorkshire; he was over in Holland plotting with other refugees; he was alleged to be planning a simultaneous murder of the

king, the duke of York, the chancellor. Toward the end of the year, his father died in the Tower of London, where he had been working as a tailor. As the father's property now passed to him, and he was an outlaw in Ireland, that property was declared forfeit for treason on 4th February, 1664.

Various prisoners were induced to implicate Blood in various plots, which involve him with Askrigg in Westmorland, Liverpool, Coventry, Leominster, Ireland, the Cameronian rising, Carrickfergus and Westminster, within eighteen months. An informer named Leving then set himself to catch him, but failed both in Ireland and near his wife's home. He did manage to arrest his Baptist friend, Colonel John Mason, ex-governor of Jersey. Blood thereupon gathered a few comrades, attacked the soldiers escorting the prisoner and the spy, defeated them and rescued his friend. So, in August 1667, he was outlawed in England. He retired quietly to Kent, where he passed unrecognized as a doctor Allen for two years.

His next exploit was in December 1670, when he and others kidnapped Ormonde on his way from a banquet in the City to St. James street. He lashed the duke behind a horseman, saying he would take him to Tyburn and hang him on the gallows for the felon he was: but the duke was rescued just in time. Blood got safely away, to Lancashire one spy thought. His two high-way exploits made him even more ambitious, and on 5th May, with his eldest son and a Baptist son-in-law and his father, he all but secured the crown and the sceptre from the Jewel tower. This time however he was caught.

Instead of executing him at once as an outlaw, Charles sent for him and examined him as to his motives. He gave the simple answer that for his actual deeds, and another contemplated assassination of Charles, the cause was "the severity exercised over the consciences of the godly, in restraining the liberty of their religious assemblies." On 18th July, the elder men were released, by the end of August all four were pardoned.

More than that, Blood now had great influence at court. He got a pardon for Colonel Barrow, an associate in the Dublin Castle plot. He introduced Gladman to the king, secured a pardon for Jonathan Jennings the G.B. Elder, got Charles Holcroft picked as sheriff for Lancashire, struck out a new theory, that as Charles was Supreme Governor of the Church of England, he could issue licences for preachers and preaching halls. Not only did he take a large part in persuading Charles to issue the Declaration of Indulgence, he was active in securing licences. Then we find him playing off one Secretary of State against another, dabbling in

admiralty affairs, claiming the restitution of his wife's property, securing the reversal of his Irish outlawry. This period of great influence lasted four or five years, till the king gave his favour again to the bishops.

In the last phase, when the Popish Plot was to the fore, Tonge accused him of being a Popish agent concerned in setting London afire in 1665. And the Duke of Buckingham won a case against him for perjury in 1680. So that he died on 24th August, rather in bad odour. Such fears were still entertained of him, that it was rumoured his death was feigned; and it was needful to exhume the body and exhibit it, to remove the apprehension.

W. T. WHITLEY.

Chard.

JOSIAH THOMPSON learned in 1770 that his church was founded by captain Wallington before 1653, and met in a barn on Crim Chard lane. The church was represented in 1653 at Wells, in 1655 at Bridgwater, and entertained the Association later that year. It was visited by Jessey 1656, entertained the Association again in 1657, April. On 29th December 1663 its minister S. Wade joined with his fellow-prisoner Toby Welles in sending a letter from Ilchester jail to their churches. In 1689 W. Wilkins attended the London meeting, and was diligent till the end of the century. Then a new site was given by a clothier, George Strong or Straw. Thomas Meacham was pastor about 1715 till his death in 1725; he re-modelled the meeting at his own expense. Then came an interregnum, Hann coming from Up Ottery to administer the ordinances. We hear of Bonner Stowe, Sam Geer for four years, Augustine Crisp perhaps 1765-70 before he went to Up Ottery, Ben Pitts with twenty members, Mills. Only with Samuel Rowles from Rotherhithe, 1783-97, does the story begin to clear; he began a register of births, now at Somerset House.