

# THE RETURN OF THE GAEL.

By Arthur Griffith.

From *Sinn Féin*, May 31, 1913. Originally published in the  
*Southern Cross*, Buenos Aires, May 2, 1913.

A little battle with Anglicisation has just been fought and won in Dublin. For generations the approach from the city to Glasnevin was via a narrow humpbacked bridge popularly known as the 'Cross Guns.' A couple of centuries ago when Glasnevin was a remote hamlet a solitary inn stood on the spot now occupied by the bridge, and its painted sign displayed two muskets crossed. From the inn the name encroached on part of the surrounding district, then retaining its Irish name of Glasmanogue. A century later, the Irish Parliament cutting a canal from Dublin to the Shannon, to link up Connacht and the Midlands with the capital, cut through Glasmanogue and past the site of the Cross Guns Inn. A bridge was built there and a name inscribed on it, but nobody heeded the name inscribed. To all Dublin, through generations, it was 'Cross Guns Bridge.'

The city has long since swallowed up Glasmanogue. Berkeley Street, Mountjoy Street, Constitution Hall, the Broadstone Railway Terminus and Phibsborough occupy its site. From Glasmanogue the city in my own time has absorbed Glasnevin. Lines of streets occupy the fields which once divided the famous cemetery and the Botanic Gardens from the metropolis. Twenty thousand new citizens of Dublin dwell where twenty years ago farmers and graziers tilled and bred stock. The narrow humpbacked bridge evoked their anger. It obstructed, delayed, and made dangerous the traffic of business. They demanded its death, and it died. A broad and level bridge replaced it this year. And Glasnevin was happy until its astonished eyes read inscribed upon it one morning the legend,

**'Westmoreland Bridge,  
Rebuilt by the Dublin Corporation, 1912.'**

Then trouble began. Each citizen asked the other—‘Who has done this thing?’ ‘Who was Westmoreland that our bridge should be named after him?’ Nobody knew. The questions were sent to the Corporation. The Corporation did not know. It had found dim letters on a stone of the old bridge. It had painfully deciphered them to spell ‘Westmoreland’ and in the innocence of its heart it had caused a brass tablet with the inscription. ‘Westmoreland’ to be reared on the new bridge. It thought it was the proper thing. An intelligent citizen pointed out that Westmoreland was the name of an English Viceroy and one of the worst of the Viceroys. Then derision fell upon the Corporation. It apologised for its ignorance. It proposed to change back the name to ‘Cross Guns,’ ‘But no,’ said the citizens, ‘let it now be changed back to the original Irish name.’

And so the Irish place-name emerges triumphant from the accretion of English Berkeleys and Mountjoys and Phipps and enjoys its own again. Surely a symbol and a prophecy of the resurgence of the Gael.

The nomenclature of the streets of the capital of Ireland is at once absurd and humiliating—absurd since it proceeds on no principle, or on no sense of fitness—humiliating since any relation it bears is not to Ireland and the Irish, but to England and the English. The intelligent foreigner arriving in Dublin and seeking in its streets evidence of the great events of Irish history and the great children Ireland has borne, will seek almost in vain—scarce one of all our ancient and illustrious kings, sages and poets is commemorated in Ireland’s capital—not one of our great medieval philosophers and saints—few of our modern leaders in nationality and art and thought. Our Ossian, our Colmcille, our Sedulius, our Johannes Scotus, or Brian, our Lorcan O’Tuathail, our Donald O’Neill, our Aodh O’Donnell, our Ristard MacGeoghegan, our Ruairi O’More, our Owen Roe, our Redmond O’Hanlon, our Luke Wadding, our Cahir O’Dogherty, our Sergeant Custume, our James Ware, our William Molyneux, our Jonathan Swift, our Toby Butler, our George Berkeley, our Richard Steele, our George Farquhar, our Nicholas French, our

Count Hamilton, our Edmund Burke, our Henry Flood, our Hussey Burgh, our John Keogh, our Kendal Bushe, our Wolfe Tone, our William Drennan, our Arthur O'Connor, our Addis Emmet, our William Aylmer, our Michael Dwyer, our Smith O'Brien, our John Mitchel, our John O'Donovan, our Thomas Moore, our Clarence Mangan, our Eugene O'Curry, our James Stephens are uncommemorated in our streets. I have jotted down the names of the men only that rise at once to my mind, but there are hundreds of others more eminent than many here mentioned, who find no record in Ireland's capital. Instead of their names, we have got the Harcourts and Granbys and Westmorelands, and three hundred other English nonentities who spent some of their useless lives in Dublin Castle running this country in England's interest and their own—and worse, we have the names of men who were unmitigated scoundrels in themselves and Egyptian taskmasters to us labelled all around us, while our Grattan, Thomas Davis, Emmet, and Oliver Goldsmith have back streets named after them, and these streets, with about half-a-dozen others, represent the whole of the national nomenclature of Dublin.

'A History of the Rascals Honoured in the Street-Names of Dublin' would be an interesting and useful book—rascals like Eustace and Cope and Capel and Ormonde give fine scope for moralising, and the brief record of their lives would make a book as fascinating as the Annals of Crime. Among such rascals Lionel Sackville, Duke of Dorset, after whom persons over whom we had no control named the chief street of Dublin Sackville Street and a main street Dorset Street in the days of Darkness, would rank highest. Perhaps the Duke of Dorset's statement in his speech against the multiplication of opportunities for getting rid of humbugs appealed to those who named Dublin's great centre after him. 'Triennial elections,' said the noble Duke, 'destroy all family interest and subject our excellent Constitution to the caprice of the multitude.'

Dorset was twice Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, in 1730 and 1750, but it was in his latter Viceroyalty that he became famous. He was a

man of small ability and little learning, but unscrupulous and polished—‘a perfect English courtier,’—as one of his contemporaries describes him. With his son, Lord George Sackville, and the infamous Primate Stone, he disputed the distinction of being the most immoral man in Ireland. His son, who was afterwards dismissed from the British Army for cowardice—a charge, however, which is open to doubt—and Stone, an English clerical adventurer of much ability, who, by the assiduous cultivation of vice, had become Archbishop of Armagh at thirty-nine, ruled in Ireland with heavy hands and galled the people by their openly-expressed contempt for them. At last they went too far—the Patriot Party, as the timid but well-meaning Whigs, whom the timid but well-meaning Anthony Malone led, opposed the claim of the British Crown to dispose of the surplus revenue of Ireland. It had opposed the claim before, but at the crack of the London whip across its face it knuckled down—and it would probably have knuckled down in Dorset’s second Viceroyalty but for Henry Boyle, the Speaker of the House. That able but little-principled man had incurred George Sackville’s displeasure, and Sackville proceeded to oust him from the Speakership. Boyle, in revenge, flung himself into the ranks of the ‘Patriots,’ rallied them against the Crown, and cast its claim to receive or control the disposal of the surplus revenue of Ireland out with contempt. Dublin, which was fervently anti-Castle and anti-English, went into a delirium of enthusiasm, and struck a medal with Boyle’s portrait. For a moment the Castle was stunned; then Dorset, Stone, and Sackville rallied, closed the doors of the Irish Parliament, dismissed Anthony Malone and every person holding Crown appointments who had voted with the Patriot Party, and seized on the surplus revenue.

These vigorous measures struck terror into the more timid ‘Patriots,’ but Boyle roused their courage, and the people enthusiastically supported them. The Earl of Kildare, Lord Edward’s father and the builder of Leinster House, threw himself full tilt against Stone, and for a period the history of Ireland is a record of the duel between these two men. Kildare demanded the recall of Dorset in a

letter to King George, in which he described Stone as ‘a greedy Churchman affecting to be a second Wolsey in the Senate.’ But for a time Stone prevailed against him, and the Primate and Dorset were the objects of execration to the people. Feeling ran so high that one night when West Digges, who was playing in ‘M’ahomet the Impostor’ in Smock Alley Theatre, delivered some lines which the audience adapted to Dorset and Stone, he was cheered to the echo and demanded to repeat them. This, Thomas Sheridan, the owner, refused to permit Digges to do, whereupon the audience rose in wrath and wrecked the Theatre. As time passed, the popular fury between Dorset and Stone increased instead of diminishing, and the British Government, alarmed for the consequences, recalled Dorset in 1775, and installed Hartington, one of his bitterest enemies in his stead. Stone was degraded and disgraced, and the able and unprincipled Boyle received a title and a pension.

Sackville Street is now O’Connell Street so far as the citizens are concerned. The Law forbade its formal change. But the Law that compelled Dublin to perpetuate in its street names the names of Ireland’s taskmasters has ceased to exist. A timid Corporation, however, has hesitated to make sweeping changes. But the little incident of ‘Westmoreland’ Bridge has shown that the citizens are alive to the degradation of their city in this matter. A few years hence the visitor to Dublin will find in its streets commemoration not of English rulers, but of Irish patriots.