

REFLECTION**All The Prominent Men Of The Realm****By Guillermo de Carndonagh**

Sept. 11, 1655 Ulster

The village was quiet now except for the song of a young woman's voice, the drone of the soldiers prayer meeting had stopped some time before. They would be here soon their closing hymn in English had a distinctive sound. She spoke only the old tongue but knew the sound, something about grace.

Before dawn the men and boys had driven the livestock into the hills above the village where the old smuggler's trails meet. Two days ago the word had come, all the Irish must leave and begin the trek to Connacht. Cromwell decreed, and all the prominent men; ministers of the new church, pamphleteers, ministers of government and the Commissioners of Ireland agreed, that all the surviving Irish and Papists must leave Ulster, Leinster and Munster.

Her voice now still, the young women stood quietly, as the soldiers marched into the village with drums beating and bugles sounding. The little cottage was bare and the hot coals secreted in damp rags under the tallow soaked thatch would take a long time to do their work. Some rags had been placed in a barrow for the old granny to sit on, daughter and the two wee boys would walk, and the new baby would be carried. A small bag of food was tied around the women's waist. What few belongings the family still had, after the weekly Saturday looting by the soldiers, were hidden under the floor of the old stone building in the hills where the villagers meet secretly with the hunted priest for Mass.

Abusing an old cripple when he would not say where the men and live stock were, the soldiers quickly stole the little that was left, and then drove the women and children, the aged and infirm out onto the road. When the soldiers were out of sight the little band stole off the road and into the hills. The smuggler's trails would be safer than the roads. Daily there were stories of young girls and women being taken and sold as slaves to merchants from the far away colonies. At nightfall from high up on the ridge they could see the light and smoke of their burning cottages.

On the long march many fell. A stone cairn for the old granny soon joined a growing line that to this day still marks the way. Too soon, the empty space in the barrow was filled with a very small make shift babies coffin. Once in Connacht, the barren rocky soil took custody of the small coffin, and then the young women, leaving her husband, daughter and twin sons to Keep the Faith.

Comment: From 1641-1652 The Irish Catholic population was reduced from 1.5 million to 600 thousand.

Prayer: Lord God do not let me forget the faith of my fore bearers and vouch safe to me the courage to Keep the Faith.