

In my paper on Porcine Legends one passage in particular, probably, appeared somewhat more singular than well sustained; that was the allusion to the Hindoo name of Europe, which, according to major Wilford, was "*Varaha Dwipa*," the region of the boar. The same highly ingenious and equally ingenuous scholar, tells us (*Asiatic Researches*, vol. viii. p. 361) that the pronunciation of the word is "*Warapa*," closely resembling the word Europe. Supposing that derivation untenable, let the former section of our folk-lore be deprived of it, and let us, in obedience to classical etymologists, ascribe the origin of the word to Europa, the daughter of Agenor. In that case what is taken from the former paper must be added to the present, for the sentiment of the Phœnician princess finds an apt parallel in that of the Connaught queen, Meadhbh.

Whether all these legends tend to commemorate a once prevailing system of worship, how far the animals mentioned may have been considered sacred, are questions beyond the scope of this paper. Allusions, however, have been made tending to elicit attention to that view of the subject, and, in conclusion, may be offered the passage from the ingenuous, though not over ingenious, Geoffry Keating, in which he says, "that one of the objects of worship of the ancient Irish was a golden calf, as mentioned in the reign of Cormac Mac Art." *History of Ireland*, vol. i. p. 429.

From the neglected state in which our national muniments now exist has arisen a general impression, that to develop the former and early features of Irish Paganism would be a hopeless undertaking. But if a full collection of oral legends were obtained, and that they were collated with corresponding extracts from our manuscripts, doubtless much light would be thrown on the subject. A reference for this purpose to a manuscript in Trinity College, Dublin, entitled *Tain Bo Flio-dhaise*, would be valuable, as also to that curious work, the *Leabhar na Huidhre* (pronounced Heera), or book of the Dun Cow.

OLDEN POPULAR PASTIMES IN KILKENNY,

BY JOHN G. A. PRIM.

THE investigation of the popular sports and amusements of a country or a district, at various periods of its history, and the changes in the pastimes of the people as civilization crept slowly forward—marking so well the spirit of each generation—must be a subject of much interest to the antiquary, the historian, and even the political economist; for statesmen have, from the earliest times, recognised the necessity of in some degree providing for and superintending the recreations of the humbler classes. There is no branch, indeed, of the science of

ancient lore that has been made more entertaining or instructive than the study of the popular amusements of our ancestors, and nothing can give us a clearer illustration or more vivid idea of their manners and customs.

To the sojourner amidst the manifold resources of this wonderfully progressive nineteenth century, with its varieties of amusements, both physical and intellectual, what a miserable blank must the middle ages present, and how barbarous must appear the few means for pleasure they afforded. The intellectual world of that period closely resembled the material, and equally rude were the means for recreation of both. Within the precincts of the monastery, and in the demesne of the feudal castle, some taste and cultivation did doubtless exist, but around the cottage of the serf no garden smiled, and his physical and intellectual amusements were rude indeed; even the wealthy burgher of the walled town fared little better; for, before the invention of printing, the precious manuscript did not leave the aristocratic hall of the castle or the blazing hearth of the refectory. These were the only "lyceums" and "institutes" of the day, and from them the people were excluded; whilst, as far as intellectual cultivation was concerned, the "miracle-play," or "mystery" was the only enjoyment of the million. The religious element mixed up largely with their mental, as did the military with their physical recreations.

But, though treating of the times—

When ancient chivalry displayed
The pomp of her heroic games,

it is not the intention of this paper to trace the amusements of the tapestried castle hall, the lordly pleasure of the feudal baron, or the tranquil recesses of the scriptorium. Mr. J. P. Prendergast, in a paper on "Hawks and Hounds in Ireland,"¹ read at a late meeting of this Society, has sufficiently illustrated the pastimes of the nobles and feudal proprietors of the olden time, and by culling some interesting extracts from the Irish State Papers of the reign of Henry VIII., bearing particular reference to the Ormonde family, he has given us a curious glimpse of the field sports which the landed proprietors in the county of Kilkenny resorted to for their recreation. But the pastimes of the urban populations, at the same period, present an equally interesting subject for inquiry. Having seen the means of amusement for the indulgence of the gentry and their dependants in the neighbouring rural districts, we must be anxious to ascertain the manner in which the burghers and artizans employed those hours devoted to recreation, in towns such as Kilkenny, where they were confined to mercantile pursuits, couped up within the limits of the mural boundary which the state of the times rendered necessary for their protection, and thus could not—even if the exclusive and monopolising spirit of the aristocratic legislators would permit them, which it did

¹ See p. 144, *ante*.

not—resort to the sports of the field and enjoy the fierce pleasure produced by the chase of the wild boar, the wolf, or deer, or that more refined enjoyment, the peculiar privilege of the royal and noble, the “gentle art of falconry.” The sports of the feudal proprietors are easily traceable on the statute book of the country, through the enactments decreeing to them the exclusive right to the pursuit of game, throughout every century; of course the ancient records of the state take comparatively little notice of the peculiar recreations of the dwellers in the town or city, but fortunately another class of public documents exists, generally calculated to give interesting information on the subject—I allude to the archives of the municipal bodies of the day; and it is my present object to seek by the assistance of the records of the corporation of Kilkenny, to throw such light upon the amusements of its citizens in the olden time, as Mr. Prendergast has, from the “State Papers,” upon the sports of the aristocracy of the surrounding county.

Kilkenny having been founded and received its charter of incorporation from an English nobleman, of course its English colonists and their descendants must naturally be expected to have had recourse chiefly to such pastimes as prevailed in England. Strutt and Brand have amply described the popular sports in that country, and, therefore, we can hope to find no very novel feature in the amusements of the olden inhabitants of this city; but still the illustrations which its municipal records afford, if they be not esteemed of general importance, must at least possess considerable local interest. The two means of amusement which I find to have been most largely resorted to in Kilkenny, during the middle ages, are in striking contrast to each other, the one being rather of an intellectual nature and calculated to inculcate a devotional spirit—the other of a barbarous and brutalizing character, unredeemed by a single recommendatory feature. I refer to the religious plays, or “mysteries” as they were called, and the ferocious sport of bull-baiting. The former was unquestionably the rude nursery from which our regular drama sprung, and as such it was useful in its time; but it also led to the dissemination of scriptural knowledge, however revolting to our modern notions of treating such subjects the means may have been. Fortunately, it was also a much favoured amusement, and those unadorned dramas were listened to with greedy ears alike by the wealthy burgher, the pains-taking artificer, and the haughty knight. But the other pastime, which unfortunately long outlived the more humanizing “mysteries,” was one as well demoralizing as of unmitigated barbarism and brutality; and yet both existed together, exciting equal interest, strangely opposite as they were, through many long generations. The ferocious sport of the bull-ring was once as largely patronized in these countries as at the present day in Spain and Portugal, although it never had amongst our ancestors the poor excuse of the picturesque accessories, and morbid interest caused by the exposure of human life on the part

of the matadores, that makes bull-fighting, in the continental countries which use it, the national amusement and patronized still by nobility and royalty. Fitzstephen,¹ writing in the reign of king Henry II., mentions the baiting of bulls and bears as a pastime enjoyed, during the winter season, by the inhabitants of London, in his time; and this cruel sport continued there, countenanced by the highest classes of society for many generations, and even patronised on various public occasions by two of our female monarchs, Mary and Elizabeth, the chroniclers telling us that with such amusements "their highnesses were right well content." We may assume that bull-baiting was in use in Kilkenny from the period of the establishment of his English colony here by the earl Marshall, in the thirteenth century, and through subsequent ages it continued to be held in high repute. It was taken under the special patronage and control of the corporation from an early period, and all the arrangements connected with the pastime were confided to a sort of committee of the municipal body, which was styled "The Grand Council of Bull-ring." It must have been esteemed a particular honour to be numbered amongst those privileged persons, for I find it was recorded in the "Red Book" of the corporation, that, in the year 1591, two of the burgesses were admitted to the grand council of bull-ring by payment of a fee of twenty marks—no inconsiderable sum in those days. But there was also an important civic functionary, whose duties were not only largely connected with the sport of bull-baiting, but even the title of his office was taken from it. This official, who was the chief constable of the town, and possessed very large powers, before the erection of Kilkenny into a city by the great charter of James I., was styled "the Lord of Bull-ring," the chief magistrate of the town being then designated "the Sovereign." But when, in the year 1609, James' charter made Kilkenny a city, and raised the chief magistrate to the dignity of a mayor, the municipal body also considered it but proper and decorous to change the designation of his leading official to "Mayor of Bull-ring," by which style and title he continued to be known till the end of that century. Dr. Ledwich, in his "Essay towards the History and Antiquities of Irishtown and Kilkenny," states that the functions of lord of bull-ring were usually "committed to the care of some reputable bachelor, who was able to contribute to the expenses attendant on it [the sport of bull baiting], the Guild supplied the rest. A certain sum was allowed for his banquet, and he had his sheriffs; his election was annual by the citizens, and during his office he was guardian of the bachelors, and on their marriage was entertained by them, so that he passed his time in festivity and good cheer." From an examination of the records of the corporation I have found this

¹ It is scarcely necessary that I should acknowledge my debt to Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes" as the source of the brief

historical notices of the various games and amusements throughout this paper. I do not quote the passages in detail.

statement to be incorrect. The holder of the office was not necessarily a bachelor; he had no sheriffs under his jurisdiction, although in his functions he was usually aided by the sheriffs of the city; neither was his life passed in the very pleasant manner alleged, nor his post one much coveted by the citizens. On the contrary, so onerous were the duties, that heavy fines were frequently paid to escape serving in the capacity of lord of bull-ring, and stringent rules were enforced by the municipal body for compelling those elected to the office to discharge the functions. The minutes of the meeting of the corporation, held on the Friday after St. John's, 1591, set out in the Red Book, supply full information on this subject. The preamble of one of the by-laws then passed, states that the lord of bull-ring was "from time immemorial High Constable, and, in time of necessity, had the command of the forces of the town, for defence thereof, and used to train up the youth in warlike exercises, and had the correction of adultery and fornication." It proceeds to say that it had been the custom to elect this officer from amongst such members of the merchants' guild as had not already filled the office, but several refractory members of the guild upon being elected had refused to serve, wherefore it was—

Enacted—That any person duly elected and refusing to serve himself in person, or by a sufficient person, who formerly bore that office, and at his expense, is to forfeit £20, and 40 days' imprisonment, without bail: to be levied off the land, goods, and chattels—£5 to [go to] the Sovereign, and £5 to the Merchants' Guild, and to be disfranchised. And the person in election to draw lots again, and refusing to serve, to forfeit as aforesaid; and so from time to time till the office be filled. And if any suit be commenced, the fine (except the Lord of Bull-ring's part) to be spent in defence. Lawyers of five years' standing at the Inns of Court not [to be] subject to this office. The Sovereign and Council, with the masters of the Merchants' Guild and Demi-Council, to name those that shall be put in election; and the person elected to certify in fourteen days his willingness to stand; and his not certifying to be taken as a refusal. The person chosen may provide one to serve in his place, who served the office before. Persons absent the day of election may be chosen as if present.

Immediately before the making of those rules, it is recorded that Robert Garvey consented "to serve Lord of Bull-ring for life, without wages, on banquetting day, for being admitted free." And at a meeting held on the 9th July, same year, it was—

Ordered—That all persons that bear the office of Lord of Bull-ring, and all who have borne it, shall wear their gowns at every high feast, station days, and days of common assembly, and burial of every of the Grand Council or Demi-Council, and upon their attendance on the Sovereign, on pain of 2s.

The same day another order was made, which exhibits further duties of this officer:—

Corpus Christi fair to be re-continued, and to begin on Wednesday morning before, and end on Saturday night following; the Sovereign and Barons of the fair to appoint where [. . .] sold, where the booth for selling drink shall be erected, and where each and every sort of merchandize shall be sold. The Sovereign to write to the principal corporations of the kingdom, and to the chief officers of the same [informing them] that the fair is re-continued, and that the constable, commonly called the Lord of Bull-ring, shall watch the fair by night with a sufficient number of armed men.

Immediately on the passing of the charter of 1609, the title was changed to "Mayor of Bull-ring," and at a meeting of the corporation, held on the 13th of October, in that year, I find "£6 13s. 4d. a-piece granted to the Sheriffs, for their extraordinary trouble, in consideration that they served the office of Mayor of Bull-ring; and the salary of £6 13s. 4d. settled on the future Mayors of Bull-ring." As we have seen that some of the functions of this officer were discharged by night, we can understand the object of the following order, made on the same day:—"The Mayor to keep 2 torches and 2 links, the Sheriffs 1 torch and 1 link; and the Mayor of Bull-ring to provide and keep 2 torches and 2 links, to be used at such times during the Christmas holidays as heretofore accustomed." We have also on the same day, this order with reference to the bull-baiting itself:—

The Butchers of the city always to provide sufficient bulls for the bull-baiting, to be used St. John's day, in the Christmas holidays; and the Mayor of the Bull-ring to provide ropes and ties; and the butchers that do not contribute, to be prohibited following the trade.

On the 9th of February, 1609, it was determined "that every young man of the Merchants' Guild shall give his attendance on the Mayor of Bull-ring, as well by night as by day," and that official was intrusted with the power of committing all such persons as he might see fit, on his own responsibility. On the same occasion the corporation arranged as to "what fees the Mayor of Bull-ring shall have from every couple married;" but, unfortunately, this schedule of fees is not preserved for us; however, it was ordered, by a most incongruous association, that he should have to his own use "all fines for frays, bloodshed, battery, and Hue-and-Cry;" and on the 31st January, 1611, in re-arranging the appropriation of the various fines which it was in the power of the chief magistrate to inflict, there was a special clause entered "saving to the High Constable, or Mayor of Bull-ring, the fines that fall by night." On the 25th April, 1623, we have the following entry—"On a petition of Peter Archer, Mayor of Bull-ring, complaining of the bad attendance of the Merchants' guild last Easter Monday, in mustering with him. Ordered—that the statutes of the corporation be executed upon them if they don't show sufficient cause." In 1630, David Brehon, then Mayor of Bull-ring, was cited to the Consistorial Court, although for what misdeed we are not informed; but the corporation resolved to pay his costs in the suit. On the 13th October, 1631, it was agreed that—

Several sums of the city money having been yearly expended in mending the city drums and the market barrels, and in paying extravagant wages to masons and carpenters employed in the city works; ordered—that from henceforth the Mayor of Bull-ring shall keep up and repair the city drums, and the under clerk of the market the market-barrels and measures.

The last entry which I have been able to trace in the documents of the corporation, respecting this officer, is in the "White Book," under

the date 25th October, 1687, when it was recorded that "Mr. Philip Stapleton was sworn High Constable and Mayor of Bull-ring." In the beginning of the ensuing century, bull-baiting, though still in high favour amongst the lower orders, seems to have fallen into disrepute amongst the wealthier classes of society in Kilkenny, and the municipal body ceased to patronise the barbarous pastime, so that the title of "Mayor of Bull-ring" was discontinued, and the official who previously bore that designation, was retained under the style of "High Constable" only.

But although the corporation ceased to countenance bull-baiting in the eighteenth century, we cannot suppose the change in their sentiments to have arisen from any increased refinement of feeling or rapid advance of civilization amongst them; on the contrary I find that they only relinquished this horrible sport for the enjoyment of the equally savage, though perhaps more refinedly cruel pastime afforded by the cock-pit. Cock-fighting claims the sanction of high antiquity, having been practised at an early period amongst the Greeks and Romans. It was in use amongst the citizens of London immediately after the arrival of the Normans, became a fashionable amusement in the reign of Edward III., was largely patronised by Henry VIII., who added a cock-pit to the palace of Whitehall, and was so much relished by James I. that he amused himself in seeing it twice a-week. Thus the pastime must have been known and practised in Kilkenny long before the eighteenth century, although I have found no mention of it prior to the year 1747, when, on the 31st of August, at a meeting of the corporation, it was—

Ordered, by a majority of the Board, that a cock-pit be built, and that the sum of £20 be given by this city for building the same, provided a convenient place be got for building it upon the city ground, and under such further restrictions as shall seem proper to this Board. That the present Mayor [Ambrose Evans], the Mayor-elect [Joseph Evans], and George Forster be appointed overseers of the same or any two of them.

And it is evident that no time was lost in carrying out this resolution, for on the 20th January following it was ordered—"that the Mayor do pay Mr. George Forster £20 for building a cock-pit, pursuant to former order." This cock-pit was erected in Mary's-lane near St. Mary's Church—strange association!—indeed, according to an original affidavit of the year 1816, which casually came into my possession, it was even built in the church-yard.¹ As illustrating this curious fact, I may be permitted here to give a copy of the document, otherwise in itself of little importance. In consequence of recording the names of the gentlemen who acted as judges, it shows

¹ It would appear from the occasional notices of the "sport" placed on record in *Finn's Leinster Journal*, a newspaper published in Kilkenny at the time, that there was also a cock-pit in John-street somewhat later in the last century. The gentry

of the district, it would seem, were in the habit of challenging those of the adjoining counties to encounters by their feathered representatives, and thus frequent "matches" came off, upon which the credit and celebrity of the respective counties were deemed

the degree of respectable patronage which the barbarous pastime found even within the present century:—

County of the City } By one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for said City.
of Kilkenny, to wit. } This day came before me Patrick Magrath, of Maudlin-street, in
said City, Brogue-maker, and made oath upon the Holy Evangelists.
Deponent saith that the first match of cocks fought in the Cock Pit, St. Mary's Church-
yard, on the 27th February instant, was justly and fairly won by Deponent and his party;
and that this affidavit is made at the desire of the Judges appointed, William Colclough,
Esq., and Mr. Morgan Mara; all which Deponent swears to be true,

Sworn before me this 28th day }
of February, 1816, }
WM. KINGSMILL, D. Mayor. }

PATT. MAGRATH.

But although bull-baiting, in order to make way for cock-fighting, was excluded from the category of polite recreations in Kilkenny in the beginning of the eighteenth century; it still remained a much affected pastime with the lower classes, the butchers, however, keeping the direction and arrangement of the sport amongst themselves, as they supplied the animal whose torture was to amuse the mob. In this way it survived to the present generation, a bull being baited regularly every Michaelmas Day, on the occasion of the swearing of the new mayor into office, and some mayors even contributing money towards increasing the festivity, in order to make themselves popular with the butchers' fraternity—always considered a very important ally on occasions of political excitement. The original bull-ring was in the neighbourhood of St. Francis' Abbey, where the locality is still termed "The Ring;" but the modern bull-baiting always took place in St. James' Green, and the last time the savage spectacle was there witnessed was so late as the 29th September, 1837.

I have already remarked that when bull-beating was most largely and generally patronized by the inhabitants of Kilkenny of all classes and conditions, the performance of the "mystery," or religious play, excited equal pleasure in the minds of our forefathers. These religious plays originated in the wish of the clergy to substitute for the profane games and dialogues, with which the jongleurs amused the people, means of entertainment which would, at the same time, inculcate a moral lesson and convey instruction upon ecclesiastical and scriptural history in a forcible manner to the minds of the vulgar. Originally performed in the churches and by members

to depend. The following extract from *Finn's Leinster Journal* of Saturday, April 30th, 1768, will serve to convey an idea of the manner in which these cruel contests were reported for the public information:—

"Monday last the great Stag Match between the Gentlemen of the County of Kilkenny and Queen's County, began at the Cockpit in John-street, and was won by the Gentlemen of the County of Kilkenny; the main consisted of twenty battles, five

of which were fought each day, and ended as follows:—

County Kilkenny.	Queen's County.
Monday . . . 2	Monday . . . 3
Tuesday . . . 2	Tuesday . . . 3
Wednesday . . 4	Wednesday . . 1
Thursday . . . 3	Thursday . . . 2
Total 11	Total 9

"Feeders.—Maher, for Kilkenny; Johnson, for Queen's County."

of religious communities, they began to be played in the open air, on stages erected for the purpose, about the thirteenth century, and soon the characters were sustained by the young men of the various trades in the towns. "Mysteries" were, no doubt, performed in Kilkenny from a very early period, but none of the particular subjects chosen for the pieces are recorded till the reign of Edward VI., when on the 20th August, 1552, two of these compositions from the pen of John Bale, then Bishop of Ossory, were acted here, of which not only the titles, but the very plays themselves have come down to us. Bale himself, in one of his curious tracts, mentions the circumstance in these words—"The yonge men, in the forenoon, played a tragedye of God's promyses in the olde law, at the Market Cross, with organe plainges and songes very aptly. In the afternoone agayne they played a comedie of Sanct Johan Baptistes preachings of Christe's baptisyng, and of his temptacion in the wilderness." The first of these mysteries, which is divided into seven acts, is published in the first volume of Dodsley's Old Plays, where it is entitled "A Tragedye or Enterlude of God's Promises," and its object is stated to be to manifest "the chefe promyses of God unto man by all ages in the old lawe, from the fall of Adam to the incarnacyon of the Lorde Jesus Christ." The second is printed amongst the tracts in the *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. i.; it is truly, as its title sets out, "A Brief Comedy or Enterlude of Johan Baptystes preachynge," consisting of but one act. The *dramatis personæ*—or, as they are here termed, "interlocutors"—brought before the public in these old dramas, seem extremely strange to our modern tastes, and however unexceptionable the teaching put into the mouths of the actors, the mind naturally shrinks from the idea of personifying upon the stage such characters as "Pater Cælestis," "Jesus Christus," "Joannes Baptista," and so on through all the saints and prophets, together with publicans, pharisees, and saducees, &c. The bishop himself appeared on the stage with "the young men" who were the performers, and with his own lips spoke an opening and closing address, corresponding with our prologue and epilogue. On the 20th April, 1610, the corporation of Kilkenny resolved "That the mayor and aldermen, with advice of the sheriffs and such of the second council as they shall cull shall order the celebration of Corpus Christi Day in decent and solemne manner as usual, and shall employ carpenters to make rails for keeping out horses and the mob, and for placing strangers at the place where the interlude shall be plaid." Seasons of festival, such as Christmas and Easter, were usually selected for the performance of mysteries, though in various towns different times were appointed for the exhibition. Chaucer in his "Canturbury Tales," speaks of the "miracle plays" as being exhibited during the season of Lent; the Chester mysteries were performed in that town at Whitsun-tide; those of Coventry, as was the custom in Kilkenny, at Corpus Christi. According to the "Red Book of Kilkenny," on the 23rd July, 1610,

the corporation determined to allow "a salary of 20s. for keeping the apparel used on Corpus Christi day station, and the apparel of the morries and players of the Resurrection." The "morries" were probably the morris-dancers. A fragment of a play styled the "Resurrection," written in the thirteenth century, is one of the most ancient of the French mysteries, preserved to the present day. Under the date 13th January, 1631, there was an entry in the "Red Book" of "£3 13s. 4d. per annum, granted to William Consey for teaching to write and read, and instructing the children of the natives for the play on Corpus Christi day;" and we have evidence that the locality chosen for the erection of the stage on these occasions was still the same as in the time of Bishop Bale, for on the 13th April, 1632, the town clerk made this memorandum—"The north side of the market cross granted to two persons for shops during the fair time of Corpus Christi, in regard their shops are stopt up by the stations and play of Corpus Christi day."

However ill agreeing with our modern notions may be the idea of seeing sacred subjects thus treated, we can easily understand that the custom was not without its usefulness in the olden time, not only for the opportunity it presented of drawing away the people from evil modes of recreation and of inculcating good advice on moral subjects, but for its satisfying the consciences of both writer, actor, and spectator, that the time devoted to the production and witnessing of these spectacles, was well spent. Why the corporation of Kilkenny should so largely patronise them is obvious enough, for as being a great attraction in themselves, they helped to draw a larger attendance of persons to the Corpus Christi fair, and thus increased the trade of the town. Civic bodies in other towns, both in Ireland and England, seem to have viewed the matter in this light, for Dugdale, in his "Antiquities of Warwickshire," printed in 1656, speaking of the Coventry mysteries, observes, "I have been told by some old people, who in their younger years were eye-witnesses of these pageants so acted, that the yearly confluence of people to see that show was extraordinary great, and yielded no small advantage to this city." The mysteries continued to be performed in Kilkenny till the year 1650, when they were discountenanced and put down as offensive to the strict principles of the Cromwellian adventurers who then settled in the city and became paramount in the corporation.¹

¹ These "mysteries" are still performed amongst the primitive people of Lower Brittany. Mr. Trollope, in his "Summer in Brittany" (vol. ii. pp. 1-14), gives a highly interesting account of the performance, at which he was present, of a dramatic piece, termed "The Life and Death of St. Helen," and which might stand for a description of any of those scenes that were witnessed at the Market Cross of

Kilkenny three centuries since. Even in America "religious plays" would appear to be acted up to the present day. Mr. Crozier, bandmaster of the 81st regiment, who was present at the meeting of the Kilkenny Archæological Society when this paper was read, stated that, having been in New York in the year 1847, he there saw at one of the minor theatres, a performance of this kind, entitled "The Birth of Moses."

At what time cards (which, whether they had their origin in France, Spain, or Germany, were not known on the Continent till the fourteenth century, or in England till the fifteenth) and dice (which we know were used by the ancients for the purposes of gambling) were introduced in Kilkenny, I have no means of ascertaining, but the first mention I find of them in the corporation records is in the beginning of the seventeenth century. On the 9th February, 1609, a bye-law was made "That no person do play at cards or dice with any freeman's son, or hired servant, on pain of 6s. 8d.; and the person in whose house they shall play to forfeit 6s. 8d." The object of this enactment was to prevent masters from suffering either from the loss of time on the part of their servants and apprentices, or from the latter being tempted to purloin the property placed in their care, to enable them to indulge their gambling propensities; and it is in some degree only the echo of the statute of the 11th Henry VIII., c. 2, prohibiting apprentices from using cards except in the Christmas holidays, and then only in their masters' houses; and forbidding any householder to permit card-playing on his premises at any other season, under a penalty of 6s. 8d. for every offence. But on the same 9th of February, 1609, the corporation of Kilkenny also made another bye-law on this subject, having reference to the community generally. It was enacted that "none of the inhabitants do play at cards, dice, or any unlawful game for more than 8d. at a time (shooting and tennis excepted), on pain of 6s. 8d. on the winner"—the loser it appears was considered sufficiently punished by his ill-luck at the game.

With respect to the amusements here excluded from the category of "unlawful games"—shooting and tennis—by the former the practice of archery is evidently meant to be implied. A poem written by Robert Shotterell in the reign of Charles II., in praise of archery, has the following stanza:—

Forsake your lov'd Olympian games awhile,
With which the tedious minutes you beguile—
Wave quoits and nine-pins, those bear-garden sports,
And follow shooting, often used in courts.

Again, amongst the Percy Reliques:—

The butts are set, the shootings made,
And there will be great royalty,
And I am sworn into my bille,
Thither to bring my Lord Percy.

The place in which the butts, or targets, for the practice of archery, were usually set up in Kilkenny, is still known as "the Butts' green," although the inhabitants of that populous locality have very little notion of the origin of the appellation.¹ On the statute-book

¹ There is a place in the town of Warwick still called "The Butts," no doubt from the same circumstance as gives name to the locality in Kilkenny.

of the realm there are many ordinances for enforcing practice with the bow and arrows in Ireland. In the reign of Henry VIII., as would appear from the State Papers, the Government was apprehensive of the decline of archery, and thus in the year 1537, we have the report of a commission recommending to the Lord Deputy, St. Leger, "Item, bycause the strengyth of this countrey is much decayed in defaulte of archers, it is therfor mete some provysion shulde be made that 3 or 400 wyche bowes, of all sortes, be brought hyther, and solde emonges the power comyns, with commaundymnt that buttes be made in every paryshe, and none other game usid but shooteing." And also the Chief Justice, Luttrell, in the same year, suggests to the Deputy "to have certain bowyers and fletchers sende hyther [into Ireland] to make childrens bowes and shaftes, and the chylidren, after scole, to use shoteing one owre or two every daye. And also to have much bowys sent hyther at the Kinges charges to thentent to cause men and chylidren to be archers, and bothe to be caused to use shewteing on hollydayes, and the counstable, with the over sight of the justices of the peace, to see this occupied and used."

The corporation of Kilkenny no doubt classed tennis with archery as being a manly sport. It appears from Roque's map of the town that the tennis court was situate in St. James'-street, in the premises at present in the occupation of the Messrs. Reade, as a bacon yard. The game is said to have originated in France, and was known in England certainly in the reign of Henry VII., as the accounts of that king's losses at the play are preserved amongst the public records. Henry VIII. built a tennis court at his palace of Whitehall, and James I. recommended the game to his son Charles, as an exercise becoming a prince; but we are led to believe that till the reign of Charles II., tennis did not become a game of general use amongst the common people, and it is, therefore, curious to find it noticed amongst the ordinary amusements of the burghers of Kilkenny, in the reign of James I.; however, it was probably brought over from the English court by some of the Ormonde family, whose example the Kilkenny folk would be anxious to follow. Another game, that of bowls (which at the present day, I believe, is no where practised in Ireland, although one of the most popular pastimes in England, where almost every village ale-house is provided with the adjunct of a bowling-green), appears to have for a time occupied the attention of the Kilkenny people, it having been patronised by the second duke of Ormonde. The old maps of the city, beside a bowling-green in the Castle grounds, also mark one in the neighbourhood of Bishop's-hill, both of which have long since disappeared. That voluminous writer, John Dunton, having taken a trip to Kilkenny in the year 1698, has left us an interesting description of the Castle as it was then arranged, and having noticed the picture-gallery, he says—"I next went to see the Bowling-green adjoining this Princely Seat. It is an exact square, and fine enough

for a Duke to bowl on; nay, Church and State were here at Play— for when the Doctor and I came to the Green, the Duke was then flinging the first bowl; next trowled the Bishop of —; Col. R —; with about four inferior clergy.”¹

The sabbath was the chief day for the indulgence of popular pastimes down to the middle of the seventeenth century, when a stricter discipline was introduced into the government of Kilkenny by the passing of municipal offices into the hands of the settlers whom Cromwell left there. Under the date 26th December, 1656, the following resolution of the corporation is set out in the “White Book :”

It is further ordered that ye Sar'ts [sergeants] shall every sabath day walk aboutt ye towne, morning and evening, during ye time of service, to find outt those whoe walke in ye streets, and by drinking or otherwise playing att dice or cards prophane and brake ye sayd sabath day, and call ye constables of each warde to their assistance, and if they finde any person soe offending, to carry them to prison, and there do continue till discharged, and to bringe ye house keeper to prison also.

It would appear, too, that in the beginning of the following century the dissolute characters of the city, like Hogarth's idle apprentice and his associates, used to assemble to gamble on the tombstones in the public cemeteries, which were not then inclosed and fenced from intrusion, as at present. On the 11th of February, 1717, the corporation made the following bye-law :—

Whereas, several idle and disorderly p'sons have of late years, and still continue to assemble themselves in the church-yards of this City, there to exercise themselves in the unlawfull sports, prophaneing the name of God by their frequent cursing and swearing, and abusing their respective parents and masters, by neglecting their duties to them—for remedy whereof, we the Mayor and Citizens doo order and enact, that for the future such beadles or other officers belonging to the Mayor of this City, and not then immediately attending the said Mayor, together with the constables of St. Mary's Parish, and John's Parish, do, from time to time, visit the said church yards, taking to their assistance some of their neighbours, apprehend all or some of the p'sons, playing or throwing att cocks as aforesaid, and them bring before the Mayor of this City to be punished according to law; and if the said Beadles and other officers and constables, for the time being, shall neglect or refuse to doo their duty herein, that such idle and disorderly persons shall meet and continue their evil practices aforesaid, that then, on complaint of the said Mayor or other magistrate to this board, the said beadle or beadles, or other officer soe neglecting or refusing, shall, for the first offence, forfeit 10s. sterling, to be stopped out of his salary or wages, and for the second offence be discharged from his service of beadle or other office which he beareth in this City; and such constable indited for his said neglect or refusale at the Sessions then next following; and that the said beadles, constables, and other officers, may be without excuse, it is hereby ordered that a copy of this by-law be immediately fixed on the Tholsell and gates of this City.

I do not find any notice, in the records of the corporation, of May, Midsummer, or Christmas games in Kilkenny in the olden time, al-

¹ Dunton's "Dublin Scuffle," p. 53. The author of a tour in Ireland, in letters purporting to be written by "Two English Gentlemen," and the second edition of which was published in 1748, in describing the ruinous condition into which Kilkenny Castle had fallen after the flight of the second Duke of Ormonde to France, ob-

serves :—"The Bowling-Green is now common for any Gentleman that pays for his Pleasure: it is generally the Rendezvous of both Sexes for an Evening's Walk; and I will assure your Lordship, I have seen the *Beaumonde* here make a very handsome Figure," p. 180. There are now no traces whatsoever of the Castle bowling-green.

though the Christmas waits, still called here, must be a relic of the latter; and we have still also faint remains of the two former in the May-bush boys¹ and the St. John's day bonfires. Neither is there any reference to athletic exercises, such as hurling² or wrestling, nor to horse-racing and such like amusements, which must have been in use. It would seem, however, that in the last century, the young women of the town, like the damsels of the days of Fionn M'Cumhail, according to the legend, were in the habit of running on foot for a prize, and that this kind of sport was held out as an inducement to strangers, as were the "mysteries" of previous centuries, to visit Kil-

¹ In the last century, the May observances of the lower orders in Kilkenny, although not interfered with by the regulations of the corporation, appear to have been regarded by the citizens in the light of a public nuisance, if we may rely on the following curious letter, published in *Finn's Leinster Journal*, of the 4th May, 1768:—

"To the Printer of the Leinster Journal.

"SIR—Though the following piece of advice may appear something like—*After Death the Doctor*—it may, however (like a remedy taken for the ague when the fit is over), contribute in some measure to prevent the next periodical fit of the mob of this town.

"For many years past the peace of this city has been disturbed every May-eve, by a vast multitude of audacious fellows, who assemble together to collect *May-balls* among the new-married folks. They sally out with Herculean clubs in their hands, and as those unmeaning *May-balls* are seldom or never given without a piece of *drink-money* to boot, such bloody battles ensue in different quarters of the town, such confusion and uproar, as would induce a passing stranger to believe that a furious band of wild Indians had broken in upon us; that Magistracy was asleep, or that it had lost all power and influence over the subject. The mischief that follows from this barbarous and unheeded custom is more *feelingly* understood than can be expressed. Not to mention the fractures, contusions, &c., which are well known to happen on such occasions, and by which many of those miscreants are disabled for a considerable time from working for themselves, and for the support of those who entirely depend upon their sound legs and arms, many Gentlemen's gardens are wantonly robbed of all their beauties, the cultivation of which cost the owner a vast deal of trouble and expense; the hedges

and fences, in the outlets of our City, are stript of full-grown hawthorns, whose late blooming pride and fragranciness is now miserably dying away on dunghills before cabin doors, by way of *May-bushes*, no longer, alas! to afford a nuptial bed to the new-married linnet and his mate, but fastened in the ground for the vilest purposes—To hang filthy clouts upon.

"And shall Magistracy stand by, looking on such mischievous abuses like an unconcerned spectator?—No—that same justice and humanity, which has already redressed so many grievances in this City, will certainly prescribe the following remedy, to be used before the mob's fit returns again.

"RECIPE—'Twenty-four drams or hours imprisonment; as many blisters as can be placed upon the scapulars; their names recorded with infamy on the Grand-jury's list;' for all those club-bearers, and for all those hedge-robbers, if any of them can be discovered and can be convicted at the next Quarter Sessions; if not, let such public and previous warnings be given for the time to come, by the inferior officers of the City, as may deter those wicked bullies, and those wild boars who have trampled upon, and ravished all the sweets of our little *Edens*, as well as all givers of *May-balls*, from ever doing the like again. I am, Sir, *not a sufferer*, but a hearty well-wisher of the City of Kilkenny, and your constant reader,

"FLORUS."

² It would appear from the file of *Finn's Leinster Journal*, for the year 1768, that at that period hurling was quite an aristocratic amusement in the rural districts, and there are frequent challenges recorded, between the gentlemen of Kilkenny, Tipperary, and the Queen's County, to hurling matches, which were held on the fair-green of Urlingford, the commons of Gowran, and the green of Gurteen, near Durrow.

kenny on the occasion of fairs being held in it. I am indebted to our excellent town clerk, Patrick Watters, Esq., for the reference to this pastime, which had escaped my researches. It appears that on the 10th June, 1703, John Blunden being then mayor, the corporation came to the following resolution:—

Ordered, that the bell-man do every market-day give public notice, that there will be a fair held within the walls of this city on the feast day of the nativity of St. John the Baptist, and on the feast of St. Kennys next, and all persons to be custom free; and that the clerk do post up papers on the gates accordingly; and that two pieces of plate of 20s. value each be prepared by Mr. Mayor, at the charge of this City, to be runn for by four maids, as the Mayor shall appoint.

And on the 22nd August, 1713, it was—

Ordered, that the Town Clerk do post up that the fair held on St. Canice's day, being the 11th October next, be custom free to all buyers and sellers for seven years then to come; and that a plate of 23s. value, yearly, be run for by five young women to be approved of by the Mayor; and that Mr. Receiver do have it advertised in the *Dublin Gazette*,¹ at the City charge.

It will be seen that all the popular pastimes of the practice of which in Kilkenny, in the olden time, the municipal records afford us positive evidence, are almost exclusively of Norman or Anglo-Saxon derivation; but there is one bye-law which may be taken as affording a clue to the use of games which were of purely Celtic origin. On the 25th June, 1638, this order was made—"No Mayor to go to any wake to eat or drink, on pain of £10." From this I think it is reasonable to suppose that the wake orgies—those remnants of Pagan rites, all traces of which now, at length, in the nineteenth century, have been, I believe, happily obliterated amongst the usages of our peasantry, by the determined discouragement and denunciation of the Roman Catholic clergy²—may have been indulged in by the citizens of Kilkenny two hundred years since.

¹ Having searched the file of the *Dublin Gazette*, for the year 1713, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, I find that the advertisement, ordered as above, was never inserted.

² The public, generally, are under the impression that the pastors of the peasantry have exerted themselves to put down wakes, merely from the unseemliness of the indulgence of mirth and games, however innocent in their character, in the chamber, or the house of death. I so thought myself until recently, when I was undeceived by Mr. Hackett, of Middleton, a gentleman whose research on the subject of existing traces of Paganism in Ireland, is well known to archæologists. Subsequent inquiries amongst those who are likely to be best informed as to popular customs, from mixing in the games and observances of the peasantry in early youth, and who have, therefore, had ocular

demonstration of the facts to which they testified, have fully corroborated Mr. Hackett's statement as to the gross obscenity of the wake orgies, and his speculations as to their Heathen origin. Whilst we must rejoice that customs so revolting to all notions of delicacy and civilization, and so largely calculated to demoralize our people, have been put down, and I trust eradicated, it is yet to be regretted that some record is not likely to be preserved of the main features of observances so curious, and calculated to be so interesting to archæological investigators, as being obviously Pagan rites (however diluted and modified in the lapse of ages), coming down to our own day in the practice of the peasantry of at least three of the provinces of Ireland; but so marked are they in every part by the all-pervading licentiousness of Paganism, that to spare the feelings of the modest reader,

Such, and other means of recreation, as simple or as barbarous, were the resources of our ancestors; and fed and surfeited as the present generation has been by the ever-teeming harvests of exciting fiction and intellectual amusement—the lecture, the theatre, the opera, the concert—with every taste gratified and every leisure moment filled up, it seems scarcely possible to conceive a state of existence when the same mental ailment was not forthcoming, and when what

if written at all, they should be confided to the guardianship of a dead language. In this place I can but refer to their nature in the most general terms. These wake games were never performed in the houses of persons who felt really afflicted by the bereavement which they might be supposed to have endured in the demise of a member of their family. They were reserved for the deaths of old people who had survived the ordinary span of life, or young children who could not be looked upon as an irreparable loss. They were placed under the conduct of some peasant of the district who excelled in rustic wit and humour, and this person, under the title of "Borekeen," may be termed the hierophant of the observances, whose orders were carried into force by subordinate officers, all arrayed in fantastic habiliments. The "game" usually first performed was termed "Bout," and was joined in by men and women, who all acted a very obscene part which cannot be described. The next scene generally was termed "Making the Ship," with its several parts of "laying the keel," forming the "stem and stern," and erecting "the mast," the latter of which was done by a female using a gesture and expression, proving beyond doubt that it was a relic of Pagan rites. The "Bull and the Cow" was another game strongly indicative of a Pagan origin, from circumstances too indelicate to be particularised. The game called "Hold the Light," in which a man is blindfolded and fogged, has been looked upon as a profane travesty of the passion of our Lord; and religion might also be considered as brought into contempt by another of the series, in which a person caricaturing a priest, and wearing a rosary, composed of small potatoes strung together, enters into conflict with the "Borekeen," and is put down and expelled from the room by direction of the latter. If the former games be deemed remnants of Pagan rites and of ante-Christian origin, these latter may be looked upon as anti-Christian, and devised with a view of making religion ridiculous, at a time when the masses had

a lingering predilection for Paganism. "Turning the Spit" and "Selling the Pig" are the names of two other of those games; in that called "Drawing the Ship out of the Mud" the men engaged actually presented themselves before the rest of the assembly, females as well as males, in a state of nudity, whilst in another game the female performers attired themselves in mens' clothes and conducted themselves in a very strange manner. Brief as are these particulars, they will give sufficient idea of the obscene and demoralising tendency of the wake orgies, and show the necessity which existed for their total suppression. It is, however, right to say that the peasantry who practised them had no idea of outraging propriety or religion in their performance, holding an unquestioning faith in the old traditions that such observances were right and proper at wakes, whilst under any other circumstances they would shrink with horror from such indelicate exhibitions. Amongst those obscene practices, some of the ordinary "small plays" in which young people in every class of society indulge, were engaged in at wakes; but it is probable they were of comparatively modern introduction; of the latter, those chiefly used were "Cutchacutchoo" and "Hunt the Slipper," known amongst the peasantry by the name of "Brogue about." The "Drohedey Dance," supposed to be the ancient Morris dance, was also sometimes had recourse to at wakes. Mr. Hackett traces a similarity to our wake orgies, in the rites still used by many savage peoples—for instance, the games of the Mandan Indians commemorative of the "Big Canoe," or Ark; and he has drawn my attention to a passage in the "Annals of the Propagation of the Faith," in which a missionary priest reported that he had experienced comparatively little difficulty in converting the Feejee islanders to an acknowledgment of Christianity but he found it utterly impossible to induce the natives to omit the obscenities enacted between death and interment. This may be merely a coincidence, but it is, at least, a remarkable one.

has become for us a very necessity of our daily lives, was either utterly unknown, or was enjoyed as a luxury, rarely and with extreme difficulty to be obtained.

INAUGURATION
OF
CATHAL CROBHDHEARG O'CONOR,
KING OF CONNAUGHT.

TRANSLATED BY MR. JOHN O'DALY, WITH NOTES BY JOHN O'DONOVAN, ESQ.,
LL.D., M.R.I.A.

THE following tract, on the inauguration of Cathal Crobhdhearg (the red-handed) O'Conor, last king of Connaught, was written by Donogh Bacach (the lame), son of Tanaidhe O'Maelconaire, who was present at the ceremony, and whose privilege it was to place the royal rod in the hands of the king, when he assumed the sovereignty of Connaught. I made the copy from a manuscript written by Eoghan O'Keeffe,¹ a celebrated Munster poet and scribe in the year 1684, which is the only copy I ever met with.

Eoghan O'Keeffe, the transcriber, was born at Glenville, in the county of Cork, in the year 1656, and died, parish priest of Doneraile, in 1720. He wrote several excellent poems, on national events, in his native tongue—one of which, on the defeat of the Irish at the battle of Aughrim, where St. Ruth's jealousy of the Irish officers caused the destruction of James' last army, is in my collection, and begins thus:—

“*Án b-crobdhearg-an-ne an Gacóiríum, do ífol Gíbhíu,
'S caillleádháin an n-ácaíne do'n dhíorhó c'éadna;
Feardannar na n-Éallacón a z-círfé Fhéibílm,
Tuz fealaob me zán feardáiríeacé an beinn ríéibe.*”

“The slaughter of Heber's race on Aughrim's plain,
And the loss of the battle-field by the same,
The inheritance of the Stranger in Felim's land,
Has left me awhile, comfortless, on a mountain side.”

I have made copies of almost all his compositions from the originals, some of which are in the Hudson collection, in the Royal Irish Academy, while others have been carried to a foreign land.

To Dr. O'Donovan's kindness the reader is indebted for the valuable notes which accompany the text.

¹ For a further account of Eoghan O'Keeffe and his brother bards, see my *Poets and Poetry of Munster*, second edition, p. 38.