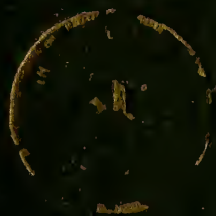


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IRISH ESSAYS:

LITERARY AND HISTORICAL.



MOST REV. JOHN HEALY, D.D., LL.D.



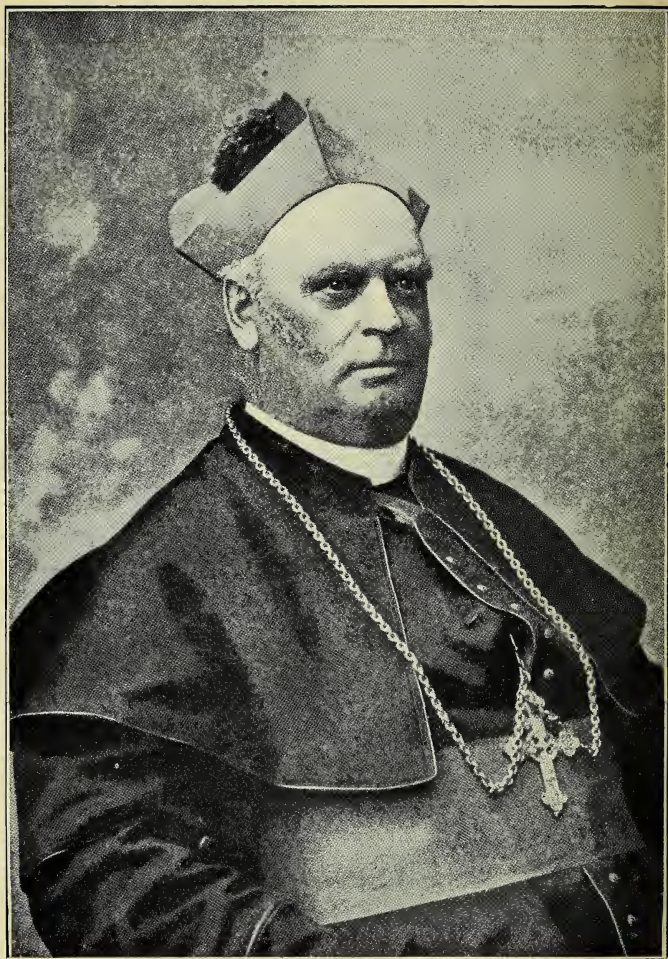
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Archbishop of Tuam

IRISH ESSAYS:
LITERARY AND HISTORICAL.

BY

MOST REV. JOHN HEALY, D.D., LL.D.,
Archbishop of Tuam.



DUBLIN:
CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY OF IRELAND,
24, UPPER O'CONNELL STREET.

1908.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following essays, written at different times and in different circumstances during the last fifteen years, touch upon some of the most interesting points in the civil and religious history of Ireland. They have already appeared separately as booklets of the Catholic Truth Society, and as such have, the author is informed, been eagerly read by thousands throughout the country. With much pleasure, therefore, has he acceded to the wish of the Society, to have them collected and published in book form, and made more attractive by the addition of many appropriate illustrations. It is his earnest hope that the little volume may, in some small way at least, help the main purpose of the Society—the diffusion of sound Catholic information, which, for the masses of our people, will have a living interest as well.

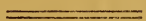
✠ JOHN HEALY, D.D.,
Archbishop of Tuam.

1st October, 1908.

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The Four Masters.*

THE name of the Four Masters will be always a dear and venerable name in Ireland ; and a sketch of their lives and labours must prove both interesting and instructive to everyone who feels the least interest in the history of his native land. That name was first given to the compilers of the *Annals of Donegal* by the celebrated John Colgan ; and it was felt to be so appropriate that it has been universally adopted by Irish scholars. It has, indeed, sunk deep into the hearts of the people, and the memory of the Masters is fondly cherished even by those who know little or nothing of their history. As O'Curry has truly said :—" It is no easy matter for an Irishman to suppress feelings of deep emotion when speaking of the Four Masters ; and especially when he considers the circumstances under which, and the objects for which, their great work was undertaken."

Just a mile to the north of the estuary of the river Erne, on a steep and nearly insulated cliff overhanging the stormy waters of the Bay of Donegal, may still be noticed by a careful observer the grey ruin of an old castle that in the distance can hardly be distinguished from the craggy rock on which it stands. That shapeless remnant of a ruin is now all that remains of Kilbarron Castle, for some three hundred years the cradle, the home, and the school of the illustrious family of the O'Clerys, from whom three of the Masters sprang. All those who can appreciate scenic beauty, and who feel something of the spiritual power that brings from out the storied past visions of vanished glories to illuminate the present, should not fail to visit Kilbarron Castle. The rock on which it stands is not only steep, but overhanging ; and the waves are for ever thundering far below. Before you is the noble Bay of Donegal, the largest and finest in Ireland, flanked as it is on three sides by grand mountain

* This paper was prepared and delivered as a Lecture to the Students of Maynooth in the *Aula Maxima*. It has been slightly altered in some respects to suit its present purpose.

ranges, exhibiting every variety of shape and colouring, but open to the west, and therefore to the prevailing winds which carry in the unbroken billows of the Atlantic to the very rocks beneath your feet. Poor D'Arcy M'Gee, influenced by the grandeur of its surroundings, and doubtless even still more by the associations of the past, has described Kilbarron Castle in a sonnet of much grace and beauty. The opening lines describe the scene :—

“ Broad, blue, and deep, the Bay of Donegal
Spreads north and south and far a-west before
The beetling cliffs sublime, and shattered wall,
Where the O'Clerys' name is heard no more.
* * * * *

Home of a hundred annalists, round thy hearths, alas !
The churlish thistles thrive, and the dull grave-yard grass.”

The “ home of a hundred annalists ” is fast falling into the sea ; but the grey ruin is still lit up with the radiance of an old romantic story that tells how the O'Clerys came to Kilbarron, and how they grew and flourished there. These O'Clerys originally belonged to the southern Hy Fiachrach, or the Hy Fiachrach Aidhne, whose ancient kingdom was conterminous with the present diocese of Kilmacduagh. But they were driven out by the Burkes in the thirteenth century, and were forced to migrate northwards to their ancient kinsmen on the banks of the river Moy, who were known as the northern Hy Fiachrach. Yet even there they were not allowed to remain in peace, for the Burkes and Barretts followed them, and once more the O'Clerys were compelled to seek new quarters. Tirconnell was still the inviolate home of Irish freedom, and its grand mountains could be seen any day from Tirawley, rising up in strength and pride beyond the bay to the north-east. Then it was that a certain Cormac O'Clery, disgusted with his oppressors by the river Moy, put his books in his wallet, and, taking his staff in his hand, set out for the inviolate home of freedom in the North. Round by Sligo he walked, lodging probably at Columcille's abbey of Drumcliff ; then, keeping between the mountains and the sea, he crossed the fords of the Erne, and came into Tirhugh, the demesne lands of the chieftains of Royal Donegal. Now, the young man, being hungry and footsore, betook himself for rest and shelter to the hospice of the great abbey Assaroe, which the children of St. Bernard had founded long before in a pleasant valley on the banks of a small stream that falls into the river Erne a little

to the seaward of Ballyshannon. Abbey Assaroe, like most of the foundations of St. Bernard's children in Ireland, was a great and wealthy monastery, while its hospice was always open with a hearty welcome to receive the poor and the stranger. But in Cormac O'Clery the good monks soon discovered that they had more than an ordinary guest; and we are told that they loved him much "for his education and good morals," and also "for his wisdom and intelligence." This is not to be wondered at, for Cormac O'Clery, besides being an Irish scholar and poet, was, we are expressly told, a learned proficient both in the "Canon and Civil Law." Now, you must not think that you have had the Irish monopoly of these things in Maynooth, and that our ancient Celtic scholars knew nothing about them. The Canon and Civil Law were taught, and well taught, far west of the Shannon fifty years before Cormac O'Clery went to Donegal. Under date of A.D. 1328, the Four Masters record the death of Maurice O'Gibellain, "chief professor of the New Law, the Old Law, and the Canon Law." The New Law was the Civil or Roman Law, then recently brought to Ireland from the schools of Bologna; the Old Law was the Brehon Law; and, of course, the Canon Law they had in one shape or another from the time of St. Patrick. This O'Gibellain is described as a truly learned sage, canon chorister of Tuam, and *officialis*, or diocesan judge, for nearly all the prelates of the West. O'Clery, therefore, would be in no want of teachers to instruct him in the Canon and Civil Law.

Now, Abbey Assaroe was only about three miles from what was then Kilbarron Castle; and a frequent visitor at the abbey was its owner at the time, Matthew O'Sgingin, the historical Ollave of O'Donnell, who had many years before come to the banks of the Erne from his native territory near Ardcarne, in the County Roscommon. He was then an old man; his only son, Giolla Brighde, the hope of his house, and the intended Ollave of Tirconnell, was slain in battle about the year 1382; and now his hearth was very lonely and his house was desolate, for save one only daughter, he had no child in his castle by the sea; above all, no son to be heir of his name and of his learning amongst the gallant chiefs of Old Tirconnell. Just then it was the old man met Cormac O'Clery at Abbey Assaroe, a gracious and learned youth, moreover, one of gentle birth, and well skilled in history, although now a friendless and homeless poor scholar. So old Matthew took young Cormac down to Kilbarron; he

showed him his castle, his lands, and his daughter—let us hope, though last, not least in his estimation—and he said : “ You can live with me here as my son-in-law on one condition, that if God blesses your marriage with a son, you shall train him up from his infancy as the intended Ollave of Tirconnell in all the learning necessary for that high office.” These terms were not hard ; O’Clery accepted them ; and from that auspicious union was derived the illustrious line of scholars that have shed so much lustre on the literary history of their native land.

The great-grandson of this Cormac O’Clery was called Diarmaid of the Three Schools, because he kept in his castle of Kilbarron “ a school of literature, a school of history, and a school of poetry.”* It is worth recording, too, and remembering, that O’Donnell nobly endowed those schools at Kilbarron ; for we are expressly told that, in addition to the lands held from his ancestors, he also granted to Diarmaid, for the maintenance of his schools, as well as for a house of general hospitality, the lands of Kildoney and Wardtown, along the winding Erne, and also the rich pastures between Bundoran and Ballyshannon—lands which, at the present day, according to John O’Donovan, would produce more than £2,000 a-year. So you see our Celtic princes were no niggard patrons of learning and of learned men. And oh ! such a glorious site for a school. How could a man be weary there—roaming through those swelling meadows a hundred feet above the sea, inhaling the bland Atlantic breezes, with the blue of the sky above, and the deeper blue of that ever-glorious sea around him ? Beyond rise the giant cliffs of Slieve League, gleaming like fairy palaces in the sunlight, and then, far away on the dim horizon’s verge, where the billows bathe the clouds, is that golden line of light which, even in the peasants’ rude imaginings, leads to the Islands of the Blessed far beyond the western waves. Many a time I have seen it in the sunshine, and, when it is far grander still, in the storm, and I can only say that, to my taste at least, Diarmaid of the Three Schools had a far better site for his college at Kilbarron than could by any possibility be found on the plains of Kildare.

That school at Kilbarron flourished during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, down to the flight of the Earls, in

* His son, Peregrine O’Clery, was the author of a *Book of Annals* which the Four Masters had in their hands, augmented, doubtless, by his successors.

A.D. 1607, when, as you know, the old proprietors were all expropriated in Donegal, as well as in five other counties of the north; and the ample domains of the O'Clerys of Kilbarron became the spoil of the stranger, and that ancient sanctuary of Celtic learning was left a desolate and dismantled ruin. Now, this brings us down to the time of the Four Masters; and we must pass from Kilbarron to Donegal Abbey. It is not a long way—as the bird flies, about seven miles—over the sand-hills, and down by the sea, that far-sounding sea, where the broken billows roar in a fashion that old Homer never heard, past the old abbey of Drumhome, where we have good grounds for believing that two Irish scholars, whose names are known throughout all Europe, spent their youth: that is, Adamnan, the biographer of St. Columba, and the blessed Marianus Scotus, the Commentator. Presently the bay narrows and becomes like a broad river, flowing between fertile and well-wooded banks, especially on the northern shore; and then you suddenly come upon the old abbey, standing close to the water's edge at the very head of the bay. Little now remains of the building—the eastern gable, with a once beautiful window, from which the mullions have been torn down; a portion of the stone-roofed store-rooms, and one or two of the cloister arches, with their broken columns—that is all that now remains of the celebrated Franciscan Abbey of Donegal. Still, it is a ruin that no Irishman should pass heedless by; not so much for what he will see, as for what he must feel when standing on that holy ground, so dear to every cultivated and thoughtful mind.

“ Many altars are in Banba,
 Many chancels hung in white,
 Many schools and many abbeys
 Glorious in our fathers' sight;
 Yet! whene'er I go a pilgrim
 Back, dear Holy Isle, to thee,
 May my filial footsteps bear me
 To that abbey by the sea—
 To that abbey, roofless, doorless,
 Shrineless, monkless, though it be.”

It was founded in the year 1474 by the first Hugh Roe O'Donnell and his pious wife, for Franciscans of the Strict Observance. Under the fostering care of the O'Donnells, whose principal castle of Donegal was close at hand, the abbey in a short time grew into a great and flourishing

house, and became the religious centre of all Tirconnell, although Abbey Assaroe still survived in almost undiminished splendour on the banks of the Erne. The despoiling edicts of Henry VIII. did not run in Tirhugh. Hence we find that when Sir Henry Sydney, the deputy, visited Donegal, in 1566, he described the abbey as "then unspoiled or unhurt," and, with a soldier's eye, he perceived that it was, "with small cost fortifiable, much accommodated, too, with the nearness of the water, and with fine groves, orchards, and gardens, which are about the same." Close at hand there was a landing-place, so that when the tide was in, foreign barques, freighted with the wines of Spain and silks of France, might land their cargoes at the convent walls, and carry away in exchange Irish hides, fleeces, flax, linen, and cloth. So we are expressly told by Father Mooney, who must have often seen the foreign ships when he was a boy, and who tells us also that in the year 1600 there were forty religious in the community, and forty suits of vestments of silk and cloth of gold in the sacristy, with sixteen chalices and two ciboriums. But in that very year the traitor Nial Garve O'Donnell seized on the abbey, in the absence of his chief, and held it for the English. By some accident, however, the magazine blew up on Saturday, the 20th of September, at early dawn, and the beautiful fabric was almost entirely destroyed. After the battle of Kinsale and the flight of the Earls it passed into Protestant hands, and was partially restored, so that Montgomery, the King's Bishop of Raphoe, proposed to make it a college for the education and perversion of the young men of the north who could not afford to go to Trinity College. This benevolent proposal was not adopted by King James; but about the beginning of the reign of King Charles, when some measure of toleration was granted to the Catholics, the building, probably then derelict, seems to have again been occupied by the Franciscans. This I infer from the express statement of Brother Michael O'Clery himself, as well as from that of the superiors of the convent, who declare that the *Annals of the Four Masters* "were begun on the 22nd day of the month of January, A.D. 1632, in their convent of Donegal;" and that "they were finished in the same convent of Donegal on the 10th day of August, A.D. 1636, the eleventh of the reign of King Charles." Colgan also distinctly asserts that they "were completed in our convent of Donegal."

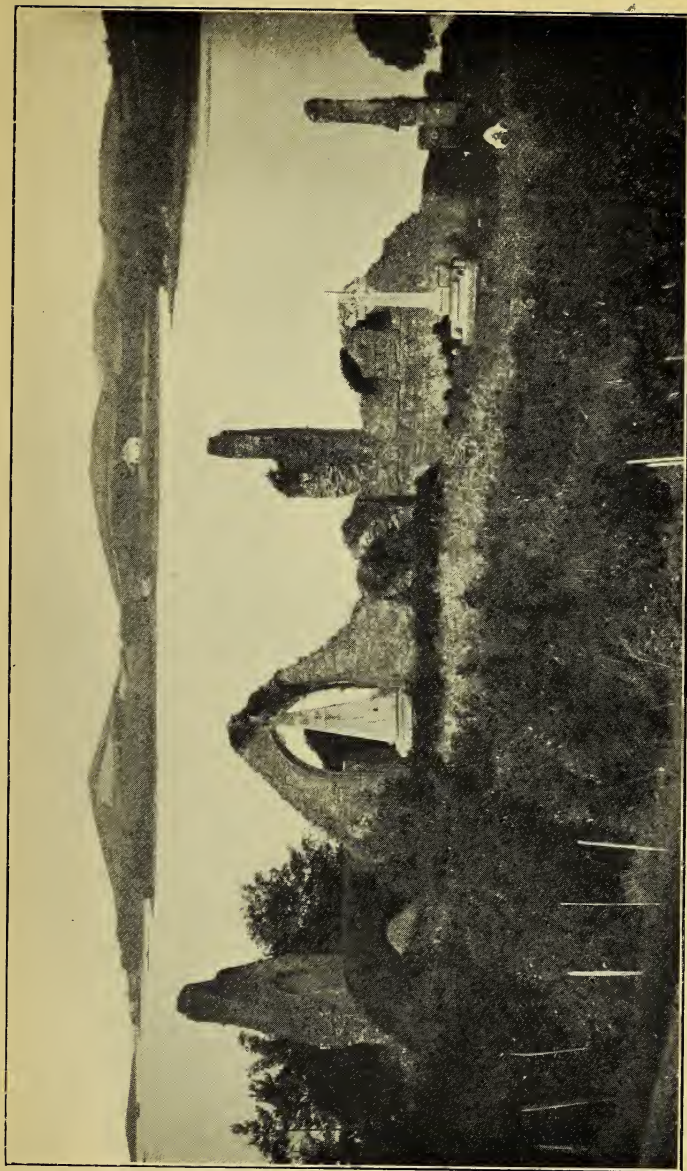


Photo by

DONEGAL ABBEY.

[*W. Lawrence, Dublin.*]



Let us now go back to that Tuesday, the 22nd January, in the year 1632. It was truly a memorable scene, the first session of the Masters in the library of the half-ruined convent of Donegal. We can realise all the details from the statements of the Four Masters themselves, and of the superiors of the Convent of Donegal. Bernardine O'Clery, a brother of Michael O'Clery, was then Guardian of the convent, and most generously undertook, with the assent of his poor community, to supply the Masters with food and attendance gratuitously during the entire period of their labours. He placed the convent and everything in it at their disposal, so far as was necessary for their comfort and convenience. The library, as Sir James Ware tells us, was well supplied with books; and there they took their places in due order according to their official rank, for the antiquarians then as now were most jealous of their rights and privileges—all the more so, perhaps, because they were slipping away from them for ever.

Brother Michael took his seat at the head of the table; around him on either side were his venerable colleagues—each with the parchment books of his family and office, which were hardly ever permitted to be taken out of the personal custody of the Ollave, lest they might be in any way injured or mutilated. On his right, we may assume, sat the two Mulconrys—Maurice and Fergus—from Ballymulconry, in the County Roscommon, historical ollaves to O'Connor, and the first authorities in all the historical schools. Maurice explains that he himself cannot remain long with them, but that Fergus would remain throughout, and have the custody of the books of Clan-Mulconry. Hence, Colgan does not reckon this Maurice as one of the Four Masters, although he gave them his assistance for one month. On the left of Brother Michael sat Peregrine O'Duigenan from Castlefore, a small village in the County of Leitrim, near Keadue. He was Ollave to the M'Dermotts and O'Rorkes, and came of the celebrated family known as the O'Duigenans of Kilronan, because they were erenaghs of that church, as well as ollaves to the chiefs of Moylurg and Conmaicne. He had before him the great family record known as the *Book of the O'Duigenans of Kilronan*. Next to him sat Peregrine O'Clery, son of a celebrated scholar, Lughaidh O'Clery, and at this time the head of the family, and the official chief of the ollaves of Tirconnell. In better days, when he was still a boy, during the glorious years of the chieftaincy of Red

Hugh, his father owned Kilbarron Castle, with all its wide domains, and sat amongst the noblest at O'Donnell's board in the Castle of Donegal. But now his castle was dismantled, and his lands were seized by Sir Henry Ffolliott and his followers. He had nothing left but his books, which he tells us in his will he valued more than everything else in the world. Like a true scholar, he would part with everything—castle, lands, and honours—sooner than part with these beloved books that he had now before him on the table. At the foot of the table sat Conary O'Clery, an excellent scholar and scribe, but still not ranking with the official ollaves present. He seems to have been chosen as secretary and attendant to the official historians, and hence is not reckoned by Colgan amongst the Four Masters properly so called.

And now that the Masters are about to begin their labours, Brother Michael explains in brief and touching words *the object and purpose of their labours*, which was to collect and arrange and illustrate* the Annals of Erin, both sacred and profane, from the very dawn of our Island's history down to their own time.

“For [he said] as you well know, my friends, evil days have come upon us and upon our country; and if this work is not done now these old books of ours that contain the history of our country—of its kings and its warriors, its saints and its scholars—may be lost to posterity, or at least may never be brought together again; and thus a great and irreparable evil would befall our native land. Now, we have here collected together the best and most copious books of Annals that we could find throughout all Ireland, which, as you are well aware, was no easy task to accomplish. We must, therefore, begin with the oldest entries in these ancient books; we must examine them carefully, one by one; we must compare them, and, if need be, correct them; then, as every entry is thus examined and approved of by us, it will be entered by you, Conary O'Clery, in those sheets of parchment, and thus preserved to latest posterity *for the glory of God and the honour of Erin.*”

“The good brothers of this convent, poor as they are themselves, have still undertaken to provide us with food and attendance. There is, alas, no O'Donnell now in Donegal to be our patron and protector; but, as you know, the noble Ferrall O'Gara has promised to give you, my friends, a recompense for your labours that will help to maintain your families at home. As for myself—a poor brother of St. Francis only needs humble fare, and the plain habit of our holy founder. So now let us set to work hard, late and early, with the blessing of God, and leave the future entirely in His hands.”

* As O'Queely puts it, “colligendo, castigando, illustrando.”

Yes, let them work for the glory of God and the honour of Erin :—

“ We can hear them in their musings,
 We can see them as we gaze,
 Four meek men around the cresset,
 With the scrolls of other days—
 Four unwearied scribes who treasure
 Every word and every line,
 Saving every ancient sentence
 As if writ by hands divine.”

Brother Michael, in his thread-bare habit, at the head of the table, and now nearly sixty years of age, was in his young days known as Teige of the Mountain, and, doubtless, shared the danger and the glory of the dauntless Red Hugh through the battle-smoke of many a desperate day. He went abroad with the exiled Earls, in 1607, or very shortly after, and subsequently became a lay-brother in the celebrated Franciscan Convent of St. Anthony in Louvain. Ward and Fleming, members of that community, were just then engaged in collecting materials for the *Lives of the Irish Saints*—those materials afterwards so well employed by Father John Colgan. Brother Michael was an accomplished Irish scholar, and belonged, moreover, to one of those learned families whose duty it was to make themselves familiar with all the old books of their country. So it was resolved to send him home to collect materials for their work. Brother Michael, of course, obeyed, and spent fifteen years in Ireland collecting those precious materials, without which Colgan could never have accomplished his own immortal work.

During these years of unremitting toil, Brother Michael had a two-fold object in view : first, to collect materials for the lives of the saints as projected by his own superiors in Louvain ; and, secondly, to gather at the same time all the books and documents that might prove to be useful in the execution of his own special project, namely, the compilation of the ancient annals of Ireland, both sacred and profane. What I especially wish to call your attention to is the long-continued and unremitting—ay, and unrequited—labour which he spent in accomplishing this double purpose. At this time no member of a religious order, and especially no friar from France or the Low Countries, could travel through Ireland without constant and imminent peril of his life, because they were regarded as agents or emissaries of the exiled Irish princes. But Brother Michael, with the most

heroic courage, faced every danger in order to accomplish his purpose. Even before the *Annals of the Four Masters* were begun, he tells us himself that he spent ten long years travelling through all parts of the country, in order to collect his materials. He visited nearly all the religious houses then in existence; he called upon nearly all the Catholic prelates in Ireland at the time, from whom he got valuable assistance and encouragement; he was a welcome and an honoured guest in the great houses of the old Catholic gentry of Ireland, both Celtic and Norman; he visited the great historical schools kept by the professional ollaves, and, being himself one of the craft, he was heartily welcomed in them all. These long journeys he accomplished, so far as we can judge, all on foot, trudging from convent to convent, and from house to house, laden with his old books and manuscripts, which we must assume he carried in his wallet. He had no money to buy books, but he got the loan of several to be afterwards copied at his leisure; many of them he had to copy on the spot, because the owners would not part with them; for in most cases, as he himself tells us, he had no other resource, seeing that he could neither buy, nor beg, nor borrow the precious treasure. "Before I came to you," he says, "O noble Ferrall O'Gara, I spent ten years in transcribing every old material I found concerning the saints of Ireland;" and also, as we know from the introductions prefixed to his work, in compiling certain preparatory treatises before engaging in his last and greatest work, the compilation of the *Annals of Erin*, both sacred and profane.

In this preparatory labour he was also careful to secure the co-operation of the greatest scholars of his own time, and especially of the official antiquarians, who were afterwards associated with him in compiling the *Annals*. How unceasingly he laboured during those years we may infer from what we know he accomplished in the two years, from 1630 to 1632, when he began the *Annals*. The first-fruit of these labours was the work now known as the *Martyrology of Donegal*, which in its present form was completed in the Convent of Donegal, by Brother Michael, in 1630. In the same year was completed the *Succession of the Kings of Erin* and the *Genealogies of the Saints*, a work which was begun at Lismoynty, in Westmeath, and completed in the Convent of Athlone in November, 1630. Next year, Brother Michael and his associates met at the Franciscan Convent of

Lisgoole, near Enniskillen, under the patronage of Brian Roe M'Guire, and with the help also of his chief chronicler, O'Luinin, they completed the well-known *Book of Conquests*. O'Clery had previously gone to Lower Ormond to submit his work to Flann M'Egan, one of the greatest scholars of the day, who gave it his most cordial commendation. From Lower Ormond, Brother Michael set out for Coolavin to secure the patronage of Ferrall O'Gara for his projected work, the *Annals of Erin*. Fortified with his promise of pecuniary assistance for the chroniclers, he went off with the good news to Ballymulconry, near Elphin, to engage the service of the two Mulconrys; from Elphin he went to Kilronan to make his final arrangements with O'Duigenan; and thence, laden with his books and manuscripts, and his heart full of hope and courage at the near prospect of successfully accomplishing his great work "for the glory of God and the honour of Erin," Brother Michael trudged home to his own dear old convent down beside the sea.

Is it not true, as the poet says, that—

“ Never unto green Tirconnell
 Came such spoil as Brother Michael
 Bore before him on his palfrey.
 By the fireside in the winter,
 By the seaside in the summer,
 When the children are around you,
 And your theme is love of country,
 Fail not then, my friends I charge you,
 To recall the truly noble
 Name and works of Brother Michael,
 Worthy chief of the Four Masters,
 Saviours of our country's Annals.”

Of the other Masters, the colleagues of Brother Michael, in nearly all his great works, little need now be said. The Mulconrys were generally recognised as at the head of their profession both in learning and authority. We can trace the family for nearly five hundred years as official ollaves to the O'Connors, the chief kings of Connaught. They resided chiefly at Ballymulconry, which is now known as Cloonahee, near Elphin; and the remains of the ancient rath where they dwelt may still be seen to attest their opulence and power. Many offshoots of the family settled in various parts of the country, and all of them were greatly distinguished for their learning. Of these, perhaps, John Mulconry, of the Co. Clare, was the most famous; for

M'Egan, of Lower Ormond, expressly declares that he had the first historical school in Ireland in his own time. Many of the family also, as might be expected, became distinguished ecclesiastics, one of them being Florence Conry, Archbishop of Tuam, the founder of the great Convent of St. Anthony of Louvain.

The O'Duigenans of Kilronan were also most eminent as historical ollaves, and from numerous references in the *Annals of Loch Ce*, of which they seem to have been the original compilers, we gather that they were for several centuries the official historians of Moylurg and Conmaicne, and as such held large possessions around Kilronan, in the north-eastern corner of the Co. Roscommon.

Such, then, were the men, "of consummate learning and approved faith," assembled under the guidance of Michael O'Clery to compile the Annals of their country for God's glory and the honour of Erin. For four years the Masters laboured with unremitting zeal in the execution of their great task, or rather for four years and a-half, from January, 1632, to August, 1636.

The work was now completed ; but it was of no authority until it was *approved*—approved by historical experts, and sanctioned by the ecclesiastical authorities. It must always be borne in mind that the historian of every tribe, or rather of every *righ*, or king, was a hereditary official, who alone was authorised to compile and preserve the annals of the tribe or clan. These officials formed amongst themselves a kind of college or corporation of a very exclusive character ; and the approbation of the leading members of this body was deemed essential to give authority to historical records of every kind, whether dealing with the tribe, or the sub-kingdom, or the entire nation. Brother Michael, therefore, by order of his superiors, deemed it necessary to submit the work of himself and his colleagues to the independent judgment and censorship of the two most distinguished members of this learned fraternity. And here again we have an example of the indefatigable zeal of the poor friar in carrying out his noble and patriotic purpose. The work was completed on the 10th of August, 1636 ; and the superiors of the Convent of Donegal formally testify to the time and place of its composition, to the names of the authors, whom they saw engaged on the work ; to the ancient books which they made use of as their chief authorities ; and also to the name of the noble patron with

whose assistance the work was brought to a successful issue.

Then Brother Michael took his staff and sandals, and, putting his precious manuscript in his bag, set out to submit his work to the judgment of Flann M'Egan, who then dwelt at a place called Ballymacegan, which is now known as Redwood Castle, in the Barony of Lower Ormond, County Tipperary, where he had studied in his youth. M'Egan examined the work, and formally testifies, under his hand, that of all the books of history which he ever saw, even in the great school of John Mulconry, "who was tutor of the men of Ireland in general in history and chronology," he never saw any book of better order, more copious, or more worthy of approbation, than the book submitted to him by Brother Michael, which, he adds, no one, lay or cleric, can possibly find fault with. This approbation is dated 2nd November, 1636. Though so late in the season, the poor friar at once set out to visit Conner M'Brody, who then kept a historical school at Kilkeedy, in the County Clare. M'Brody gave a similar testimony, on the 11th day of November, 1636. Then Brother Michael set out to submit his work to the ecclesiastical authorities; and first of all he came to the celebrated Malachy O'Queely, Archbishop of Tuam, who, relying on the official testimony of the distinguished antiquaries to whom the work was submitted, gave it his own formal approbation, and authorised its publication "for the glory of God, the honour of the country, and the common good." This approbation is dated the 17th of November, just a week after Brother Michael was in the County Clare. Then, facing still north, he came to the beautiful convent of his order at Roserilly, near Headford, and there got a similar approbation from the learned Boetius M'Egan, Bishop of Elphin, himself a Franciscan friar, and a famous Irish scholar. The work was also solemnly approved by Dr. Fleming, Archbishop of Dublin, and Dr. Roche, Bishop of Kildare. Then Brother Michael once more returned to spend his Christmas with the brotherhood in his own beloved Convent of Donegal, having completed his great work for the glory of God and the honour of Erin. He felt, it is true, that the darkness of the evil days was deepening around his country; but he had also the satisfaction of feeling that his own great work was accomplished, and could never be undone. When he heard the brothers chant the complin of the dying year, he might

well sing, with a full and grateful heart, the *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine*. His toilsome journeys now were over, and his long day's work was done. He had laboured for God and for his country ; and he knew that God would reward him beyond the grave, and that his country would never forget his name.

Neither must we forget the illustrious name of the noble Ferrall O'Gara. Brother Michael himself tells us that it is to him in a special way " thanks should be given for every good that will result from this book in giving light to all persons in general." The poor friars of Donegal nobly did their duty, and more than their duty, in supplying the Masters for four years with food and attendance ; but it was Ferrall O'Gara " who gave the reward of their labours to the chroniclers by whom it was written." The poor chroniclers, like the native chieftains, had been robbed of their patrimony, and were now entirely dependent for the maintenance of themselves and their families on the generosity of those members of the ancient nobility who had still some property remaining. It was Torloch MacCoghlan, of King's County, who maintained the Masters while compiling the *Succession of the Kings* ; Bryan Roe M'Guire, Lord Enniskillen, was their patron and paymaster when producing the *Book of Conquests*. These, however, were comparatively small undertakings, and the Masters were not long engaged upon them. But who would be their patron in the great task now before them, which would engage them for years, and cost a large sum of money ? To the eternal honour of the County Sligo, such a man was found at Moy O'Gara, in Coolavin. He told Brother Michael to be of good heart, to secure all the help he needed, and that he would give the antiquarians the reward of their labours, no matter how long they might be engaged on their task ; and therefore Brother Michael says that, after the glory of God and the honour of Erin, he writes the *Annals* " in the name and to the honour of the noble Ferrall O'Gara ;" and he beseeches God to bestow upon him " every blessing, both of soul and body," for this world and the next. The ruins of the old castle of Moy O'Gara, where Ferrall O'Gara then dwelt, may be seen about three miles from Boyle, and not far from the junction at Kilfree. It was a square keep, like so many others, yet not like them, for a halo of literary glory lights up its mossy, mouldering walls. Its very site will be sought and visited by Irishmen in the future, when

the castles of its spoilers will have become nameless barrows. We may well re-echo the touching prayer of Brother Michael for the welfare of his soul :—

“ Oh ! for ever and for ever !
 Benedictions shower upon him ;
 Brighter glories shine around him,
 And the million prayers of Erin
 Rise, like incense, up to heaven,
 Still for Ferrall, Lord of Leyney.”

Neither should we forget those younger Masters, who have lately passed away, by whose labours those who are strangers to the ancestral tongue of Erin are enabled to profit by the writings of Brother Michael and his associates. Foremost amongst them stands the ever-honoured name of John O'Donovan, who has translated and annotated the *Annals of the Four Masters*, and thus made that great work accessible to the whole English-speaking world. It was a task requiring great learning and immense labour ; and, according to the confession of all, it has been most successfully accomplished. His name will go down to posterity, and most fitly so, bracketed for ever with the immortal Masters of Donegal. Eugene O'Curry also, and Petrie, with Todd and Hardiman, gave most valuable assistance to O'Donovan in accomplishing this great work.

It was O'Curry who transcribed for the press in his own beautiful style the autograph copy of the *Four Masters*, and also gave most effective help by explaining, as perhaps he alone could do, ancient and obsolete words in the text. Petrie, to whom in other respects Irish literature is so much indebted, read the sheets as they passed through the press— itself a work of very great labour—and gave useful help in many other ways also. Todd and Hardiman likewise lent their assistance ; the former especially, for he spared neither his labour nor his purse in order to bring the work to a successful issue. The publisher, too, Mr. George Smyth, who at his own sole risk undertook this vast work, certainly deserves his meed of praise for making the *Four Masters* accessible to the literary world. We should never forget the ungrudging labours of those great men in the cause of Irish literature ; and, certainly, their example should not be without its effect in moving us to do something, each in his own way, be it great or small, to forward the same glorious work.

We are living in brighter days than the Four Masters lived in. Now there is everything to encourage students to pursue the study of Irish literature and of Irish history. A wider and more general interest is being awakened in all that concerns the antiquities of Ireland. Continental scholars eagerly scan the Celtic glosses of our ancient manuscripts, and our old romantic tales are translated and read with the greatest interest. Not so in the time of the Masters. Their lot was cast on dark and evil days. They had no motive to inspire them but a lofty sense of duty, and the hope of a supernal reward:—

“ Not of fame and not of fortune
 Do these eager pensmen dream ;
 Darkness shrouds the hills of Banba,
 Sorrow sits by every stream ;
 One by one the lights that led her,
 Hour by hour were quenched in gloom,
 But the patient sad Four Masters
 Toil on in their lonely room—
 Duty thus defying doom.”

All that time Donegal itself was a vivid picture of Erin's woe ; school and castle and abbey were despoiled and dismantled. The six counties of the North were confiscated after the flight of the Earls ; and were just then in process of sub-division and occupation by the stranger. The hungry Scot and greedy Saxon were settling down in every fair valley of green Tirconnell, and the remnant of its owners were being driven to the bogs and mountains. The bawns of the newcomers were rising up in hated strength by all their pleasant waters. The gallant chiefs of the North, who at Kinsale had made their last vain stand for Irish independence, were now all dead—some from the poisoned cup of hired assassins, and some from broken hearts. At the very time that the Masters were writing, Strafford was maturing his plans in Dublin for further despoiling the native chiefs who had yet escaped the sword and the halter. The present hour was dark, and the future was darker still:—

“ Each morrow brought sorrow and shadows of dread,
 And the rest that seemed best was the rest of the dead.”

And yet it was in the deepening gloom of those darkest days, when the religion, the patriotism, and the learning of the Gael were all proscribed together, that the Masters sat down in that ruined Convent of Donegal—the fit emblem of

their unhappy country—to compose, with patient and self-denying toil, that enduring monument of their country's history, which will be our cherished possession for ever. What men ever laboured under more discouraging circumstances, with more unselfish toil, or for a nobler purpose? Where can we find a better lesson than in the simple record of their lives? And where shall we look for men to be inspired with the spirit of the Masters, and to continue their patriotic labour, except amongst those who inherit their names, their blood, and their faith, and to whom every old book and every crumbling ruin should speak with a voice stronger and more persuasive than mine—surely they before all others are called upon to share in the noble work of preserving and extending through the coming years a knowledge of the Irish language and literature. The study of our history, our literature, and our antiquities, will serve to elevate and purify the mind; it will occupy leisure hours that might easily be spent in more frivolous, if not more ignoble, occupations; it will lend a new interest to those old storied scenes that are scattered throughout the land; it will clothe in the spiritual beauty of religious and historic association many a broken arch and ivied ruin that in our ignorance we might, heedless, pass by. And when we are tempted to let our ardour grow cold, then the vision of the Four Masters in that old abbey by the sea, toiling patiently at their self-imposed task, may serve to inspire us to labour with renewed zeal in the same patriotic work for the glory of God and the honour of our native land.

Tara, Pagan and Christian.*

MY purpose—at least my main purpose—in selecting this subject for my address this evening is to create and foster in the minds of the students of this college a deep and abiding love for the historic sites and ancient monuments of our native land. In the highest sense of the words, you are the heirs, and you ought to be, as it were, the official custodians, of the historic monuments of the Gael. It would be strange, indeed, if the British Parliament should deem it its duty to preserve many of these monuments at the public expense, and that an Irish priest should be either ignorant of their history, or show himself indifferent to their defacement or destruction. No man can do more than a priest to aid in their preservation, and every sentiment of genuine patriotism, of national honour, and even of professional zeal, should move him to aid in the noble work of illustrating the history and guarding the integrity of these ancient monuments, which are at once eloquent witnesses of our vanished glories in the past, and hopeful emblems of a higher national life in the not distant future.

Now, my young friends, of all the historic sites in Ireland, there is no other that can at all approach the Hill of Tara, either in antiquity, in historic interest, or in the variety and suggestive significance of its ancient monuments. If we are to accept, even in substance, the truth of the bardic history of Ireland—and I see no good reason to question its substantial truth—there was a royal residence on the Hill of Tara before Rome was founded, before Athena's earliest shrine crowned the Acropolis of Athens; about the time, perhaps, that sacred Ilium first saw the hostile standards of the kings of Hellas. But before I sketch the history of the Royal Hill, I must first tell you something of its physical

* Lecture delivered to the students of Maynooth College, Nov. 5, 1897.

features, which alone have remained, through all the changeful centuries, unchanged and unchangeable.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

Tara is not a high hill, its elevation above the sea being only about five hundred feet. It is rather broad and flat-topped, with gently sloping declivities. Still it commands a far-reaching prospect of surpassing beauty. On the north-east the hill of Skeen rises to the sky-line, and shuts out a wider view of the swelling plains beyond ; but on every other side the prospect from Tara, of a fine summer's day, is one of enchanting loveliness. Nearly the whole of the great limestone plain of Ireland lies in view, with all its varied scenery of grassy plain, and deep embowering woods, and noble mansions peeping through their sheltering foliage. Then there are the towers of Trim, and the silvery windings of the Boyne, stealing serpent-like through sunlit meadows, with glimpses of the hoary walls of Bective and Columcille's ancient shrine, whose sweet-toned bells once tolled across the fertile fields and populous villages, where herds of cattle now roam in what is almost a primitive, though still a rich and grassy wilderness. Then, far away to the south-east, the Wicklow mountains rise up like giant ramparts against the blue of the sunlit sky. The smoke of Dublin shrouds its spires in the distance. Beyond Dundalk the hills around Cuchullain's ancient home are distinctly visible. To the north and north-west the peaks of Cavan and Monaghan are well defined against the sky, while to the south and south-west the isolated hills of the great plain rise in solitary grandeur, with the immense range of Slieve Bloom on the southern horizon, which the men of old regarded as nature's barrier between the Hy-Niall and the warriors of Leath Mogha. It is difficult to get anywhere else in Ireland, except, perhaps, from the Hill of Usnach in Westmeath—and that is somewhat similar—a prospect to equal the view from Tara Hill, in extent, in variety, in picturesque beauty, and historic interest. You may get grander and wilder scenes, but nothing more attractive to the eye, or more suggestive to the mind, than the matchless landscape revealed from the summit of Tara Hill.

It is no wonder, then, that the fertility of the soil, and the beauty of the prospect from Tara Hill, attracted the attention of even the earliest colonists in Ireland. Those

ancient men of barbarous times, in one thing at least, showed far more taste and judgment than the cultured people of this nineteenth century. They chose for their dwellings and strongholds the breezy summits of fertile hills, which at once gave them health and security, and above all a far-reaching vision of picturesque grandeur. No doubt it was necessary for them to see the country far around them, so as to be able to notice the approach of the foe, and take measures for their own defence in unsettled times. But I think there was something else in their minds besides this idea of self-defence. They appreciated, in their own simple way, the manifold beauties of their island home; they loved to see them and enjoy them, and the vision gave them loftier thoughts and bolder hearts. They would not dream—no, not the smallest Irish chief—of building his dun in a swampy plain or secluded valley. You will not see, in any part of the country, an ancient rath occupying such a site. No; they were in their own land, and they built their homes on the windy crests of the swelling uplands, where they could see their wide domains, their flocks and herds, the approach of the foe, and the gathering of the warriors to defend their hearths and homes.

HISTORY OF TARA HILL.

Of the colonists that came to stay in the land, the Firbolgs were the earliest; and the bards tell us that Slainge, the first high king of that race, chose Tara Hill as the site of his royal palace,* and called it Druim Caein or the Beautiful Hill. If we can trust the chronology of the Four Masters, Slainge was contemporary with Abraham in the Land of Canaan; so that we must go back some nineteen hundred years before the Christian era for the first dun that crowned the Hill of Tara. I do not ask you to believe this. I merely quote the statement; and it is probably as well founded as a good deal of what is set down as ancient history. O'Flaherty's chronology, however, which fixes the advent of the Firbolgs about the year 1250 B.C. is far more probable.

It is, however, to the second colony that occupied Ireland—the Tuatha de Danaan—that the origin of the Royal City of Tara is more commonly traced. Nine kings of the Firbolgs, it is said, ruled the land; but as they reigned in

* Poem ascribed to Caoilte MacRonain.

all only thirty-seven years, they could not have done much for Tara. It was the new colony—a more civilised and powerful people—who brought the Ogham lore to Erin and the Lia Fail to Tara, which they made—so the bardic story tells us—their Cathair, or capital city. Stone buildings were certainly not abundant at Tara, but still as it is called a Cathair by the poet Kineth O'Hartigan in the tenth century, we need not hesitate to adopt the term.

Tara was called Cathair Crofinn even before it was called Tara ; and Crofinn is said to have been a queen of the Tuatha de Danaan, remarkable both for her talents and her beauty. Doubtless she was buried within the precincts of the Royal Rath, to which she gave her name ; that is, if she did not, like many others of her people, take up her abode in the Land of Youth, either under the grassy slopes of Tara, or some other of the beautiful enchanted hills of Erin.

They were a strange people, these Tuatha de Danaan, dark-eyed and brown-haired, of unknown origin, but of much culture, ingenuity, and weird mysterious power, who left no survivors in the land of Erin, at least, amongst the children of mortal men. Would they had not vanished so completely, for the bardic story that tells of their advent and departure is full of a strange subtle interest which takes and keeps the mind by a secret, silent influence that cannot be measured or analysed. It pervades alike our history and our romance, the tales of our childhood, and the wanderings of our maturer fancy in mystic realms of a fairyland that is not all a fable.

It was the Tuatha de Danaan who brought to Tara that wonderful Lia Fail, the Stone of Destiny, of which you all have heard something. Some say it is still in Tara, others that it is under the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey. I shall speak of it presently, but it is quite natural that the enchanted stone should be the gift of the enchanted people ; and its history—part fact and part fable—is as strange and mysterious as their own.

So when the Milesian colony came to Erin, Tara, though not yet called by that name, was already the chief royal seat of the monarchy. Heremon was married to his cousin, a beautiful and accomplished princess named Tea, and she asked her lord, even before they landed, to give her as her dower her choice hill in Erin, “ that she might be interred therein, and that her mound and grave-stone might be raised thereon,” and “ where every prince to be born of her

race should dwell for ever." This favour was guaranteed to her ; and then we are told that she chose Druim Caein, called also Laeth-Druim, the Beautiful Hill, which from her is called Tea-Muir, *i.e.*, Tara, the Mound of Tea, and therein she was interred. The Irish form was Tea-muir, latinized Temora, which by a kind of metathesis has become Tara in the genitive case. Other explanations of the name have been also given ; but this is at once the most ancient, the most natural, and the most poetic. The pillar stone still standing on Tara Hill, over the Croppies' grave, which Petrie thinks was the original Lia Fail, was in my opinion the gravestone raised over Tea's monument more than three thousand years ago. We know that such monumental pillars, "hoary inscrutable sentinels of the past," were raised elsewhere over royal graves, as at Rathcroghan over the grave of King Dathi, and at Roscam, near Galway, over the grave of King Brian, the great ancestor of the Connaught kings ; and in some cases they came to be worshipped as idols. So Tea's pillar-stone was raised at Tara over her mur or grave mound, from which it was removed after 1798, but only a few paces, to place it over the Croppies' grave, where the foolish insurgent youths made their last vain stand for their country. There it has stood through all the changeful centuries, and the ashes of Tea's offspring, who died for the land she loved, now rest in peace beneath its shadow.

THE FEIS OF TARA.

One hundred and twenty kings of the Scotie or Milesian race reigned in Erin from Heremon to the cursing and desolation of Tara in A.D. 565 ; and it may be regarded as fairly certain that all these high-kings kept their court (at least for a time) on the Royal Hill. The history of Tara would, in fact, during all this time, be the history of Ireland. So we can only refer to a few of the most noteworthy events in its annals specially connected with the place itself.

Ollamh Fodhla, the fortieth in the list of Irish kings, after a reign of forty years, died, we are told by the Four Masters, "in his own house at Tara. He was the first king by whom the Feis, or Assembly of Tara, was instituted ; and by him also a Mur Ollamhan was erected at Tara." The king's real name was Eochy—the term Ollamh Fodhla, or Doctor of Erin, being given to him as an agnomen on account of his learning. There are not wanting critics who doubt of the

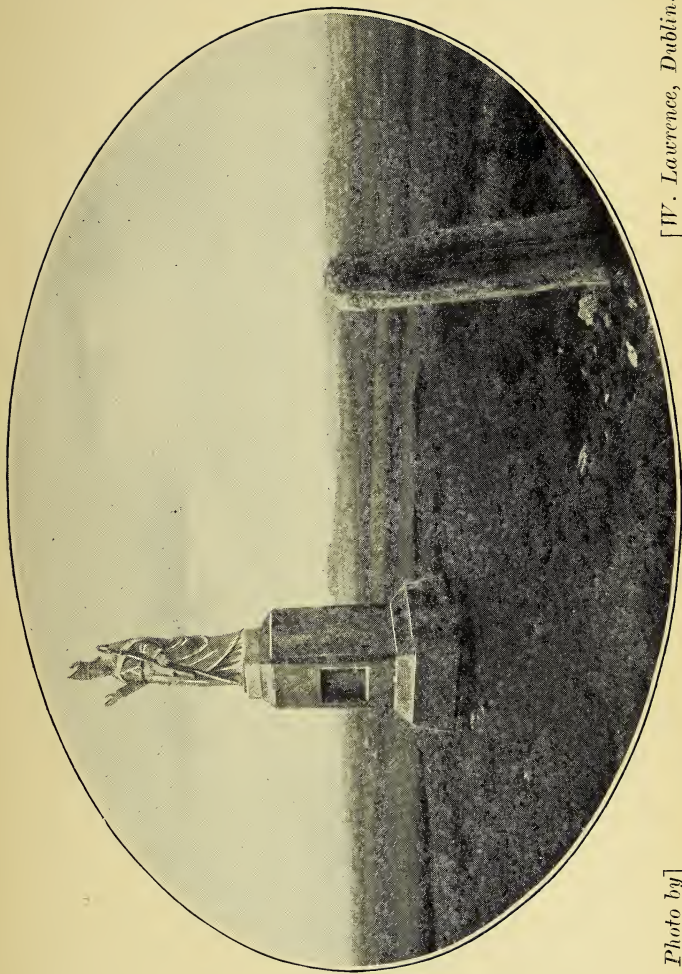


Photo by

[W. Lawrence, Dublin.

TARA—SHOWING ST. PATRICK'S STATUE AND THE CROPPIES' STONE.

existence of this ancient king ; but the entry proves at least one thing, that the " Feis Tara " was in popular estimation of very ancient origin. Reference is frequently made to this famous assembly in all our ancient literature, both sacred and profane. It was, in fact, the national parliament of the Celtic tribes in Ireland, and as such must have exercised a very great influence on the national life. It was held triennially for one week at Samhaintide, that is three days before and three days after November Day. It is probable that in fine weather the chiefs met in council on the green of Tara in the open air ; but if the weather were inclement then the meeting was held indoors, and most likely in the great banqueting hall, which was the largest building in Tara. Its object was to discuss all matters of national importance, especially the enactment of new laws, the assessment of tribute, the examination and purification of the national annals, the settlement of tribal disputes, and the maintenance of a militia for the preservation of the peace and the protection of the nation. All broils between individuals or factions during its sessions were punishable with death, without the option of an eric, and it would seem that it was forbidden to bear deadly weapons, or engage in martial exercises, lest they might lead to strife amongst the champions. The place of every king and chief was fixed by the public heralds with the greatest exactness, and his arms and shield hung above the head of the chieftain, but were not worn in the hall. When the day's work was done the revels were begun, the feasting and drinking being often prolonged to a late hour of the night ; and no doubt they sometimes found it convenient to sleep beneath the couches on which they sat.

The next famous reign in connection with the history of Tara is that of Tuathal Teachtmair. In regard to Tara his most important proceeding was to take a portion from each of the old provinces to form a mensal kingdom for the high-king. These united together formed the new province of Meath, which henceforth was reserved for the maintenance of the royal court and the royal guards of the high-king. The ancient Feis of Tara was preserved ; but Tuathal directed that yearly assemblies should be held in each of the four parts of his dominions taken from the other provinces. So he ordained that at Tlachtá, near Athboy, a religious festival should be held at Beltane ; that a great fair should be held at Usnach about mid-summer ; and that

a marriage-market with sports and games should be established at Taillteann on the first Sunday of August, called in consequence Lughnasa; but this last was probably of far earlier origin. He also required an oath from the kings and chiefs assembled at the Feis Tara, that they would be loyal to his house for ever, and never set up a king from the Attacots, or even from any rival house. These were all just and wise regulations, which tended to concentrate and consolidate the royal authority over the whole nation in a single royal family—a thing greatly needed and much to be desired in Erin. But he was also partly responsible for another institution, which caused much bloodshed in Tara and much strife in Erin for many centuries, and contributed long afterwards, at least indirectly, to bring it under foreign domination. This was the establishment of the celebrated Borrumean Tribute.

ORIGIN OF THE BORRUMEAN TRIBUTE.

It arose in this way. Tuathal had two daughters “more beautiful than the clouds of heaven.” The King of Leinster sought the eldest in marriage, and obtained his request; but after a while he heard that the younger was the more beautiful. So he sent a false message to Tara, saying that the elder sister had died, and that he now wished to marry her younger sister. This request was also granted; but after a little the two sisters happened to meet face to face in the dun at Naas. Then the eldest, heart-broken at the deceit practised against herself and her sister, died of shame, and the younger shortly afterwards died of grief at the cruel fate of her unhappy sister.

Word of these proceedings was soon brought to Tara, and to the kings of Ulster and Connaught, who were the foster-fathers of the maidens in question. A great army was raised; Leinster was harried with fire and sword; the wicked king was slain; and its princes and people were required to pay annually a tax of 1,500 sheep, 1,500 pigs, 1,500 kine, with many other things also, amongst the rest, a brazen boiler large enough to boil twelve oxen and twelve pigs at a time for the hosts of Tara. For more than five hundred years this oppressive tax was the cause of continuous bloodshed. It was often levied, but never without a fight; it was oftener successfully resisted, but always caused hatred, strife, and slaughter between the two

kingdoms until its final remission through the prayers and diplomacy of St. Moling. One enduring effect it produced was a great estrangement between the men of Leinster and Conn's Half, which was not without its influence in inducing the Lagenians to side with the Danes at Clontarf, and at a later date in moving false Diarmaid MacMurrough to bring in the Norman, in order to be revenged on his own countrymen. Such are the far-reaching consequences of public crime and injustice.

CORMAC MAC ART.

One hundred and twenty years later the majestic figure of Cormac Mac Art is seen on Tara Hill ; and Tara never saw another king like him—neither his grandsire Conn, nor Nial of the Hostages, nor any other pagan monarch of Ireland. If he had an equal at all it was Brian Boru, who may justly be regarded as the greatest of the Christian kings of Erin, even as Cormac was of the pagan kings. The monuments of Tara especially were the creation and the glory of Cormac. Most of its monuments were erected or restored by him ; he appears as the central figure in its history, the hero of its romantic tales, the guardian of its glories, and the champion of its prerogatives. For forty years he reigned in Tara ; he drank delight of battle with his peers in a hundred fights ; but he was not only king but a sage, a scholar, and lawgiver, whose works, at least in outline, have come to our own times, and have challenged the admiration of all succeeding ages. When he came to die he refused to be laid with his pagan sires in Brugh, but told them to bury him at Rosnaree, with his face to the rising sun, that the light from the east just dawning in his soul might one day light up with its heavenly radiance the gloom of his lonely grave.

“ Spread not the beds of Brugh for me
 When restless death-bed's use is done ;
 But bury me at Rosnaree,
 And face me to the rising sun.”

Cormac appears first of all as a historian and chronicler. He it was who assembled the chroniclers of Ireland at Tara, say the Four Masters, “ and ordered them to unite the chronicles of Ireland in one book called the *Psalter of Tara*.” That great work is no longer in existence ; but Cuan O'Lochan, a poet of the tenth century, gives us a summary of its contents, which would lead us to infer that

the *Psalter of Tara* was somewhat like the *Psalter of Cashel*, the contents of which are embodied in the *Book of Rights*. As a lawgiver, Cormac may be regarded as the original author of the great compilation known as the *Seanchus Mor*, of course not in its present form, but he laid the foundations on which that immense superstructure was afterwards erected. And it is not improbable that in the text, as distinguished from the commentary of the older work, we have many of the legal *dicta* uttered, if not penned, by Cormac himself.

The learned work known as *Teagasc na Riogh* has also been attributed to Cormac by our antiquaries, who say that he composed it for the instruction of his son and successor, Cairbre, when he himself was incapacitated to reign from the loss of one of his eyes. He was equally renowned as a warrior, and fought fifty battles against his foes, north, south, east, and west. He was the great patron of Finn MacCumhal and his warrior band, who really composed his staff and standing army; and to secure the friendship of that great warrior, Finn, Cormac gave him his daughter Grainne in marriage. The lady, however, was by no means faithful to her liege lord, and her elopement and wanderings with Diarmaid formed the theme of many a song. Cormac was also a great builder. He erected the rath which still bears his name at Tara; he restored and enlarged the great banquet hall; he erected for his hand-maiden Carnaid the first mill known in Ireland, and thus made Tara the great capital of all the land—the centre of its strength, its power, its grandeur, and its civilisation. An ancient writer* has preserved a picture of Cormac presiding at the Feis of Tara, which we have no reason to think exaggerated. He describes Tara as a beautiful sunny city of feasts, of goblets, of springs, as a world of perishable beauty, the meeting-places of heroes, with twice seven doors and nine mounds around it, a famous strong cathair, the great house of a thousand soldiers, lit up with seven splendid, beautiful chandeliers of brass. Cormac himself sat at the head of all the princes of Erin, clothed in a crimson mantle, with brooch of gold, a golden belt about his loins, splendid shining sandals on his feet, a great twisted collar of red gold around his neck. We might well doubt the accuracy of this description, but that the twisted collars of gold have been

* Kenneth O'Hartigan.

found at Tara, and a gold brooch of excellent workmanship, with many other ornaments, not far off. Cormac was a Connaught-man—at least, his mother was a Connaught-woman, and he himself was born and nurtured under the shadow of Kesh Corran, in the County of Sligo.

ST. PATRICK AT TARA.

Cormac was the link connecting Pagan and Christian Ireland. The next scene on the Hill of Tara brings the two religions face to face in the person of St. Patrick and the Druids of King Laeghaire. My description of this meeting must be very brief, yet it was the most momentous event that ever took place in the history of Ireland, for it was a struggle to the death between the old religion and the new.

Here let me observe that Druidism was not an immoral and debasing superstition, such, for instance as now may be seen in many parts of Africa. It taught the immortality, or at least the transmigration of souls; it inculcated the necessity of many natural virtues, and, though it was idolatrous and tolerant of fratricidal strife, its very superstitions were romantic, for it defied all nature. Hence the cult, as a whole, was very dear to the hearts of our Celtic forefathers, and was closely interwoven with their national life. As McGee has well said of the Druids:—

“ Their mystic creed was woven round
 The changeful year—for every hour
 A spirit and a sense they found,
 A cause of piety and power.
 The crystal wells were spirit springs,
 The mountain lakes were peopled under
 And in the grass the fairy rings
 Excelled rustic awe and wonder.
 Far down beneath the western sea
 Their paradise of youth was laid,
 In every oak and hazel tree
 They saw a fair immortal maid,—
 Such was the chain of hopes and fears
 That bound our sires a thousand years.”

The battle then between Patrick and the Druids was a battle to the death; and the Saint could not conquer without visible help from on high. There are critics that accept the natural but reject the supernatural facts in the narrative. The testimony for both is precisely the same; so their proceeding is extremely foolish. That Patrick could conquer

the Druids on Tara Hill without a miracle would, in my judgment, be as strange a thing as any miracle he wrought there.

It was Easter Sunday morning, A.D. 433. Laeghaire with the remnant of his followers had returned at dawn of day from his disastrous journey to Slane. He and his chiefs and Druids were gathered together to take a meal they needed much in the great mid-court or banquet-hall, and at the same time to take counsel for the future, when suddenly and unexpectedly, although not uninvited, Patrick with his few companions having divinely escaped the ambushes of the king, stood before them. Laeghaire was confounded at the sight, but the laws of Irish hospitality were imperative, and being there, Patrick was invited to sit beside the king, and eat and drink. Patrick accepted the invitation; but just before he took the cup the wicked Druid found time to pour in a drop of poison unnoticed into the ale. Patrick blessed the cup with the sign of the cross; the poison curdled, and when the cup was slightly turned fell out; whereupon the Saint drained the cup as if nothing had happened.

Failing in this, the Druid challenged him to work wonders. Patrick accepted the challenge, and the Druid brought a fall of snow on the plain, but he could not remove it: he was powerful for evil, but not for good; whereupon Patrick blessed the plain, and the snow instantly disappeared. Then the Druid brought a thick darkness over all the face of the country, yet he could not at Patrick's challenge remove it. But the moment the Saint made the sign of the Cross the darkness disappeared, and the sun shone out in its splendour. Still the contest was not yet over.

Both sides had books—books of power—the Gospel of Patrick, and the magic rolls of the Druids. "Fling them into the water," said Laeghaire, "into the stream close by, that we may see which comes out uninjured." "No," said the Druid, "water is his God." "Then cast them into the fire," said Laeghaire. "No," said the Druid, "fire he has also for his God," alluding to the fire of the Holy Ghost. Then said Patrick to the Druid: "Let the matter be settled in another way. Let a house be made, and do thou, if thou wilt, go into that house, which shall be completely shut up, with my chasuble around thee; a cleric of my household will also go in with thy Druid's tunic around him. Let the house be fired; and so may God deal doom on you both therein."

The men of Ireland thought that a fair challenge, and it

was reluctantly accepted ; yet even there Laeghaire was false, for he caused the Druid's part of the house to be built of green timber, and Benen's part to be built of dry wood. Then a mighty marvel came to pass when the house was fired ; the green part thereof was burned, and the Druid within it too, although Patrick's chasuble in which he was clothed was not even singed ; whilst Benen's part of the house, though dry, was not burned at all ; only the Druid's cloak around him was burnt to ashes, he himself being untouched by the flames.

The site of Benen's house is still shown on the hill. The wicked king being enraged at the death of his Druid would slay Patrick, but God scattered his men and destroyed many thousands of them on that day. Then the king himself was sore afraid, and he knelt to St. Patrick, and believed in God ; " but he did not believe with a pure heart," but continued to be half a Pagan all his life, and he died a Pagan's death, and was buried like a Pagan in his grave. Many thousands of the King's people also believed on that same day, when they saw the wondrous signs wrought by Patrick on the Royal Hill.

This was the crowning victory of the Cross at Tara ; but it had for a thousand years been the chief seat of idolatry and druidism in the kingdom, and the same spirit lurked there long afterwards.

Oilioll Molt, the immediate successor of Laeghaire, does not seem to have been a Christian ; Laeghaire's son, Lughaidh, who reigned for twenty-five years towards the close of Patrick's life, was not a Christian, and was struck by lightning from heaven at Achadh-Farcha for his impiety. Druidism was not indeed finally destroyed at Tara until the year A.D. 565, when another memorable scene was enacted on the Royal Hill to which I must now briefly refer.

THE CURSING OF TARA.

The high-king at the time was Diarmaid, son of Ferghus Cearrbhoil, an able and accomplished prince, who was resolved to maintain the king's peace, order, and discipline, throughout the land. His purpose was certainly good ; and it is greatly to be regretted that in enforcing his authority he acted in a very high-handed way, which brought him into conflict with the saints of Erin, who triumphed over him.

In the first place there is strong evidence that Diarmaid,

though generous to Clonmacnoise, kept Druids in his court and army, and was still secretly attached to the druidical rites. Then, again, he was high-handed in carrying out his laws, without counting the consequences. This led him into conflict with his own cousin, the great St. Columcille, whose person he insulted at Tara by tearing from his arms a youth who fled for refuge to the saint and who was not really a criminal, but, accidentally, a homicide. This outrage raised all the north against the king, and led to his defeat in the bloody battle of Cuildreimhne; but this was not, it seems, warning enough for him. He sent his herald and his high steward over the country to see that the king's peace was duly kept and the royal authority duly respected. This official, to show his own consequence, carried his spear crosswise before him; and if the entrance to a chief's dun were not large enough to admit his spear thus crossed before him, he caused it to be pulled down, and made wider for the king's courier and for all others. In this manner he came down to the south of the Co. Galway, near the place now called Abbey, in Kinelfechin. The chief of the district who was going to get married and bring home his bride, had a short time before strengthened his dun, and raised a strong palisade of oaken posts over the earthworks. But for security sake, the entrance was narrow, and the king's bailiff could not carry in his spear cross-wise. "Hew down your doors," said the bailiff. "Do it yourself," said Aedh Guaire, and at the same moment he drew his sword and with one blow struck off the man's head. It was treason against the king, and Guaire knew it well, so he fled for refuge, first to Bishop Senach his half-brother, and afterwards to St. Ruadhan of Lorrha, who was also his relative. But Ruadhan also feared the king, and advised the criminal to fly for safety to the King of Wales. But, even there, the king demanded his extradition; so that, in despair, he came once more to Ruadhan. Then Ruadhan hid him in a hole under his own cell, afterwards called *poll* Ruadhain. Whereupon the king, hearing that Guaire was at Lorrha, came in person to demand the criminal. "Where is he?" said the king. "Give him up to me at once." "I know not where he is if he is not under this thatch," said Ruadhan. As the king could not find him, he departed; but reflecting that Ruadhan would not tell a lie, and that he must therefore be on the premises, he returned and discovered the unhappy fugitive whom he carried off to Tara.

Now, this was a violation of the right of sanctuary, *i.e.*, monastic sanctuary, which, if it were ever defensible, would be most defensible in that lawless and sanguinary time. So Ruadhan, summoning to his aid the two St. Brendans, his neighbours, and many other saints whom he had known at Clonard, in the school of St. Finnian, followed the king to Tara to demand the fugitive. The king refused them; but they were not to be put off. They fasted on the king, and it seems the king fasted on them. One old chronicler says that for a full year "they anathematised Diarmaid, and plied him with miracles, he giving them back prodigy for prodigy." This would seem to imply that there was once more conflict between the druids and the saints. But in the end the saints were completely victorious. "They chanted psalms of condemnation against him, and rang their bells hardly against him day and night;" and several of the royal youths of Tara died suddenly, without apparent cause. The king, too, had a dream, in which he saw a great spreading tree on Tara Hill hewn down by strangers, and the mighty crash of its fall awoke him. "I am that tree," said Diarmaid, "and the strangers who chop it are the clergy cutting short my life. By them I am overthrown." So when he rose he yielded to the clergy, and gave up the prisoner; but, at the same time, he said: "Ill have ye done to undo my kingdom, for I maintained the righteous cause; and may thy diocese," he said to Ruadhan, "be the first one that is ruined in Ireland, and may thy monks desert thee." And so, says the old tale, it came to pass. Then upon the royal hearth Ruadhan imprecated the blackness of ruin—"that never more in Tara should smoke issue from its roof-tree." This certainly came to pass; the king died a violent death before the year was over; and no king after him, though they were called Kings of Tara, ever dwelt on the Royal Hill.

This, in substance at least, is authentic history; but it is clear that there is more beneath this story than appears at first sight. The conflict really was not between the king and the saints so much as between the saints and his counsellors, the Druids; and it was for that reason that the king was excommunicated, and that Tara was "cursed," or interdicted. Yet we cannot help feeling some sympathy for the king, and greatly regretting that "never more in Tara should smoke issue from its roof-tree." The curse has been marvellously accomplished; but what a pity that the home

of a hundred kings, the royal house of Tuathal and Cormac and Niall should be desolate ; that the grass should grow in its empty courts ; that the cattle should herd where the sages and warriors of the Gael once held high revel. It is surely a sad thing, and it was, moreover, a fatal blow at the unity and power of the nation. With a high-king ruling in Tara there was some chance of welding the tribes of Erin into one great nation ; but when Tara fell it might be said that hope had disappeared for ever.

Yet, though Tara was deserted by its kings—for none of them would risk the penalty of dwelling in the accursed site—it was later on chosen by St. Adamnan and others as a place to hold great ecclesiastical synods. It may be that Adamnan, wiser than Ruadhan, wished to undo the ancient curse, and prepare Tara to become once more the seat of the monarchy. He certainly held a synod there of the prelates and chiefs of Erin, about the year 697, in which women were formally and authoritatively exempted from military service, so that they became non-combatants, entitled to the protection of all true Christian soldiers on either side.

THE EXISTING REMAINS AT TARA.

The remains still existing at Tara, seen in the light of the lamp of history, are eminently interesting, and well worthy of a visit. I wish I had a luminous map on which I could exhibit them to you ; but, failing that, I shall try to describe them as briefly as I can.

Now, suppose you approach the Royal Hill by the great road from the south anciently called Slighe Dala, and still in existence, at least on the same lines, you turn a little to the left at the southern slope of the hill, and first of all you meet the triple rampart of Rath Laeghaire. It may have been the private residence of the king ; but its chief interest for us is that its outer rampart was certainly the burial-place of the king himself. Laeghaire had in his character some traits which we cannot help admiring—bad traits, if you will, but still noteworthy. He was, above all, a steadfast Pagan, and a great hater of Leinstermen. “ I cannot believe,” he said, “ for my father, the great Niall, would not allow me to believe, but told me to have myself buried like a Pagan warrior on the brow of Tara, face to face against my foes ; and so shall I stand till the day of doom.”

Well he obeyed his sire. He had sworn a great Pagan oath by all the elements, that he would no more exact the Borrumean tribute from the men of Leinster, and he was released by them from captivity on the faith of his oath. But he did try to exact it, and he was slain by the elements—by the sun and wind—on the banks of the Liffey. But the dying king was still true to his promise to his father. “Carry my body home to Tara,” he said, “and bury me like a king.” And so they interred him, with all his weapons upon him, in the south-eastern rampart of his own royal rath, standing up with shield and spear, and his face to Leinster, defying them, as it were, from his grave until the day of doom. I wonder is he still there, or did they do to him what the men of Tir Conall did to another old hero who gave similar directions—carry him off by night from his royal grave, and bury him flat in a marsh with his face down, that he might no more fight from his grave against his hereditary foes.

Now, leaving Rath Laeghaire, continue due north about one hundred paces, and come to the outer rampart of Rath na Riogh—where it *was* rather—for much of it has been carried away. Within this outer rampart were all the most ancient monuments of Tara. It was also called Cathair Crofinn from the Tuatha de Danaan queen; and most likely contains her grave. A little to the right within this great inclosure on the east was “Cormac’s House,” the palace which he built for himself, where he dwelt, and which was the scene of his glories. It had, at least, a double rampart round it to separate the palace from the other buildings of the Royal City, and was of considerable extent. Further on, only a few paces, was the Farradh or Hall of Meeting; the word also means a seat, and doubtless signified the place of the royal seat or throne, where the kings and chiefs of Erin assembled in council round the monarch. Then beyond the Farradh, still to the north, we find on the right or east side the Mound of the Hostages—Dumha-na-Giall—where the royal hostages were kept sometimes in fetters of gold to indicate their quality, but fettered all the same, for otherwise the light-limbed youths in bondage would soon clear the ramparts of Tara, and make their way to their distant homes. On the left, but close by, was the site of the famous Lia Fail, or Stone of Destiny. I have already indicated that there is a great controversy about the identity of this stone, and I have signified my own opinion. This

stone never could have served the purpose of an inauguration stone, for it is a true pillar-stone, and the king-elect could not be expected to stand upon it. The Lia Fail, we are told, was the stone on which the kings were inaugurated, and on which they planted their feet in symbol of sovereignty. Then, if the prince were of truly royal line, the stone bellowed loudly to signify approval, otherwise it was dumb. This stone, we are told, was taken over to Scotland by Fergus Mor MacEarc, a brother of the high-king of Tara at that time—the beginning of the sixth century—that he might be inaugurated on this ancestral stone as king of the Scottish Dalriada. It was taken from Scone, it is said, in the time of Edward I., and is now under the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey. Petrie's chief objection to this story is two-fold—first, that we have no reference to this translation in our ancient annals; and, secondly, that the Milesian chiefs would never allow the stone to be carried out of the kingdom.

Well, in reply to the latter point we can only say that most likely one brother lent the stone secretly to the other without consulting his chiefs; and the same thing would account for the silence of the Irish annalists. It is not recorded in the annals of the nation. The story of the translation came from Scotland, and is told only by our later antiquaries. It is a question, though very interesting, not yet by any means settled.

Outside Rath na Riogh, to the north-east, was the well Neamhnach, which still flows away to the north-east. It is chiefly interesting as the site of the first corn mill ever erected in Ireland. Cormac had a beautiful handmaiden, a bondswoman called Carnaid, whose duty it was to grind the corn on the hand quern. He pitied the hard toil of the maiden, and having got some idea of water mills during his foreign wars, he erected this to lighten the labour of the maiden. The well still flows, and until quite recently we believe its waters turned a mill at Tara.

Beyond the outer rampart of Rath na Riogh, still northward, was the Rath of the Synods—Rath Seanadh—where Adamnan, and Patrick before him, held a synod of the clerics and chiefs of Erin. It has been partially defaced by the wall of the Protestant church, a recent structure, wholly out of place on such a site.

Just a little north-east of this point, between the Rath of the Synods, and the southern extremity of the banquet hall,

on the very summit of the hill, the five great roads that lead to Tara had their meeting-point. They can still to some extent be traced from the crown of Tara radiating in all directions. It is said that they were discovered on the night that the great Conn was born ; but probably it merely means that his father, who had finished their construction, declared them formally open in honour of that event. I cannot now describe them at length, but it may be said that in general they ran in the route of the modern trunk lines of railway to all parts of ancient Erin.

Just beyond the Rath of the Synods still going to the north, we find the great Teach-Miodhcuarta, the mid-court house, or the mead-circling house, as others have translated it, by far the most interesting of all the existing monuments of ancient Tara. Its site can still be distinctly traced from north to south, and the measurements correspond with the accounts of the building given in our ancient books. It was no less than eight hundred feet in length, and from sixty to eighty feet in breadth, with six or seven great entrances on either side. You will at once perceive that this was an immense hall, larger than one of the sides of your largest square, and capable of accommodating an immense number of chiefs and warriors, either at meat or in council. There was a great range of couches all round the walls ; the tables, loaded with meat, were in the centre ; the lower portion seems to have contained a great kitchen for roasting and boiling, and we are told that some of the large pots could contain several beeves and pigs which were boiled together. When the meal was ready the attendants plunged huge forks into the boilers, which carried out several joints at once to be deposited as they were, without covers we may presume, before the assembled kings and warriors. At that time and long after, knives and forks were unknown ; but I have no doubt skeans and daggers were called into requisition, and perhaps did the work of carving quite as well.

I hope I have said enough to awaken in you a keener interest to know for yourselves all about the Royal Hill ; and if so, then I have gained my purpose in speaking before you here of "Tara, Pagan and Christian."

Some Irish Graves in Rome.

IT was on Monday morning, October 29th, 1900, that we (the Irish pilgrims then in Rome) assembled at nine o'clock for Mass in St. Peter's Church in Montorio, anciently known as the Janiculum, not far from St. Peter's in the Vatican. I myself was celebrant of the Mass, and the evening before, in the Roman Academia, on the Corso, I had explained to the pilgrims something of the history of the graves we were to visit. After Mass the pilgrims gathered round the twin gravestones, which were fringed, I think, with ivy leaves, and most devoutly recited the *De Profundis* for the souls whose ashes lay beneath their feet, and whose names are inscribed on the marble flags. Then they examined the various paintings and monuments in the church, especially the beautiful little temple in the courtyard of the Franciscan monastery adjoining, which was erected on the very spot where St. Peter is said to have suffered martyrdom. I heard some one of the Roman bystanders say, "Why do they all come here?"—this church was not one of the great Basilicas which the pilgrims were bound to visit—but some one else replied that great Irishmen were buried there, and these pilgrims came to visit their tombs, and say a prayer for their souls. My purpose in this paper, is to tell you who are the great Irishmen referred to thus vaguely, and why they came to be buried in St. Peter's church in Montorio, beneath those marble slabs.

Now, this church is most interesting for many reasons. It stands on the slope of the Janiculum, on the western bank of the Tiber, and overlooks the whole city of Rome. From this point you can see every church and palace and ancient ruin throughout the city—the huge dome of St. Peter's on the left; in front the Capitol, surmounted with the Convent of Ara Cœli; then towards the right the ruins of the Palatine and the Coliseum, and all the other ancient monuments around the great church of the Lateran. These are in the foreground immediately beneath the spectator;

but further on, as Martial tells us of his own time, you can see the Seven Royal Hills of Rome, and judge the whole extent of the city, bounded in the blue distance by the Alban Hills on the south, and the higher hills of Tusculum stretching far away to the north-east. The yellow Tiber flows beneath in two great bends from north to south, and directly in front, but a little to the right, was the ancient wooden bridge across the river, which "the Dauntless Three" held so bravely against the Etruscan army that poured down upon them from this very hill on which we stood. This Janiculum was in olden times outside the city proper. The lower ground towards the river was then inhabited for the most part by the Jews, and in the time of Nero by the Christians, who dwelt amongst them, and with whom they were often confounded.

This was, perhaps, the reason why the slope of the hill where the church now stands was chosen as the scene of St. Peter's crucifixion. It was outside the city, close to the quarter of the turbulent Jews, and hence a fitting place to execute a "malefactor" of the hated race. The Saint had been confined in the Mamertine Prison near the Forum; but he was taken thence and led up to this conspicuous spot above the Jewish quarter, overlooking, as was fitting, all Royal Rome; and there the cross was erected in that very hole from which the lay Brother now takes up for you a little of the golden sand. "Let me not be crucified like my Master," he said to the soldiers. "I am unworthy of it; let my body be fastened to the cross with my head down." So he was crucified with his head down, as Eusebius and St. Jerome, quoting from more ancient writers, expressly tell us. "Happy man," says St. Chrysostom, "with his feet erect to walk straight into Heaven." The body of St. Peter was taken from this place of execution by the Priest Marcellinus and interred in a quiet spot on the slope of the Vatican Hill, about a half a mile further north on the same side of the river, probably the place where the holy priest then dwelt, and offered the Holy Sacrifice. Over his tomb there grew up a church which was greatly enlarged in the time of Constantine the Great, and was finally rebuilt in its present unapproachable grandeur during the sixteenth century by men like Michael Angelo, Bramante, and others, whose equals have never since appeared in the world of art and architecture. It was this Bramante who designed the beautiful little temple—

Tempietta—in the Courtyard of St. Peter's, in Montorio, over the very spot where, as Mangan says, "the martyr saint" was crucified, and which is reverently visited by the pilgrims of every nationality who go to Rome. It was Raphael, too, perhaps the greatest of all painters, who painted his famous Transfiguration to be an altar-piece for this Church of Montorio, and it continued over the high altar until 1797, when it was, like many other works of art, stolen by the sacrilegious French from Rome. It was afterwards restored, and is now one of the greatest of the art treasures in the Vatican; so that from the religious and artistic point of view this church has many points of interest for the pilgrim. It was built by order of the Catholic Sovereigns Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain about the year 1500, and given in charge to a community of Spanish Franciscans. Their representatives are there still, but, as the Superior told me after our cup of coffee, they are very poor, for, like the Italian religious, they have been left destitute by their own Government, and now live on the fruits of their garden and the scanty alms of the faithful. It would be a real charity to help the guardians of the Earls' graves.

But for the Irish pilgrims the graves of the Northern Earls were, of course, the great centre of attraction, and no patriotic Irishman who goes to Rome ever leaves them unvisited.

"Two Princes of the line of Conn

Sleep in their cells of clay beside O'Donnell Roe;

Three Royal youths, alas! are gone,

Who lived for Erin's weal, but died for Erin's woe!

Ah! could the men of Ireland read

The names these noteless burial-stones display to view,
Their wounded hearts afresh would bleed,

Their tears gush forth again—their groans resound
anew."

So sang the Bard of Tyrconnell who accompanied the Earls, as poor Clarence Mangan has translated his woeful song; and even still it is hard for an Irishman to view these graves unmoved—that is, an Irishman who knows the whole sad story of glory, disaster, and death. I propose to read for you the names on these noteless burial-stones. One stone on the left tells us that Prince Rory O'Donnell, Earl of Tyrconnell, whom the poet calls "O'Donnell Roe,"



HUGH O'NEILL, EARL OF TYRONE.

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INTERIOR OF CHURCH OF ST. PETER IN MONTORIO.



after many battles fought, and many labours endured for his faith and country, was driven an exile from Ireland and received with hospitality and affection by the Pope in Rome, where to the grief of all who looked for his return, he died on the 29th of July, 1608, in the 33rd year of his age. His brother Caffar, the companion of his dangers and his exile, followed him to the grave on the 15th October following, at the age of twenty-five. It is added that their eldest brother, Prince Hugh O'Donnell, had predeceased them six years, and was buried by the royal care of Philip III. of Spain, at Valladolid, on the 10th September, 1602. The second stone records that Hugh, Baron of Dungannon, the eldest son of Prince Hugh O'Neill the Great, after fighting many years against the heretics for his religion and country, like his uncle, the Earl of Tyrconnell, became an exile, and died, like him, an early death, on the 1st October, 1609, in the 24th year of his age. At a later period—seven years later—the great Hugh himself went to his rest, and although it is not stated on the slab, it is certain that he was buried beside his son, the Baron of Dungannon, and a simple inscription recording his death was inscribed on the tomb. I did not see the inscription over the Great Hugh, but Father Murphy quotes it as follows :—

Hic quiescunt
Hugonis Principis O'Neill
Ossa.

So they sleep side by side in death far away from green Tyrconnell, those noble princes of the North, so closely allied in blood, in virtue, and in deeds of valour on many a well-fought field, the names of which are among the most glorious recorded in the chequered annals of our sad island story.

The two Hughs—the great Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell—were, as the poet says, "Two princes of the line of Conn." They were sprung from two twin brothers, Eoghan and Conal, sons of Nial of the Nine Hostages, who was himself seventh in descent from Conn of the Hundred Battles. The two brothers, with their own good swords, won the broad lands to which they gave their names; for Tyrone is simply Eoghan's Land, as Tyrconnell is Conal's Land. The brothers were so much attached to each other, that it is said Eoghan died of grief when he heard of the death of his brother Conal, who was killed in a raid which

he made into the County Leitrim, and was buried near the old Church of Fenagh. His cromlech or monument is there still, and I myself have seen it. These two princes were Christians, and were baptised by St. Patrick during his missionary journey to the North. From that time till Queen Elizabeth's reign their descendants ruled over their respective territories for 1150 years; and amongst them were scholars, saints, and warriors, many of whom became High Kings of Tara. The O'Neills were always recognised as the leading family in the North; and were also generally regarded as Provincial Kings of Ulster. The O'Donnells and their predecessors, of the same race, but of other family names, claimed perfect independence and equality, and never paid tribute to the O'Neills. Even when eastern Ulster—Down and Antrim—was conquered by De Courcy and De Burgo, the O'Neills and O'Donnells still maintained their independence in the fastnesses of Tyrone and Donegal. In the reign of Henry VIII, A.D. 1542, Conn O'Neill agreed to accept an earldom from the King and acknowledge his Sovereignty; but he continued to be an independent prince. It is said that he took the Oath of Supremacy, of the meaning of which, however, he knew little or nothing, for he lived and died a Catholic like all his family. The safe-guarding clause, too, was then annexed, limiting the Royal Supremacy—"in so far as the Law of Christ permits"—which made a very great difference in the nature of the oath. We are told also that about the same time Manus O'Donnell and his son "made peace and amity" with the King's deputy; but the words of the Four Masters imply that it was rather as independent princes than as dutiful subjects. Certainly no attempt was made at that time to interfere with the Northern Chiefs in the government of their principalities, or to enforce the King's laws for the suppression of their monasteries.

But when Queen Elizabeth found herself firmly seated on the throne, she began to adopt a more aggressive policy. She and her Ministers meant first to destroy the Catholic Faith in Ireland as soon as they could; and secondly to reduce the Celtic Chiefs to English rule and obedience—she was determined to make Ireland at once a Protestant and "civilised" kingdom after the English model. To some extent in civil things we see the process going on under our own eyes in South Africa. I merely now state facts. It is admitted that the purpose is to abolish the

civilisation of Pretoria and substitute that of Capetown and London. The Boers are content with their own civilisation ; but England imposes on them a higher civilisation for their good, of course—just as Elizabeth, with even less right, undertook, for their good, to civilise Tyrone and Tyrconnell. But the gallant chieftains of the North resolved to fight to the death for their religion and ancient independence. In the latter they failed ; but in the first they were victorious, for it is mainly owing to the heroic struggle made by them, and men like them, that the Catholic Faith still survives in Ireland. Had they yielded, Ireland would now be, like England, a Protestant country—for it was the tyranny of Elizabeth that made England Protestant.

And here let me observe that those Irish chiefs who fought against Elizabeth were not rebels or insurgents or anything of that kind. I am no advocate of rebellion ; but please God I shall never cease to praise brave men fighting for their own. The Northern Earls were not rebels ; they were gallant men fighting for their homes and altars against a tyrannical usurper ; and I will prove it. Elizabeth had not a shadow of a title to the obedience of the Celtic chiefs of Ireland. Three titles to sovereignty are recognised—there is no fourth—and these are the right of birth, the right of conquest, and the will of the people. She had no right of birth, for she was the illegitimate daughter of Henry and Anne Boleyn, born whilst his legitimate wife, Catherine of Arragon, was still alive. Even her own father and the English Parliament in 1536, when Anne was put to death, declared his daughter to be illegitimate ; and shall we recognise this bastard princess to be by birth Queen of Ireland ? She had no title from conquest, at least till the very close of her reign, for the native chiefs were in the field down to the battle of Kinsale ; and she was dead before Hugh O'Neill had made his actual submission to the deputy. She had no title from the will of the people, as these long struggles prove, and neither of the Parliaments held during her reign was representative of Celtic Ireland, and, such as they were, they made no pretence of giving her the Crown of Ireland. She had no title to rule Celtic Ireland from beginning to end. Hence, the Northern Chiefs were perfectly justified in resisting her authority by force of arms.

They would no doubt be willing enough to yield her a nominal obedience, for they feared her power, if she would

only allow them liberty of conscience, and let them keep the faith of their fathers. They always put this in the forefront of their demands, but that liberty of conscience she always refused. It was essentially a religious war—on the one side a war of wicked aggression to “make Ireland English” in religion, language, and polity, that is, to root out the religion and destroy the National life of Catholic Ireland; on the other side, it was a war of self-defence, waged by men who were resolved to defend their faith and their country at the cost of their lives. And hence Pope Clement VIII. declared repeatedly that these wars of the Irish chiefs against Elizabeth were a crusade for the faith, undertaken to repel the unjust aggression of a foreign prince who had no right to the throne of Ireland, and broke the oath she took at her coronation to protect the Church and maintain the Catholic Faith throughout her realm. The ten years’ war maintained by O’Neill and O’Donnell, from 1592 to 1602, was the most bloody and glorious of this prolonged struggle, and they have left us memories of Irish victories won over the generals of Elizabeth which will never fade from the minds of the people. “The dauntless Red Hugh” was not the greatest general, but he is the noblest figure which looms across that page of Irish history—the boldest, the bravest, the most chivalrous of all our island warriors; and hence it is that he holds so high a place in popular affection, higher perhaps than any other of our National heroes. He hated the Saxon with undying hatred, and not without good cause. Whilst he was yet a mere boy of fifteen he was basely kidnapped, with his cousins, by the captain of an English ship at Rathmullen; he was carried thence and imprisoned in the Castle of Dublin; he was loaded with iron fetters and left to starve, except in so far as the charity of the passers-by threw an alms through the bars of their grating to keep the poor boys from the pangs of hunger. He escaped, but was recaptured and loaded with still heavier fetters. He escaped once more in mid-winter to the hills of Wicklow. He saw poor Art O’Neill, his fellow-captive and fellow-fugitive, perish by his side at midnight in a rocky cave, and he himself suffered so much from cold and hunger that he was unable to walk to a place of shelter, and two of his frozen toes had to be amputated at the second joint. Is it any wonder that the gallant boy hated the deputy who planned this crime, hated the Queen who approved of it, and hated

all the oppressors of his country, who bore the Saxon name ? And for ten years he gave it to them hot and heavy—sometimes in alliance with O'Neill, sometimes fighting on his own resources. With exultant pride O'Keenan tells in a splendid elegy of the glorious fields he won. I can now only refer to one, the battle of the Curlew Hills, north of Boyle, and I refer to it chiefly because in a short address which O'Donnell spoke to his soldiers before the battle, he sets out in a very striking way the manifold wrongs of his country. The battle was fought on the 15th August, 1599. The day before the battle O'Donnell and his troops fasted in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and on Lady Day itself he and most of his officers confessed their sins, and heard Mass and went to Communion. It was after Mass he addressed his soldiers, narrating their wrongs, bidding them trust in God and His Holy Mother, and assuring them of victory. Here are one or two stanzas of my own version of this splendid address :—

“ Not for conquest, or for vengeance, on this blessed Lady Day,
 Not in strength or numbers trusting, do we face their proud array ;
 But for Holy Mary's honour, by their tainted lips defiled,
 For the sacred rights of freemen, for the mother, maid, and child.
 Prone and bleeding lies our country ; sorrow clouds her crownless brow ;
 All the lines of peerless beauty limned in ghastly colours now.
 In the light of glories olden, beaming through our dark disgrace,
 See the madd'ning wrongs and insults heaped upon our fallen race—
 Roofless homestead, broken altar, slaughtered priest, dishonoured maid—
 Children of an outraged mother, whet ye well the thirsty blade !
 Never chieftain of Clan Dalgaigh to th' invader bowed the knee ;
 By the black years of my bondage, it shall ne'er be done by me !
 I had rather angry ocean rolled o'er castle, cot, and hall,
 Than see any Saxon *bodagh* rule in Royal Donegal.”

Such were the motives, as he tells us himself, that inspired "the dauntless Red Hugh," the bravest and best of the Gael in this conflict with his relentless oppressors. The great Earl of Tyrone was his brother-in-law, and in his youth Hugh O'Donnell was betrothed to O'Neill's daughter, but, I believe, the marriage never took place. O'Neill was a much older man and a greater general than O'Donnell. He had been trained in his youth in England; and he knew how to baffle the statesmen of Elizabeth with caution and cunning superior to their own. He had great military talents, and his talents were perfected by great and varied experience in war. Henry IV. of France declared that O'Neill was the second soldier of the age—he himself being the first. He gained by sheer military skill a great victory over Bagnal and the English at the Yellow Ford, near Armagh, which proved that, on equal terms, no English general could keep the field against him. In fact, until the fatal day of Kinsale, the careers of O'Neill and O'Donnell might be described as ones of almost unbroken victory. You have read of that fatal field, where the cause of Ireland received its death-blow; and, what is saddest of all, the defeat of the Irish was to a great extent due to their own fatal jealousies and dissensions. That took place at the end of 1601 or beginning of 1602. O'Donnell forthwith set out for Spain to seek once more the help of the Spanish King, Philip III. The King received him kindly, and promised to help him. But there were delays, and as O'Donnell hastened once more to see the King, he fell sick at Simancas, a Royal castle, and after sixteen days' illness he died there, and his remains were buried with great solemnity by Royal command in the Franciscan Convent of Valladolid, where the King kept his court at the time.

There was some suspicion of foul play even then, yet hardly any one could credit it. But now we know it was too true. O'Donnell was poisoned by one James Blake of Galway, who was bribed for the purpose by Carew, President of Munster. We have Carew's own letter, partially in cypher, describing the hellish plot, and we have his account of its success, written also in cypher, to the Secretary Salisbury, that he might give the joyful news to his royal mistress, who was then fast hastening to her own fearful death. Father Murphy has published the documents, and given us the key of the cypher in his introduction to the

“ Irish Life of Red Hugh O’Donnell,” lately published. So the best and the bravest of the Gael was assassinated in a foreign land by the agents of that wicked Queen, whose Deputy had caused him to be kidnapped when a mere boy and loaded with fetters in the dungeons of Dublin Castle. When will the men of Donegal forget those wicked deeds ?

O’Neill and Rory O’Donnell, the brother and heir of Red Hugh, submitted to the Deputy Mountjoy, in the beginning of 1603, just when the Queen was dying, but of that fact they were carefully kept in ignorance. James I.—the ungrateful, pedantic, drivelling James—with the blood of Irish kings in his veins, succeeded to the throne, and at first there were hopes of better times. O’Neill was pardoned, and was confirmed in the possession of a great part of his ancient territory. Rory O’Donnell was made Earl of Tyrconnell, and in like manner succeeded to the ancient principality of his family, with certain restrictions in favour of Nial Garve O’Donnell, who had done much to accomplish the ruin of his family, and very fitly ended his own traitorous career in the Tower of London. But the northern Earls soon learned that the pardon and restoration of their estates was a hollow pretence. O’Neill, in a document which we still possess, sets out a long list of his grievances. No priest would be allowed to say Mass even in his own barony of Dungannon ; his vassal, O’Kane, was encouraged to refuse him the usual dues payable to the over-lord ; the new prelates of Derry and Armagh claimed a great part of his territory as churchland. English sheriffs, too, and other officials, harried and plundered his tribesmen, and every effort was made to drive him into rebellion that his estates might be confiscated. Similar schemes were set on foot against Rory O’Donnell in Tyrconnell. Still, O’Neill was cautious, and gave no ground to his enemies for arresting him on a charge of treason.

Then Chichester had recourse to informers to get up a charge of treason against the Earl. The Baron of Howth, Christopher St. Lawrence, to his shame be it said, was the base delator ; and Nugent, Baron of Delvin, seems to have lent his assistance. A pretended plot was discovered, and O’Neill was commanded to go to England with the Earl of Tyrconnell, to answer the charges against him. But his son, Henry, sent him word from Brussels that if they went they were lost, that they would certainly be imprisoned in the Tower, or perhaps executed at Tyburn. A ship was

got ready at Brussels to enable them to escape from the country. It was secretly brought to Rathmullen by Maguire of Fermanagh, a devoted friend and fellow-soldier of the two Earls, and so on the 14th September, 1607, at 12 o'clock at night, O'Neill and O'Donnell, with their immediate friends and relations, 90 souls in all, weighed anchor, and set sail on that ill-fated voyage to the Continent, from which they were never destined to return. The Four Masters describe them as the most illustrious party of emigrants that the winds ever wafted from the shores of Ireland, and pathetically add, "woe to the heart that meditated, woe to the mind that conceived, woe to the council that decided on the project of their setting out on this voyage, without knowing if they should ever return to their native principalities or patrimonies to the end of the world." It was, in truth, a fatal mistake, but yet produced its own good fruit in its way, as we shall presently see.

It was only a small craft of 80 tons, with 90 persons on board, and they set sail for Spain at the very worst time in our western seas, when the equinoxial gales are sure to blow. Nor did they fail to come from the south-west, right in the track of the little vessel, buffeting her hither and thither for fourteen days, until at last the half-famished crew of the ill-fated ship, short of water and of food, and drenched with the billows, were forced to run for shelter to the estuary of the Seine, a little to the seaward of Rouen, in France, where they landed on the twenty-first day after their departure. They were kindly received, but detained to ascertain the pleasure of the King in their regard. The King allowed them to continue their journey, as he did not care to keep the exiles in France, but when the British Ambassador asked to have them sent to London, the King indignantly replied, "France is a free country; no guest of France shall be molested, least of all those driven from their homes on account of their religion." Still, Henry had no desire to give needless offence to his royal brother of England, and he intimated that the sooner the exiles proceeded on their journey to the Low Countries the better. They travelled by easy stages, first to Brussels and afterwards to Louvain. Everywhere on their journey they were received with the greatest marks of esteem. At Brussels, Spinola the governor received them as princely guests, and entertained them at a royal banquet. Albert and Isabella the Archdukes, met them at the door of their palace, and received

the exiles with the most cordial welcome. At Louvain, it might be said, they were once more at home. They were lodged in the palace where the great Emperor Charles V. spent his boyish days. Florence Conry, afterwards Archbishop of Tuam, was then founding the great convent of St. Anthony, which afterwards did so much for Irish literature. Henry O'Neill, the son of the Earl, was there, too, and in command of a Spanish regiment, which he received from the King, in spite of all the influence of England. There were many Irish Franciscans there also in the young convent of St. Anthony, who gave an Irish welcome to the toil-worn exiles. The burgomeister and all the citizens, too, received them with the highest honour, and there they stayed to rest themselves for some months in that city of learning.

It was their intention to proceed to friendly Spain; but meantime King James's Ambassador was intriguing against them at Madrid, and urging the King to give no countenance to those whom he described as a band of fugitive conspirators. King Philip, anxious to keep on good terms with James, thereupon sent word to the Irish nobles that it would be better for them to proceed to Rome than to Madrid. Pope Paul V. had already intimated to the exiled Earls, through Peter Lombard, Archbishop of Armagh, that no matter what others might do, he would at all times give the exiles a home and a welcome in Rome. So they resolved to cross the Alps and take refuge with the Father of the Faithful. Some of the ladies and youths of their company were left for the present in the old University city, under the protection of the Archdukes, who, however, as we shall see, were unable to save Bernard O'Neill, the son of the Earl, from the murderous hands of some agent of the English Government. On the 28th February they set out, twenty-one in number, for the Eternal City. There were no railways then, or Alpine tunnels. The St. Gothard Pass was deep in snow, so deep that when the party was crossing the Devil's Bridge, over the foaming Reuss, at the foot of the Pass, one of their horses slipped on the bridge and fell down the abyss with all the provisions and some money which he was carrying. But they struggled onwards to Milan, where they again received a royal welcome, and finally reached Rome towards the close of April, 1608. Here again a royal welcome awaited the illustrious exiles by command of the Pope. Peter Lombard, Archbishop of

Armagh, with several Cardinals, met the party at the Flaminian gate, and conducted them to the Salviati Palace in the Borgo, near St. Peter's Church on Montorio, which his Holiness had provided for their reception. Next day they were invited to see the Pope himself at the Quirinal, and he received them with fatherly tenderness, and was deeply moved by the story of their sufferings. The Pontiff also set aside an ample sum for their maintenance, and the King of Spain also settled pensions on the Earls to enable them to keep their state in Rome. The ladies of the party were also received by the Pope with the greatest honour, and the most illustrious dames and nobles in Rome visited them and received them in their palaces. But the young eagles of the North, taken away from the breezy uplands of their native hills, pined away like caged birds in the malarial atmosphere of a Roman summer. Many of the party were attacked by the Roman fever in the sultry June. Most of them recovered, but the Earl of Tyrconnell, whose victorious sword had so often flashed against the foe through all the borders of the North, sickened unto death, and on the 22nd of July, strengthened with the Last Sacraments, at the age of 33, gave his soul to God, and was buried on the Sacred Hill—sacred, indeed, but far, far away from the dear old abbey by the sea at Donegal, where his fathers slept in peace. He was buried like his sires in the habit of St. Francis, and he knew that the Monks of St. Francis for many a day would pray for his soul's repose. Three months later his brother Caffar, at the early age of 25, was buried in the same grave—

“ Caffar, whom
Tyrconnell of the Helmets mourns in deep despair,
For valour, truth, and comely bloom,
For all that greatens and adorns—a peerless pair.”

Just twelve months later, and the Roman summer claimed another victim. Young Hugh O'Neill, the Baron of Dunganon, eldest son of the great Hugh, was carried up to the Church of St. Peter on Montorio, and laid in a new grave beside his cousins before the high altar. He, too, was cut off in his vernal bloom at the age of 24, and the news brought great joy to Dublin and to London; and the King's ministers wrote joyful letters to each other announcing the event, for they feared and hated the name of O'Neill

as they feared the gates of hell. But the old Earl still lived on, and so long as he lived they were still sore afraid, for they knew that the very name of the great Hugh would still awake and incite the men of the North to deeds of valour and of vengeance.

Yet the great old man was then more to be pitied than to be feared. He saw the hope of his house laid low, and the light of his life extinguished, when his son was laid to rest beside his cousins in the Church of St. Peter. He had other sons, it is true, but the bloodhounds of James were on their track. His youngest son, Conn, was left behind in Ireland in the hurry of the flight. He was picked up by Chichester, and, boy as he was, he ended his life in the Tower of London. Young Bernard, who remained in Brussels as a page in the Court of the Archdukes, although his father did not live to hear it, was strangled in his lodgings with his hands tied behind his back, by an agent of the British Government—that same Government who had poisoned Red Hugh, and on six different occasions had tried to assassinate both Shane O'Neill and the Earl. Two more still remained, Henry, who was a Colonel, and John, who was a sailor in the service of Spain, but both died at a later period, and left, I believe, no family behind them. There was only one boy, a nephew of old Hugh, the son of his brother Art, who survived and found his way to Ireland, where in many a well-fought field he taught the English foe that the sword of O'Neill was as keen in his hands as when it was wielded by Hugh the Great. There is some reason to think that Eoghan Roe, too, was poisoned by the agents of England.

But old Hugh knew none of these things. He was now seventy years of age, and failing fast. For some years, indeed, he hoped almost against hope to get such help from the King of Spain as would enable him to return to Ireland, reconquer his hereditary dominions, and expel the intruders from the North. But the old hero's heart grew sad as he saw his cherished hopes one by one doomed to disappointment. In 1615 he fell ill, and the greatest Roman doctors tried to restore him to health, but in vain; it was a malady of the mind rather than the body. The thought of his gallant tribesmen, the loyal and the brave, driven without mercy from the land which their fathers owned to make way for the foe and the stranger pressed heavily on his heart. At the beginning of the following year he lost his

sight ; and he himself now felt that there was no hope that he could ever again lead the warriors of the North to victory. The darkness around him was a sad emblem of the darkness which had settled over the fair hills of his native land. He felt, indeed, that if by mortal arm his father's throne could have been saved, his arm the feat had done. But he had drawn a sword that could not save ; the cause of Ireland was lost. " Each morrow brought sorrow and shadows of dread, and the rest that seemed best was the rest of the dead." He felt that he would soon sleep with his son in the Franciscan habit in the church of Montorio, and he had not long to wait. On the 20th of July, 1616 the old man died in the 76th year of his age.

The record of O'Neill's death is, fitting enough, the last entry in the *Annals of the Four Masters*. The hope of an independent Ireland lies buried in his grave. " Although," they add, " he died far from Armagh, the burial place of his ancestors, it was a token that God was pleased with his life when the Lord permitted him to have no worse burial place than Rome, the head city of the Christians." Yes, it was well that the Northern Earls died in Rome, and that we know where they rest on the Golden Mount, where the " martyr-saint " was crucified. A heedless thinker might say that they fought in vain and died in vain. But no ; they bravely fought and nobly died for their faith and their fatherland ; and men like them never live or die in vain. St. Peter was crucified with his head downwards on the very spot where they sleep. Did he live and die in vain ? The yellow sands of that Coliseum, whose ruins can be seen beyond the river, were often dyed red with the blood of the martyrs whose noble deaths made sport for the yelling mobs of Rome. They surely did not die in vain. No, nor the three hundred who fell at Thermopylæ, nor the Roman Senators who calmly awaited death from the Gauls in their curule chairs on the Capitol, nor the brave men of every age and country who gave their lives for God, or for their native land. They go down to the grave, but their example abides for ever—a living force to incite men to imitate their deeds, and if needs be, follow them to a noble death.

And rest assured that the story of the *Fate and Fortunes of the Northern Earls* has been, and will be through generations yet unborn, a most powerful agent in fostering and strengthening the spirit of faith and nationality in the

bosoms of the men of Ireland. And those silent graves on Montorio have been, and will be for ages to come, a bond of union stronger than steel to bind the heart of Ireland to the great heart of Rome. We can never forget that when the northern chiefs were driven by oppression from their native land, when the King of France told them to move on, when even friendly and generous Spain was afraid to receive them, it was the Pope (Paul V.) who with open arms welcomed them to his city of Rome, gave them a palace to dwell in, and an income to live upon, commanded his Cardinals and nobles to pay them all the honours due to princes who had sacrificed everything for their faith, and when the end came had them buried with princely honours in the beautiful Church on St. Peter's Mount. We can never forget these things in Ireland, and it was thoughts like these that brought the Irish pilgrims to visit the graves on Montorio; that made us give a mightier shout of joy to see the Pope in St. Peter's; that have caused me to recall the memories of those Irish graves in Rome; and that will, I hope, help to strengthen in the hearts of all an undying love for faith and country, as well as an unswerving loyalty "to that grand old Roman See" that never deserted our fathers in the days of their trials.

The Holy Wells of Ireland.

“The Holy wells—the living wells—the cool, the fresh, the pure,
A thousand ages rolled away, and still those founts endure.”—

FRAZER.

IRELAND from time immemorial has been celebrated for its Holy Wells and Healing Fountains. The “Tripartite Life of St. Patrick” tells us that even in pre-Christian days certain healing streams were greatly venerated by the people. The veracious Gerald de Barri records some marvellous stories of the famous Irish wells of his own time; and any modern tourist can easily find out many holy wells, to which the people pay great veneration, and which they are wont to visit for the performance of certain religious “rounds” or exercises on the feast days of the “patrons” of these holy wells.

In pagan times the sacred streams were certainly the objects of idolatrous worship, and even in Christian times the reverence for them has sometimes degenerated into superstition. But, all the same, it is certain that a lawful and appropriate reverence of a religious character can be paid to the holy wells, especially to those sacred fountains that have been specially blessed by some great saint, or sanctified for the administration of the Sacraments of the Church, or have been instrumental in performing miraculous cures.

Those who regard the Scripture as the Word of God can hardly deny the lawfulness of venerating such holy wells, for we find examples of a similar veneration quoted with approval in many passages of the Bible. Tertullian, one of the earliest of the Latin Fathers, traces the origin of this religious veneration to the fact that the element of water was specially sanctified by God when, as we are told, His Spirit “moved over the waters” of the dark and shapeless void, and brought life and light into the world. The same element of water was constantly used in the ceremonial

purifications of the Jews. A brazen sea of purest water stood within the court of the Temple for the purification of the priests, as well as ten lavers for the washing of the victims for the holocausts; and all these lavers were regarded as sacred things which no man dare profane. We know, too, that "he who was not sprinkled with the water of expiation, he shall be unclean, and his uncleanness shall remain upon him" (Numbers xix. 13). Holy water surely this was, and entitled to appropriate religious veneration as a sacred thing.

And was not that a sacred spring which gushed from the heart of the rock Horeb, when Moses, by divine command, smote it with the same rod whose stroke had turned into blood the waters of the sacred Nile? For St. Paul tells that the rock was a figure of Christ, and the fountain was a type of the living waters of the New Law. So, likewise, the Jordan was pre-eminently a sacred stream, whose waters, "swelling up like a mountain" for the passage of the Israelites, heard and obeyed the voice of God. A healing virtue from on high filled the waters of the same sacred river when Naaman, the leper, went down, and washing seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the prophet, "his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was made clean." Truly a sacred wave of mighty power, which became holier still when the Saviour Himself stood in its bed, and the Baptist poured on His head those baptismal waters which, as all the Fathers teach, gave no sanctity to Him, but were for ever sanctified by the touch of His sacred flesh. And so, through all the ages, pilgrims from every land bathed in that sacred wave, and its waters are borne, even in our own unbelieving days, to far distant cities to baptize the children of kings.

Everyone has heard, too, of the sacred pool of Bethsaida, or Bethesda, where, as St. John tells us, "a great multitude of the sick, of the blind, of the lame, and of the withered" lay in its five porches waiting for the moving of the water. "And an angel of the Lord descended at certain times into the pond, and the water was moved. And he that went down first into the pond, after the motion of the water was made, was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under." Truly a healing fountain, just like that of Siloam, close at hand, in which the blind man washed by command of Christ, and returned from the fountain seeing. If these things of old happened in Jerusalem, why not at Lourdes in

our own time? And if the Jordan waters and Jacob's Well, from which the Saviour drank, were deemed sacred of old, why may not the fountains blessed by the saints of God, sanctified by their daily use, and employed by them as baptismal waters, be also deemed sacred and holy? If the stream of the Jordan and the Pool of Bêthsaida had a healing virtue at certain times, why should it be impossible that the same Divine power should give a similar healing virtue to some of the blessed wells of holy Ireland?

There were many circumstances connected with the early history of our Irish Church which undoubtedly contributed a particular sanctity to our Holy Wells.

In the early Christian Church, adult baptism, as we know, was generally performed by immersion. It had thus a special significance for the Christian converts, for it symbolised in a very vivid manner the death to sin and the resurrection to a new and heavenly life, which, as St. Paul teaches, was a leading idea in the spiritual significance of the Christian Baptism; and the triple immersion of the catechumen added a deeper significance, for it reminded him of the three days spent by Christ in the grave, as well as of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity in whose name he was baptised.

So we find that baptisteries for the convenient and becoming administration of the Sacrament by immersion were at an early period constructed close to all the cathedrals of the great cities, like Rome, Milan, Ravenna, and Constantinople. They were, as we know, beautiful buildings, elaborately decorated, and of considerable size; but the soul and centre of the building was the holy fountain itself, surrounded by a balustrade with ascending and descending steps, in which the catechumens stood, whilst the bishop, with his deacons and deaconesses, administered the Sacrament of Baptism by triple immersion, or, as happened in many cases, by infusion—that is, a copious pouring of the blessed stream on the heads of those to be baptised. Everything was done with the greatest regard to propriety. The catechumens were dressed pretty much as bathers are at present, and the holy basin was surrounded by curtains, oftentimes richly ornamented, thus securing, as it were, the privacy of the domestic bath. The ceremony itself was beautiful and significant. It was administered with great solemnity, especially on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost. The catechumens, standing in the water in

batches before the bishop and his attendants, first turning to the west, the place of darkness, solemnly renounced Satan with all his works and pomps. Then, turning to the east, to the throne of heavenly light, they stretched out their hands to heaven and made solemn profession of their faith, after which they were baptised by the bishop and his attendants, either by immersion or infusion, as the circumstances of the time and place demanded. These sacred fountains were always solemnly blessed by the Church ; and, so far as we can judge, they were completely emptied of water, then cleansed, refilled, and blessed anew, at least once a year, on the vigil of Easter or of Pentecost, or, more commonly, on both days.

And not only were these baptismal fountains kept in the baptisteries, but there was another kind of holy well in the atrium or porch of the church for the use of the faithful when entering the sacred building. Like the lavers in the Temple of Jerusalem, they served to cleanse the face and hands and feet of the worshippers, so that they might, in those hot and dusty lands, approach the holy mysteries with fitting disposition both of body and mind. They were reminded, too, by an inscription over the fountain, to cleanse the conscience with even more care than they cleansed the face :

NIΨON ANOMHMATA MH MONAN OΨIN.

But when St. Patrick came to preach the Gospel in Ireland he found a very different state of things existing. He found a people hungry for the Gospel, who were eager to drink in joy from the fountains of their Saviour ; but they were a people very different in many respects from the provincial populations of Imperial Rome. They were a simple people, or, as St. Patrick himself calls them, " barbarous," in the sense that they knew nothing of Roman civilisation. They had neither cities, nor towns, nor temples, nor centralised government ; although, in our opinion, they had a written language and a bardic literature of considerable antiquity. St. Patrick had to build his own churches, and to do it hurriedly sometimes, either of turf, or of wood, *more Scottorum*, rarely of stone, except in those districts where nothing else could be had. And before he built the churches he had to baptise his converts. Baptisteries, of course, were out of the question. But he met the difficulty in another way. He pitched his tent close to a wayside stream, or

well, near the dun of a friendly chief. He preached the Gospel; he won over the chief and his friends, and then the whole tribe followed *en masse*. At once, with their help, he set to build his church; but, first of all, he baptised his catechumens after brief instruction suited to their simple minds. For this he blessed the well, and he placed his converts in batches in the sacred stream, or round about it, baptising them, as we may fairly assume, by infusion, for the number was too great for the more tedious process of immersion. Thus it was, we are told, that he baptised in one day twelve thousand of the men of Tirawley in that fountain of the One Horn which still flows beneath the hillock that gave it its name into the sea at Killala, close to where the railway station now stands. It got its name from the hillock from whose foot it flowed, and might well be deemed holy, because it was blessed by the Apostle, and became the fountain of salvation for so many souls, one of them being a woman whom Patrick had raised to life, and then baptised in its sacred waters.

The Holy Well of Ballintober, in the Co. Mayo, has been famous through many centuries. Both town and parish took their name from the well, which became in after ages so celebrated that a great abbey of Canons Regular was founded there in the thirteenth century. But it was known even in pagan times by the name of Slan, or the Healer, and the people worshipped it because they believed a certain wizard or prophet dwelt beneath the rock from which the cooling spring burst forth. And they called it the "King of Waters." But Patrick undeceived the foolish people, for he removed the flag from the well, showing them there was nothing beneath it; and then, blessing the fountain, he baptised in its waters his disciple Cainnech, and placed him over the church of Cell Tog, which afterwards came to be called Ballintober. This shows us Patrick's procedure in dealing with pagan superstitions, and how the mystic fountains of the old religion became the blessed wells of that new religion of which baptism was the most essential and characteristic rite. These sacred fountains, called after St. Patrick, are found all over the face of the country, wherever the Apostle preached, and still are justly held in the highest reverence.

One of the most picturesque holy wells in Ireland is that which is known as Tubbernaltha, on the shore of Lough Gill, near Sligo. The well gushes out from the face of the cliff

to which it owes its name. The pellucid stream at first lingers under the shade of embowering shrubs, the centre of a scene of enchanting loveliness, and then steals away with gentle murmur to mingle with the waters of the lake. The well has a double sanctity, for it was not only blessed by St Patrick, who, it seems, baptised his converts there on his way southward through Tirerrill, but in the penal days its waters were used in the celebration of Mass, which was solemnised there beneath an aged tree when no priest dare venture into the town of Sligo. There is another Patrick's Well on the slope of Tullaghan Hill, in the Co. Sligo. It is said that it sprang up at the prayer of St. Patrick, when he was suffering from thirst through the machinations of one of the she-demons of Croagh Patrick, who had polluted all the wells in her flight from the holy mountain. This well is described in a treatise on the wonders of Ireland, dating from the ninth century, as "a well of sweet water on the side of Corann, the property of which well is that it flows and ebbs like the sea, although it is far away from the sea;" and Gerald de Barri repeats the statement in the beginning of the thirteenth century almost in the same words. There is a large rock close at hand which is called the Altar, and it may have been used as such by St. Patrick himself. But Dr. O'Rorke, the local historian, denies the ebbing and flowing, and assures us that the water is by no means sweet and pellucid. It had for ages, like many other holy wells, two enchanted trout; and great crowds assembled there on the annual "patron" day to make their "rounds" of prayer, and afterwards enjoy themselves in more mundane fashion. This led to so many abuses that the local clergy there, as well as in many other places, proscribed the "station," which has now, we believe, been discontinued.

In the Glen of Altadavin, near Clogher, on the borders of Monaghan and Tyrone, there is another famous Patrician well. It is a small, smooth, circular basin, sunk in the surface of a large rock that stands isolated from and rising over the adjacent rocks. Yet as often as the basin is emptied of its water, it fills again in a short time, although no one can explain how the water gets there, for the rock stands alone, and the well is on its upper surface. No aperture or perforation can be discovered; the basin is "smooth, hard and solid." It was in this basin, it appears, the Saint baptised his converts. The chair in which he sat when speaking to the crowds below is close at hand, and the

great stone altar where he celebrated Mass stood before him. The whole glen is very striking, and one might easily fancy the Saint still sitting in his chair of stone, his converts crowding the rocky slopes around, and listening to the words of life that fell from his lips ; then the blessing of the rock-basin, and the baptism by infusion from the higher ground, and the wondering crowds on the green sward below watching the Saint, as he offered the holy sacrifice for the first time in the deep shades of that romantic glen, which had hitherto been sacred to the dark rites of Druidism. No wonder the rock-basin is venerated as a holy well ; and the people confidently assure us that, no matter how often it is emptied, the basin will spontaneously fill in some twenty minutes, and " it was never known to continue without water, no matter how great or prolonged was the drought." Near Limerick there is another well-known fountain, still called Patrick's Well, where the Apostle baptised the King of Thomond, as told in the " Tripartite Life." A similar holy well, which local tradition connects with the name of our Apostle, is to be seen near Clonmel, the photograph of which is here reproduced.

As a rule, all the Irish Saints have one or more blessed wells dedicated to their memory in the immediate neighbourhood of the churches which they founded. Indeed, for the reasons already explained, the church was never founded except near a well. Pure water was necessary, not only for baptism and for the Holy Sacrifice, but also for the daily needs of the holy men and women whose lives were given there to the service of God. Pure water was for them an urgent need, for they led lives of extreme rigour, hardly ever tasting animal food, except a little fish from time to time. Bread, herbs, and water were their daily fare ; they drank neither wine nor beer nor spirits—nothing but the crystal spring. What wonder these became holy wells—blessed for baptism, used at Mass, giving daily drink to generations of saints, who, with pure and grateful hearts, blessed God who gave them those crystal springs, and blessed again and again the fountain itself that gave its grateful waters to quench their thirst at every frugal meal.

For a somewhat similar reason, we find constant reference to the " blessed trout," or the " enchanted trout," that frequented the holy wells. No doubt some of the saints sought to keep fish for their own use in some of these wells and streams, as the religious of mediæval times certainly



ST. PATRICK'S WELL, CLONMEL.

Photo by]

[W. Lawrence, Dublin.



did in the larger rivers, nigh to which they always built their monasteries. Then, no true Christian would touch those little fishes which the saint or hermit kept in the stream or well near his church. It would be almost sacrilege to rob the holy man of the little that he claimed as his own, so that the fish, like the stream, would be holy things in the estimation of the people, and came to enjoy a kind of immortal life. We have a remarkable instance of this at Aghagower, in the Co. Mayo. St. Patrick founded that church for his disciple Senach, who, on account of his spotless innocence, was called the Lamb of God. The church was built on the bank of a limpid river, which still flows as full and clear as in ancient days, although both church and round tower are now in ruins. Patrick himself loved the place much for its sweet retirement, and was minded to stay there, as he was "weary faring round so many churches, and crossing so many floods." But the Angel said "No"—it was not God's will. Whereupon, Patrick left Senach there, and placed in the stream for him two salmon, as the "Tripartite" tells us, that always kept together, and could not be harmed, through the blessing of Patrick, for he left angels to watch over them. So we are told in this book, written more than a thousand years ago, and the wondrous tale has come down through the ages, and, for aught we know, the blessed salmon are there still at Aghagower, as they are said to be in so many other of the holy wells of Ireland.

This will be more easily understood if we bear in mind that in the early ages of the Church the fish was a very sacred symbol, and as such is constantly figured in the catacombs. The *ἰχθῆς*, or "fish," was regarded as a symbol of our Saviour Himself, because the letters of the word are the initial letters of the five Greek words signifying JESUS CHRIST, OF GOD THE SON, OUR SAVIOUR. So Jesus Christ himself was the heavenly ichthus, or fish, and we, His disciples, are the smaller fishes, who, as Tertullian says, are born in the waters of baptism, and caught in the net of salvation by the apostolic fishermen, who thus make us heirs of the heavenly kingdom, "catching us not for death but for life eternal with God." Then, again, the miracle of the loaves and fishes gave a eucharistic significance to the holy fish that swam in the holy wells, and both together furnished a vivid type of the spiritual life of man, as it is beautifully expressed in a Greek inscription discovered near

Autun in the year 1839 : " Offspring of the heavenly ichthus, see that a heart of holy reverence be thine, now that from the divine waters thou hast received whilst yet among mortals, a fount of life that is to immortality. Quicken thy soul, O beloved one, with the ever-flowing waters of wealth-giving wisdom, and receive the honey-sweet food of the Saviour of the saints. Eat with longing hunger the ichthus, which thou holdest in thy hands." * The Irish Saints were no strangers to this beautiful symbolism ; and if we bear it in mind, perhaps, like them, we may come to be disposed to look with deeper reverence on the crystal waters of the holy wells that symbolise so vividly the ever-flowing waters of wealth-giving wisdom, as well as on the sacred trout that haunt the stream for ever, the living image of the heavenly ichthus who has purchased our souls for God.

After St. Patrick, the greatest missionary saints of Ireland were Brigid and Columcille. St. Brigid, " the Mary of the Gael," was a woman, not only of great holiness, but also of great zeal and energy in doing the work of God. She made missionary journeys throughout various parts of Ireland. She founded many churches, and nigh to her churches we find the holy wells that still bear her name, and are still held in great reverence by the people. Brigid was venerated at Cam, west of Athlone, quite as much as she was in Kildare. Her *comarbs*, or successors, were entitled to collect the baptismal penny from all the men of Hy Many, and the holy well close to her church, in which they were baptised by her clerics, is still one of the most celebrated of those beyond the Shannon. It is yearly frequented by great crowds of pious pilgrims, who perform the station there on the Saint's feast-day, and leave many votive offerings behind them to testify to the efficacy of her prayers on their behalf. It is called Bride's Well, and has been thus frequented from time immemorial by all the men and women of Hy Many.

So it was, likewise, with Columcille. He founded, before setting out for Iona, many churches and monasteries in the northern half of Ireland, especially in Donegal, Derry, Sligo, and Meath ; and at all these foundations we find some reference to the holy wells blessed by the prayers and the daily use of the Saint and of his companions. Like St. Patrick, he was a great traveller, and on his missionary

* Dict. Chri. Ant., vol. i., p. 806.



Photo by]

HOLY WELL, SLIEVE LEAGUE. [*W. Lawrence, Dublin.*



journeys went mostly on foot. Hence it came to pass that, often tired and weary, he sat down by the wayside to rest and refresh himself with a draught from the pure waters of the cooling fountain. Then he preached there, and baptised those who flocked to hear him, and if the place were otherwise suitable, he chose it as the site of a church, or hermitage, or monastery, for, although most of the monks lived in community, others preferred a solitary life, and sought to serve God in some deep mountain valley, or lonely island, or pathless wood, where they might live alone with Him, far removed from the distractions of the world. Such a wild mountain valley is Glen Columcille, at the base of Slieve League, in the Co. Donegal, cut off, as it then was, from the world, and looking out over the wild western sea. But Columcille loved it for its very loneliness; and his holy well on Slieve League is still greatly venerated by the men of Tirconnell, who confide in the Saint as their special patron and protector.

Then every diocesan patron, and almost every parochial saint, had his own holy well, of which the memory is now sometimes lost, but in very many cases is still fondly cherished. The Wedder's Well, in which St. Brendan was baptised, is greatly venerated, and votive offerings still hang round it on the bushes that grow on its margin. Another famous well was St. Mullin's, near New Ross, but we believe its ancient celebrity is now waning. Many holy wells were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, like that near Athenry, which is still much frequented by pilgrims on the eve of the Assumption, for it is believed to possess great curative virtues. Even in remotest Connemara we find a Tober Muire, or Mary's Well, in the townland of Kilbride, in the barony of Ross. This shows that the church was dedicated to St. Brigid, and perhaps the well, too, for she is often called the "Mary of the Gael." There are, however, many other Mary's Wells throughout the country, which certainly bear the name of the Blessed Virgin, most probably on account of cures believed to be wrought there through her intercession.

There was a celebrated holy well near the monastic Church of St. Augustine in Galway, at which some wonderful cures took place. One of these has been formally attested by more than a dozen of the first citizens of Galway, both clerical and lay. It was in the case of Patrick Lynch, and took place on the 11th of June, 1673. He himself deposed on oath, and

his deposition was confirmed by the oaths of the witnesses, that he was visited by "a most grievous, desperate, dangerous disease, and given over by all doctors to be incurable, and could not eat one bite since Easter last." But when brought to St. Augustine's Well on the day named, and "totally dipped therein, and having also drunk a cup of water out of the well three times in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," he at once got up of himself and walked about the well, and recovered his strength and his appetite, and "doth sleep well as before, for which" the deponent piously adds, "the eternal God be glorified and praised for the same for ever." It is not the well of itself, but the mercy of God and the prayers of St. Augustine to which he attributes his cure, through the instrumental agency of the water of the well, just as the Jordan's waters healed the Syrian leper, who went to bathe in them by command of the prophet of God. Similar cures, but less formally authenticated, are said to occur every year at some holy wells.

There are certain superior persons, even amongst Catholics, who deem any religious reverence paid to those holy wells to be superstitious; and they are inclined to sneer at the ignorant piety of the simple faithful who perform their devotions at the sacred springs, or attribute any healing efficacy to their waters. They say in effect, like the Syrian leper: "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel, that I may wash in them and be made clean?" "Would it not be better for these foolish people to go to the doctor than put faith in prayers and blessed wells?" But the waters of Jordan alone could cleanse the leprosy of the scoffing Syrian, and so we can hardly blame our poor people, who, in their strong and simple faith, believe that the prayer at the blessed well and the washing in its waters have more value than the doctor's medicine. With non-Catholics, who do not reverence even the Cross of Christ, we do not reason here. But Catholics ought to know better than regard all these observances as superstitions. It is true they may sometimes degenerate into superstition; but the Catholic instinct that shows reverence to the relics of the saints, and venerates the holy fountains which they blessed and used in the service of the Church, is not superstitious. We may, indeed, well venerate them, for some of the ancient holiness lingers round them still, and it is not too much to hope that the saints who blessed them may still

look down from their high place in Heaven on the faithful souls who so lovingly cherish their memories in the scenes of their earthly pilgrimage, and ask their strong prayers before the great White Throne in Heaven. This is not superstition; and the Church has no sympathy with the hollow smile and frozen sneer of those superior persons who, with all their wisdom, do not understand the things of the Spirit of God. This same spirit would sneer at the poor woman who touched the hem of our Saviour's garment that she might be healed, and would have no patience with the superstitious people of the Apostolic Age, who brought forth their sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, "that St. Peter's shadow at least might fall upon them, and that they might thus be delivered from their infirmities." And what would such people say of the folly and superstition of those foolish people who brought to the sick the handkerchiefs and aprons of St. Paul, which yet were powerful to drive away disease from the sick, and evil spirits from the bodies of the possessed?

With this half-sceptical faith and sneering piety we have no sympathy. We believe that some of their ancient holiness still lingers round our blessed wells, that their holy patrons still pray in a special manner for those who frequent them in a pious and confiding spirit, and that God often hears those fervent prayers and grants special requests to the faithful suppliants through the fervour of their faith and the merits of the saints. No doubt there have been abuses. Let them be corrected, and if there is ignorance, let it be enlightened. But do not brand as superstitious those pious practices which in themselves are not only blameless, but laudable; for surely it is nothing else but laudable to visit in a spirit of prayerful faith those sacred scenes and places hallowed by the footsteps of the saints of God, where every memory moves the penitent to ask their prayers with confidence, and recalls to mind for their own imitation the bright example of their lives. Let the sceptic go to Bath, Buxton, or Harrogate to have his disorders cured, but let not our poor faithful people be blamed too much if, in their own hearts, they prefer the sacred streams of the Jordan to all the rivers of Damascus.

The Round Towers of Ireland.

THE re-publication of O'Brien's "Essay on the Round Towers"* at the present time shows that the question of their origin and uses, which was so warmly debated one hundred years ago, is still regarded by many as an open and interesting one.

No man of intelligence can ever gaze on one of these inscrutable sentinels of the past without asking himself who built it, and why it is so different from everything else that we see in Ireland, or even in other countries. It was thought by many well-informed persons that Petrie's famous "Essay on the Origin and Uses of the Round Towers" had for ever settled the question. But the warm Celtic imagination, dissatisfied with the present, revels in the far-distant past; and, proudly pointing to the Pillar Towers of his native land, the Irishman will tell you that they were built by his ancestors long before Cæsar's legions conquered the half-naked savages of Britain.

O'Brien's essay of itself is not worthy of serious refutation. The style is puerile and turgid, the alleged facts are often wholly unfounded, the quotations are inaccurate, and sometimes the arguments are quite silly. The writer, too, though very dogmatic, frequently shows gross ignorance of Irish history, as, for instance, when he describes St. Patrick as *entering* on his prescribed task—the conversion of Ireland—towards the *close* of the fifth century, and makes Cormac—the first Bishop of Cashel, as he calls him, and the author of the famous Glossary, who was killed in A.D. 907—a personal disciple of St. Patrick, and a convert to Christianity in the same fifth century! His main argument, that the towers were pre-Christian, is founded on a statement, made in the "Annals of Ulster" under date of the year A.D. 448, that fifty-seven of these Towers were overthrown in that year by

* By Henry O'Brien, Esq. New Edition, London, 1898.

an earthquake ; whereas the entry is an exact and textual reproduction, from the "Chronicle of Marcellinus," of a passage describing the damage caused by an earthquake, not in Ireland, but in the "Imperial City" of Constantinople ! He argues that these Irish Towers must have been built by the Tuatha De Danaan, because the two great battlefields on which they fought are called Magh Tuireadh, which means, he says, the "Field of the Towers" ; although nobody ever asserted there was a Round Tower at or near either field, or within miles of them.

Why such an essay should get a second prize of £20 from the Royal Irish Academy is more than we can well understand, except it were given, not in recognition of the merits of the work, but, to borrow the phrase of the author himself, as "an eleemosynary deodand." The author rewarded their liberality by denouncing their refusal to award him the first prize—which they had most deservedly assigned to Petrie—"as an act of the most aggravated injustice."

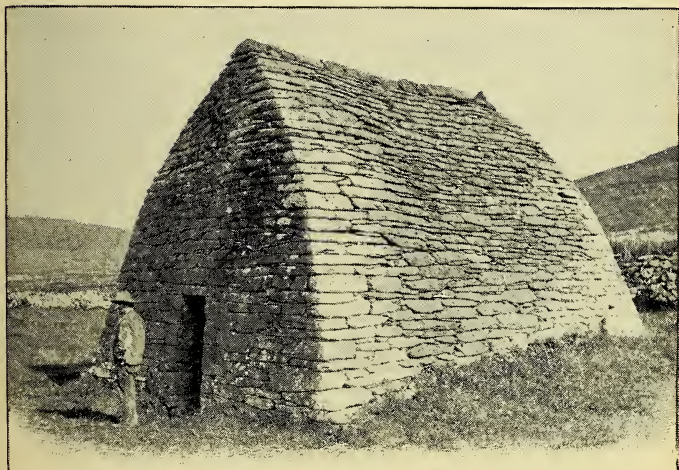
The history of the controversy regarding the Round Towers is very curious. The celebrated Giraldus de Barri, writing early in the thirteenth century, with the accuracy of an observant critic, describes them as ecclesiastical towers, built in the fashion of the country, lofty, round, and narrow. He unfortunately says no more ; but this much is important, for it shows that the Towers formed part of the ecclesiastical establishments of the time, and hence may be fairly assumed to be of ecclesiastical, and, therefore, of Christian origin. The statement that they were built in Irish fashion—*more patriæ*—seems to imply that the type was Irish, and, although it was doubtless originally borrowed, it came to be regarded as characteristic of Ireland.

Dr. John Lynch, of Galway, Sir James Ware, Peter Walsh, and Molyneux, who all wrote in the seventeenth century, attribute, with more or less hesitation, the origin of the Towers to the Danes. Walsh, who knew least about the subject, speaks most confidently, and asserts that the Towers were built by the heathen Danes "to serve as watch-towers against the natives." It is enough to say that there is not a shred of evidence in support of this theory. The Danes, neither at home nor abroad, ever built a Tower of this peculiar type ; and they are to be found in many parts of Ireland which, though often raided, were never occupied even temporarily, by the Danes. No Irish scholar at the present time adheres to this hypothesis of the Danish origin

of the Towers, although it was common enough during the greater part of the last century. The last, and worst, writer of any note who maintained the Danish origin of the Towers, was the notorious Ledwich, whose pretensions to antiquarian learning are justly scoffed at by all discerning critics.

It was towards the close of the last century that General Vallancey, a much more respectable writer than Ledwich, put forward for the first time, with a great show of antiquarian learning, his own theory of the pagan origin and uses of the Round Towers; and, strange to say, his views, with various modifications, were supported by really learned men like Lanigan, O'Connor, D'Alton, Beaufort, and others of less note. Vallancey's "Essay on the Antiquity of the Irish Language," in which he puts forward these views, was first printed in 1772, and reprinted in 1781. The Towers, according to Vallancey, were fire-temples where the Druids kept the sacred fire perpetually burning, from which all the people were obliged to light their own fires once a year; and "they were certainly," he added, "of Phœnician construction." But his arguments are mere fanciful conjectures, based on the alleged similarity of the terms applied to such towers in the Irish and Oriental languages. There were not wanting, however, various writers who undertook to maintain the Christian and ecclesiastical origin of the Towers; but sometimes, by their foolish arguments, they rather injured than served the cause which they undertook to champion.

Whilst Irish opinion was thus divided on the subject, the Royal Irish Academy, with a view, if possible, to decide the question, offered, in 1820, a prize of a gold medal and £50 to the author of an "approved essay" on the Round Towers, which, they hoped, would remove the uncertainty in which their origin and uses were involved. Amongst the rival candidates for the Academy's prize were Petrie and O'Brien. The former produced a most accurate and elaborate treatise on the whole question of ancient Irish architecture, which gained the prize, and, speaking generally, has brought conviction to the minds of its readers. With some minor modifications, the theory which it advocates of the Christian origin of the Towers has been adopted by almost all Irish scholars ever since. No one now maintains O'Brien's theory that the Towers were built by the Tuatha De Danaan for the phallic worship which they carried with them all the way from their original homes in Persia. In 1867 Marcus



CLOCHAN, OR ORATORY OF ST. GALLERUS, DINGLE.

Photo by]

[W. Lawrence, Dublin.

Keane published a work in which he boldly challenges the conclusions of Petrie and Dunraven, who still further expounded and somewhat modified the views of Petrie; and he maintains that not only the Round Towers, but also the crosses and stone-roofed churches, are entirely of heathen origin. A still later writer, Mr. Brash, whose work on "The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland" was published in 1875, whilst assenting to many of Petrie's views, expressly declares that he does not believe in the ecclesiastical character of the Round Towers, so that the latest writer on the subject flatly contradicts the earliest statement on the same question made by Giraldus Cambrensis.

With all modesty, therefore, but with no doubt, we venture to summarise our own views on the question, which in the main are those of Petrie, but modified by the reservations of Dunraven and Miss Stokes. Petrie was the first writer who set about the investigation of the question in a rational and scientific method. Instead of indulging in vain speculations, regarding fanciful resemblances between the names and aspects of the Round Towers and other buildings in Eastern countries, he set about a careful and systematic examination of the Towers themselves, and at the same time collected every reference made to them in our ancient annals and unprinted manuscripts. In this way he was enabled to reason from facts—from existing facts and from historical facts—and was thus in a position to prove his conclusions by unassailable evidence.

First of all he showed that there were no buildings of any kind—leaving the Towers out of the question—in pre-Christian Ireland built with lime-cement, or with any other cement. We have many existing examples of the cromlechs or dolmens in their most ancient form; we have the great sepulchral chambers of Dowth and New Grange, certainly dating from pagan times; we have grand old pagan fortresses like Dun Aengus and Dun Connor on Aran Mor, which are also certainly pre-Christian, and constructed with considerable skill; we have also some clochans, or stone cells, which appear to date back to the same period; but in all these structures there is not a trace of cement of any kind. They are all built dry, and for the most part of stones which were never touched by the hammer. It is only in the earliest types of the Christian churches that we first note the use of lime-cement; and as it was certainly used in the construction of all the Towers, the conclusion is

inevitable that they belong, not to the pagan period of dry walls, but to the Christian period of lime-cement.

Again, a Round Tower has never been found except in immediate connection with some Christian church. Even where the ruins of the church have disappeared, its site can be traced in the neighbourhood of the Tower, and its existence can be proved from our annals. This surely points to the fact that the use of the Tower was in some way closely connected with the use of the church, and that the men who built the one, or their representatives, also built the other, especially as we find that in many cases—for instance, at Kilmacduagh—the masonry of the church and of the Tower is of the same character, and obviously belongs to the same period. Even the most unprofessional eye can detect the very striking resemblance which exists between the workmanship in the two buildings, so that the conclusion is inevitable that both belong to the same period of ecclesiastical architecture.

Furthermore, the Irish name for the Round Tower invariably used by the annalists is *cloic-theach*—that is, bell-house—which certainly goes to show that one of the uses of the Round Tower was to serve as a belfry for the church and monastery close to which it stood. It has been said that the word might also mean stone-house, which is possibly true; but it has never been so applied, for when the annalists wish to distinguish the stone church from those built of other materials, they use the word *daimhliag* to express the house of stone; nor can any instance be produced where the term *cloic-theach* has been used to express that idea.

Another striking fact which goes to show that the Towers were primarily intended for places of refuge, has been well brought out by Miss Stokes. That learned lady has given a map showing that the Towers were built in those places which, as our annals show, were most subject to the Danish raids—that is, along the great waterways of the country; whereas none of the Towers are to be found in the remoter inland districts that were beyond the reach of the northern pirates. There is strong evidence, too, to show that they were built within the existing cemeteries that surrounded the churches, for in several cases where excavations have been made within the Towers, numerous skeletons have been found beneath the foundations, lying east and west in the Christian fashion.

From this it may be fairly inferred that the Tower was built within a Christian churchyard, which would never have been done except for the urgent need of erecting these Towers of refuge as near as possible to the church, so that the clergy might, in case of sudden alarm, betake themselves with their treasures to these convenient and admirably designed strongholds.

It has been said that if the Towers were built within historic times, some notices of the date of their erection would be found in the annals of the country. It was not usual, however, for the annalists to note the foundation of the churches or other buildings in connection with them, although they very frequently notice the dates of their pillage or destruction. And so also we find reference to the burning of the Towers, with all the people and treasures they contained: which goes to confirm our view that they were primarily built to serve as strongholds for the protection of the ecclesiastics and treasures of the Church.

On the main question, therefore, we think that Petrie has completely proved his theory of the Christian origin of the Towers; but as to the limits of the period during which they were erected, his views are, we think, fairly open to question. He holds that they were erected at various periods between the fifth and the thirteenth century, and he seems to think that the *primary* purpose for which they were intended was to serve as belfries. Here we venture to dissent from the learned Petrie, and, to put our views briefly, we hold that:—

(a) The Towers were primarily designed to serve as strongholds for the protection of the ecclesiastics, and as keeps for the preservation of the treasures of the Church during the turbulent times of the Danish wars in Ireland.

(b) We think they were erected at different times during the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, although some may have been repaired at later dates.

(c) They also served as belfries, and naturally took their name from a usage which was every day obvious to the people

(d) They were also designed to be watch-towers, from which the approach of an enemy could be noticed at a great distance; and this was the real purpose of raising them so high over the surrounding buildings. They were, generally speaking, about 120 feet in height.

These conclusions will be obvious to those who carefully observe the construction of the Towers in the light of the history of the times.

The entrance door was narrow, so that only one person could enter at a time ; and it was always placed at a considerable height above the ground, not less, generally speaking, than from ten to fifteen feet. The walls, too, were at least three feet in thickness at the level of the doorway, which had two strong doors, one behind the other, with the thickness of the wall between them. It is obvious that the purpose of the builders in thus keeping the entrance so high above ground, and the doorway so narrow, was to make ingress as difficult as possible to the foe. In fact, a few determined men within the Tower could easily keep the doorway against a host, whose only means of access would be by ladders or similar contrivances laid against the wall. If the doorway was to be forced at all, it could only be done from an elevated platform, on which men might work a battering-ram of some kind to burst in the door, and then set fire to the Tower with combustibles—a contrivance that was, it appears, sometimes successfully resorted to, both by the Danes and the native chieftains.

The Towers also contained several lofts, resting on offsets—sometimes four, five, or six—with small ladders leading from one storey to the other, each of which was lighted by a single small window. By this means the Tower, though not usually more than eight or ten feet in diameter, could be made available for the accommodation of a considerable number of refugees. The topmost storey, under the conical stone roof of the Tower, was far the most important. It contained at least four openings, looking to the four points of the compass, so that the watchman could readily perceive from that great height—at least 100 feet—the approach of the foe from any point of the compass. Then he had his bell near him, either hung from the roof or rung by hand, to warn all the clergy and tenants of the Church lands that the foe was approaching. Their first care would then be to bring all the treasures of the church to the Tower—the gold and silver vessels of the altar, the precious shrine, with the relics of the founder, his bell, his crozier, his Gospel and its gem-studded cover, along with everything else which they prized. Provisions were also carried up the ladder. Stones and other missiles were collected in the topmost storey ; all the clergy and the neighbouring people took refuge in the Tower ; then the ladder was drawn up, the double doors were barred, and all was secure. When the enemy came, they might fire the church, but it was empty. All its



TOWER ON DEVENISH ISLAND.

Photo by]

[W. Lawrence, Dublin.



valuables were gone. They dare not attempt to undermine the thick, strong walls of the Tower, often built on the rock, for missiles—deadly missiles from such a height— could be showered down upon them from the four large windows of the upper storey, which were sometimes nearly as large as the door. They could not force the door, for it was far above them, and ladders would be wholly useless. They could not starve the inmates, for the garrison took good care to provide themselves with provisions and water. They might sit down, it is true, to besiege them ; but meantime the whole country would rise, and the raiders might be utterly destroyed.

This, we think, explains the origin and uses of the Round Towers in a simple and natural way. During the Danish wars, which began in the ninth century, the religious houses and the cathedral churches were the principal objects of their bloody raids, because, as a fact, they contained most of the wealth of the country in gold and silver, and their flocks and herds were amongst the fattest of the land. For the first thirty or forty years the raiders left no time to the Churchmen to build their towers ; but about the year A.D. 875 they suffered great defeats, so that there was a "period of rest" for forty years, during which no new swarms of sea-rovers landed in Ireland, and those already there kept themselves comparatively quiet. This was the time during which most of the Towers still remaining were constructed to guard against future incursions. Some of them were built rudely, as if by men in a hurry, who had small time to square their stones or ornament their doors and windows ; but others are admirable specimens of the builder's skill, and seem to belong to a later date.

The last three-quarters of the tenth century were very turbulent, owing to the arrival of new swarms of the Danish invaders ; but, towards the close of that period, the heroic Brian Boru put them on the defensive, and finally gave them a crushing defeat at Clontarf. Encouraged by these brighter prospects, and by the great example of Brian himself, the abbots and bishops once more set about building Round Towers to protect their churches, not only against the Danish raiders, but also against the native chiefs, who too often followed their bad example. About the same time the first traces of what is known as the Irish Romanesque began to appear in our churches. It is only fair to conclude, therefore, that the Round Towers which show ornamental

doorways of Romanesque design, like Kildare, Timahoe, and, to a less extent, Ardmore, were erected during this period, and must be regarded as belonging to the more favourable times of the eleventh century.

We may add that, although the Round Towers are called bell-houses in our annals, it must not be assumed that their bells were huge cylindrical or conical masses of bell-metal, such as we see in the towers of our churches at present. There were bells in use in the Irish Church from the time of St. Patrick ; but they were hand-bells—not small, round bells as we now see, but rudely-fashioned pyramidal or quadrangular bells of good size and of a very peculiar shape. Such bells, no doubt, might be hung ; but it is more likely that in the topmost storeys of the Round Tower they were rung by hand ; and as the bell-ringer's functions were normal, not exceptional, his bell gave its name to the Tower itself. We regret that we have no space to answer various difficulties that have been urged against these views, but we venture to think that to state them clearly is to prove their truth.

St. Patrick in the Far West.*

I PURPOSE to give a sketch of St. Patrick's missionary labours here in the far West, especially in relation to his famous fast on the Holy Mountain, which still bears his name. It is a subject full of interest for all Irishmen, and especially for you who dwell under the very shadow of the Sacred Hill, which has been always regarded as the Mount Sinai of Ireland. I shall only attempt to trace the Apostle's footsteps through what is known as West Mayo—to do more at present would be impossible.

ROUTE THROUGH MAYO TO THE REEK.

Having founded the church of Donaghpatrick (which still bears his name), in Magh Seola, near Headford, in the modern County Galway, the Saint crossed into Mayo, most probably at Shrule, where there was an ancient and famous ford over the Black River. In that territory, then called Conmaicne, we are told that he founded four-cornered churches; and as stone was abundant, they were doubtless built of that material. One was called Ard Uiskon, which may be Donaghpatrick itself. Another is called the small middle church—*cellola media*—which is doubtless Kilmainebeg. It is exactly the same name in Irish, and the old churchyard there probably marks the site of the Patrician Church. Therein he left as nuns the sisters of the Bishop Felart of the Hy Ailell, that is the modern barony of Tirerrill, in the County Sligo. The Bishop himself dwelt at Donaghpatrick. He also founded other churches in the same region—for he went westward, even beyond Cong—but they cannot now be identified. Returning, he proceeded north into Magh Cerae, and founded a church about a mile north of Kilmaine, on the road to Hollymount. It still bears its ancient name, for Kilquire is only another form of the Cuil Core in the Book of Armagh. We are told that he baptised very

* A lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Westport.

many in that place, and doubtless the Holy Well is there still. The old church, however, has entirely disappeared, and nothing but the graveyard remains.

Patrick then went northwards into Magh Foimsen. This we take to be the great plain between Hollymount and Lough Carra. We are told that he found there two brothers, chiefs of the district, one of whom—Derglam—sent his herdsman to slay Patrick, but the other brother, Luchta by name, forbade him, whereupon Patrick blessed Luchta, assuring him that there would be bishops and priests of his race there always; “but the seed of thy brother,” said he, “will be accursed and soon disappear.” He left there a priest, Conan by name, but it is impossible now to identify the site of this church. It was probably somewhere near Ballyglass.

St. Patrick then went westward to a place called Tobar Stringle, in the desert. He must have passed by the famous well since called Tobar Patrick; but he did not stay there on his first visit to the place. The name Stringle is now corrupted into “Triangle,” and there, we are told, he spent two Sundays; but it is not stated that he built a church there. A little later on he founded the church at Ballintober. From Tobar Stringle we are told that Patrick made a short excursion northwards to Magh Raithin, which is the plain around Islandeady lake; but it was a short visit—although he founded a church there—for it is immediately added in the Book of Armagh that he went to the men of Umall, that is to Aghad Fobair, where, as the Book remarks, “Bishops dwell.” This goes to show that, at the time the Book of Armagh was written Aghad Fobair, now strangely corrupted into Aghagower, was an Episcopal See with jurisdiction over the men of Umall.

The account given of this ancient church in the Book of Armagh, supplemented by the account in the Tripartite, is extremely interesting.

PATRICK AT AGHAGOWER.

Aghagower is finely situated on the margin of a clear stream, surrounded by a group of sheltering hills. When St. Patrick and his religious family encamped on the grassy margin of the stream, it would appear that the first who came to seek him was a fair young maiden

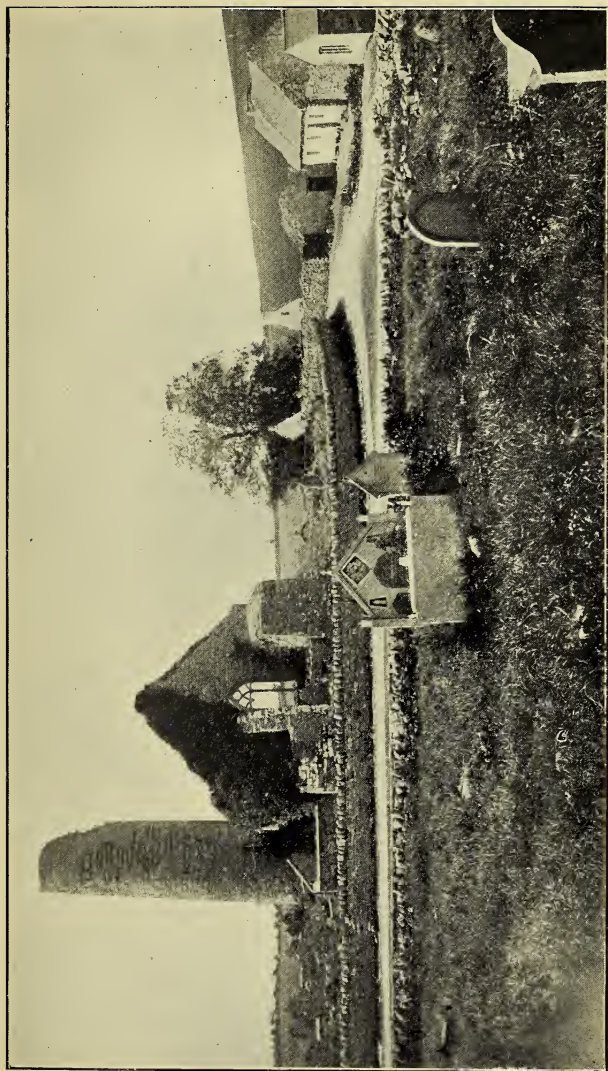


Photo by]

AGHAGOWER, CO. MAYO.

[D. J. McLoughlin, Westport.

Mathona by name, the daughter of the Chief—so far as we can judge—who after instruction and baptism, begged to receive the religious veil at the hands of Patrick, which request he gladly granted her. Then the maiden's father also came to be instructed by Patrick with his household; and Patrick finding him to be a very holy man, of gentle, patient disposition—his wife appears to have been dead—had him duly instructed and consecrated Bishop of that place. Moreover, he gave his convert a new name. Before he was called Senach, but Patrick called him Agnus Dei—God's Lamb—and the name was appropriate, as the three petitions he asked of Patrick clearly show—first, that he might never sin—mortally of course—under grade, that is after his ordination; secondly, in his humility he asked that his church should not take its name from himself, so that instead of being called Cill-Senach, it has always retained the old name, Aghad Fobair or Aghagower; and lastly, he asked Patrick that the years taken from his own life, if God so willed it, might be added to the age of his son, Aengus, whom also Patrick ordained a priest. Moreover, Patrick, with his own hand, wrote a Catechism or Alphabet, as it is called, of the Christian Doctrine for the young priest, that he might first be instructed himself, and be thus qualified to teach others, and he added that holy bishops of their seed would be there for ever. It is clear that the Saint greatly loved this holy Senach the Bishop, with his virgin daughter, Mathona, and her brother Aengus. I am inclined to think he spent the whole winter of 440-441 with them at Aghagower, and he came to love the place greatly, and wished to remain there, if it was God's will.

“I would choose,” he said,

“To remain here on a little spot of land.

After faring round churches and

Waters I am weary, and would go no farther.”

It was no wonder indeed he was weary, for he was then advanced in years. He had preached the Gospel and founded churches from Slemish in Antrim to Tara, and from Tara all the way across the country to the far West. Seven years he had already spent founding churches, and crossing rivers, living for the most part in the open, often-times in great hardship and much suffering. Would God permit him to spend the remnant of his days with the

Lamb of God and his holy family, beside that pleasant stream, and within the shelter of these encircling hills? But no ; such was not God's high will. The angel came to Patrick and told him :—

“Thou shalt have everything round which thou shalt go,
Every land,
Both mountains and churches,
Both glens and woods,
After faring round churches and waters,
Though thou art weary, thou shalt go.”

Yes, indeed, round the whole island he had to go, to the very summit of its soaring hills, across its estuaries and rushing waters, over its spreading plains, through its roughest woods and glens, from the very summit of the Reek, round the wild shores of the northern seas, through the plains of Kildare and the hills of Wicklow, over all the Munsters to the Shannon mouth—he was to go over them all preaching and baptising—but they were all to be his own for ever, and no one would ever be allowed by God to snatch them from his hand.

With sorrow, therefore, but in perfect obedience he went still farther west to surmount that soaring cone that he saw so often from Aghagower, rising heavenward in the blue distance over the western sea—beautiful at all times, but especially when the sinking sun lit up its rugged flanks with a glory that seemed to pour down from heaven itself upon the Holy Mountain. There he would commune alone with God, like Moses on Sinai, like Elias on Carmel, like the Saviour Himself on the Judean hills ; there he would fortify his soul for the great work before him ; there he would pray for the people whom, in his own words, “the Lord had given him at the ends of the earth,” and not for them only, but for their children down to their latest generation at the day of doom.

PATRICK AND THE BLESSED TROUT.

Patrick had a great sympathy, not only with men, but with the lower animals also. He noted two trout that frequented the streamlet still flowing by the roadside. They became his pets, and even these he parted from with regret. From the earliest Christian days the fish was a sacred symbol. The apostles were at first fishers

in the waters, and afterwards became fishers of men. The very letters of the word, in the Greek alphabet, were holy symbols, and, hence, the trout living in the wells and streams, whose waters were used in Baptism, had themselves something of a sacred character, and the acts and saying of St. Patrick gave encouragement to this idea, which has not yet disappeared from the minds of our people.

“ My two salmon inseparable,” said Patrick,
 “ Swimming against the stream,
 Harmless and innocent,
 Will abide here, and angels will be with them.”

The venerable successor of St. Patrick at Aghagower tells me they are there no more. I am sorry for it, for I should surely regard them as sacred fish, symbols of the Saviour of men, and types of silent, innocent hearts, who, like them, are under the guardianship of God's angels.

It would appear from the narrative in the Book of Armagh that Patrick went first from Aghagower to Murrisk, at the base of the mountain. There his car-driver, Totmael, the Bald One, sickened and died—rather suddenly it would appear—and there they buried him in the ancient Irish fashion, raising a great cairn of stones over his grave, which is, I believe, still to be seen. The simple people of Murrisk had at the time little or no idea of a resurrection of the dead; so Patrick, standing by the great cairn, said—“ Let him rest there until the world's end, but he will be visited by me in those last days ”—and raised from the dead.

PATRICK ON THE MOUNTAIN.

Thereafter, Patrick, we are told, ascended the summit of the mountain, and remained upon it “ forty days and forty nights ”—that is the whole of Lent—but as a fact he spent more than forty days and forty nights on the Holy Hill, for he ascended it, we are told, on Shrove Saturday, *i.e.*, the Saturday before Ash Wednesday, and remained there until Holy Saturday, the eve of Easter Sunday. We can even fix the exact year and the day of the month on which St. Patrick ascended the Reek. The Annals of Ulster, under date A.D. 441, have this important entry—“ Leo ordained 47th Bishop of the Church of Rome, and Patrick the Bishop was approved in the

Catholic Faith." There is also a sentence in the Tripartite Life which helps to explain this entry. It is this—"When Patrick was on Cruachan Aigle (that is on the Reek), he sent Munis (his nephew) to Rome with counsel for the Abbot of Rome"—that is the Pope—"and relics were given to him" to carry home to Patrick.

Now, St. Leo the Great was consecrated Pope in Rome on the 29th September, in the year A.D. 440. Croaghpatrick was a long and, at that time, a very difficult journey from Rome, so that news of the new Pope's election could hardly reach Patrick in the far West before the early spring of the following year. As soon as the news did reach him on the Reek, he felt it his duty to send off at once his own nephew, Bishop Munis, to congratulate the new Pope, to give an account of his own mission and preaching, and to beg the Pope's blessing and authorisation to continue his work. This authority Munis readily received from the Pope, with many relics for the consecration of the altars in the new churches which Patrick was founding in Ireland, and we hear of him on his return journey at Clonmacnoise. That is the meaning of the phrase—that "Leo was ordained 47th Bishop of Rome, and Patrick the Bishop was approved in the Catholic Faith" in Ireland. It is an exceedingly important statement and, as might be expected, Protestant writers have not called attention to its full meaning. It is a very interesting fact connected with the history of this Holy Mountain that it was from its summit St. Patrick sent this wise message to Rome, and got back the Pope's blessing.

HOW THE SAINT LIVED ON THE REEK.

The Tripartite tells us that during the time Patrick was on the Reek, he abode there in much discomfort, without drink and without food, from Shrove Saturday to Holy Saturday. There can be no doubt the Saint must have spent those days on the great mountain's summit in much discomfort. He was exposed, day and night, to all the fury of the elements—wind and rain, sunshine at times, but not improbably much snow and hail also in the early months of spring. He had the poor shelter of four stones round about him; and at night, when he sought to rest, his head was pillowed on a flag, the five stones making the shape of a rude cross—great discomfort surely



SOARING SUMMIT, AS SEEN FROM AFAR.

[D. J. McLoughlin, Westport.

Photo by]



of body, and no doubt, too, much anguish of mind ; but it is by the Cross the saints reach their glory. Hence, all our ancient writers compare Patrick on the Reek to Moses on Mount Sinai. Both were bidden by God's angel to spend the forty days upon a holy hill ; both fasted and prayed for their people ; both fought against demons and druids ; both, it is said, lived to the same great age of 120 years, and the sepulchre of both, the exact spot, no man knows—for, although we know that Patrick was buried at Downpatrick, the exact spot has been unknown for many ages, even from the day of his burial, for it was deliberately concealed lest his body might be stolen. There can be no doubt, too, that Patrick suffered much anguish of spirit on the Reek. He was fasting in prayer for his people, over whom the demons of paganism had ruled so long ; and the demons resolved, so far as they could, to tempt and torment him. They tempted Christ Himself, as we know—why not try to tempt His apostle ? They covered the whole mountain top in the form of vast flocks of hideous black birds, so dense that Patrick could neither see sky nor earth nor sea. They swooped down upon him and over him with savage beaks and black wings ; they filled the air with discordant screams, making day and night horrible with their cries.

ROUTING OF THE DEMONS.

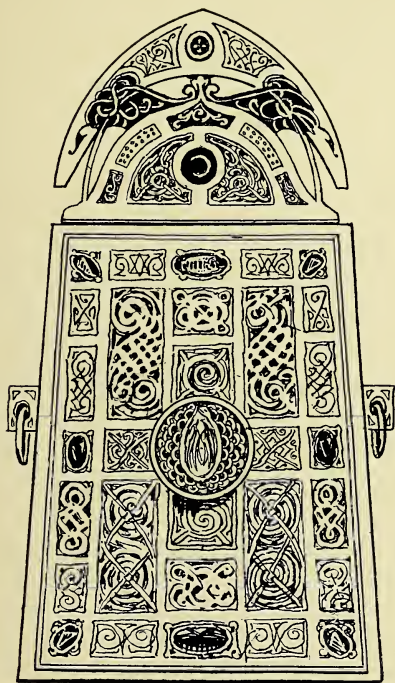
Patrick chanted maledictive psalms against them to drive them away, but in vain ; he prayed to God to disperse them, but they fled not ; he groaned in spirit, and bitter tears coursed down his cheeks, and wet every hair of the priestly chasuble which he wore—still prayers and tears were in vain. Then he rang his bell loudly against them—it was said its voice had always power to drive away the demons—whereupon they gave way, and to complete their rout, he flung the blessed bell amongst them, and then they fled headlong down the side of the mountain, and over the wide seas beyond Achill and Clare, and were swallowed up in the great deeps, so that for seven years no evil thing was found within the holy shores of Ireland. The bell itself rolling down the mountain, or from the excessive ringing, had a piece broken out of its edge, although such bells were made of wrought iron or bronze ; but an angel brought it back again to Patrick,

and when dying he left it to Brigid—who prized it greatly—hence it was called Brigid's Gaping, or Brigid's Broken Bell. This is a very ancient tale, and you may believe as much of it as you please. If it should seem strange why the voice of the bell should have more virtue than Patrick's prayers and tears, let me remind you that it was Patrick's Bell, the symbol of his spiritual authority and, as it were, the voice of his supernatural power.

BLESSED BELLS.

The bells from the earliest days in the Western Church were blessed, or as it came to be said later on, they were baptised—that is sprinkled with holy water and salt, and anointed with the Holy Chrism, and had a special name given to them. The very oldest form of blessing that we have shows that the bells were not only used for calling the people to the Divine Offices of the Church, but their sound was regarded also as powerful to drive away demons, and repel storms and lightning. In Ireland these blessed bells were especially esteemed; and one of them was always regarded as an essential part of the equipment of Bishop or Abbot. He was to have a bell, a book, a crozier or bacul, and a menistir or chalice, with its paten and altar stone, and when St. Patrick had St. Fiac consecrated Bishop of Sletty, he gave him a case containing all these four articles. This explains why the voice of the blessed bell was so powerful, and why the demons could not bear its sound or its presence. The voice of Patrick's Bell on the Holy Mountain was, as it were, the voice of God proclaiming the routing of the demons and the victory of the Cross. And hence, it is said in some of the Lives that all the men of Erin heard the voice of Patrick's Bell on the Reek—sounding the triumph of the Cross—and from the same lone height, in one sense at least, it may be said that its voice is still heard all over the land. It was heard on the 16th August just passed; and with the blessing of God the voice of Patrick's Bell will be heard every year by all who dwell along these western shores, far over land and sea. It is no new sound; it verily and indeed is the voice of Patrick's Bell that you will hear coming down to us through the ages, and sounding once more from the Reek over all the land.

In the might of God and by the power of God, Patrick



SHRINE OF THE BELL OF ST PATRICK.

Photo by]

[W. Lawrence, Dublin.

drove off the demons from the Reek and from the West—let us hope, for ever. He was victorious, but worn out after the long conflict, and his Angel Victor suggested that he might now leave the Sacred Hill, and return to Aghagower to celebrate Easter.

PATRICK IS CONSOLED BY THE ANGEL.

And to console Patrick, the whole mountain summit was filled with beautiful white birds, which sang most melodious strains; and the voices of the mountain and the sea were mingled with their melody; so that the Reek became for a time, as it were, the paradise of God, and gave one a foretaste of the joys of heaven. "Now get thee gone," said the Angel, "you have suffered, but you have been comforted. These white birds are God's saints and angels come to visit and to console you; and the spirits of all the saints of Erin, present, past, and future, are here by God's high command to visit their father, and to join him in blessing all this land, and show him what a bountiful harvest his labours will reap for God in this land of Erin." The Book of Armagh goes no further, but the Tripartite and the later authorities add much more.

PROMISES MADE TO PATRICK.

Taking Colgan's version of the narrative, he tells us that God's angel promised to Patrick that through his prayers and labours as many souls would be saved as would fill all the space over land and sea so far as his eye could reach—more numerous far than all the flocks of birds he beheld. Furthermore, by his prayers and merits seven souls every Thursday and twelve every Saturday were to be taken out of Purgatory until the day of doom; and thirdly, whoever recited the last stanza of Patrick's Hymn in a spirit of penance would endure no torments in the world to come. Moreover he prayed, and it was granted to him, that as many souls should be saved from torments as there were hairs in his chasuble, also that those Whitely Stokes calls the Outlanders should never obtain permanent dominion over the men of Erin; that the sea would spread over Ireland seven years before the Judgment day, to save its people from the awful temptation and terrors of the reign of Antichrist; and that Patrick himself would be like the Apostles over

Israel, and judge the men of Erin on the Last Day ; and this too was granted, but not without great difficulty. Such is the substance of the wrestling of Patrick on the Holy Hill, and the wonderful favours he obtained for the men of Erin by his strong prayers. What wonder, then, that the Reek has been esteemed the holiest hill in all Erin ; that it has been from the beginning a place of pilgrimage, and that somehow an idea has got abroad that whoever did penance, like Patrick, on this Holy Hill would have his special blessing, and by the powerful prayers of the Saint, escape eternal punishment?

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL OF THE REEK.

But Patrick was not content with praying for his beloved flock, and watching over them during his own life : he left holy men of his family, it is said, to watch over the men of Erin until the Day of Doom. One he left, first of all, on the Reek itself, to watch over all this western land and over the islands of the main, and his bell, they say, is often heard, although he himself cannot be seen. Another he left on Ben Bulbin, which, after the Reek, is the most beautiful hill in Erin, and he watches over the north-west ; a third he left on Slieve Donard, who gave his name to that grand mountain overlooking all the north-east ; a fourth on Drumman Beg, to watch over the plains of Meath ; a fifth at Clonard, and a sixth at Slieve Cua, the great ridge overlooking at once the plains of Tipperary and the beautiful valley of the Blackwater. Well, all I can say is, if the men of Patrick's family have not kept watch and ward on these lonely heights for the past fourteen hundred years, God's Angel-guardians have done it ; for, otherwise, the Irish race and the Faith of St. Patrick would have been utterly rooted out of the land.

EXPULSION OF THE SNAKES.

It is a common belief that it was from the Reek that St. Patrick drove all the poisonous reptiles and serpents into the sea, so that none has ever since been found in Erin. I find no trace of this ancient tradition in the Book of Armagh or in the Tripartite, or other more ancient lives of the Saint. Still the tradition is very ancient.

Jocelyn, in his life of St. Patrick written towards the

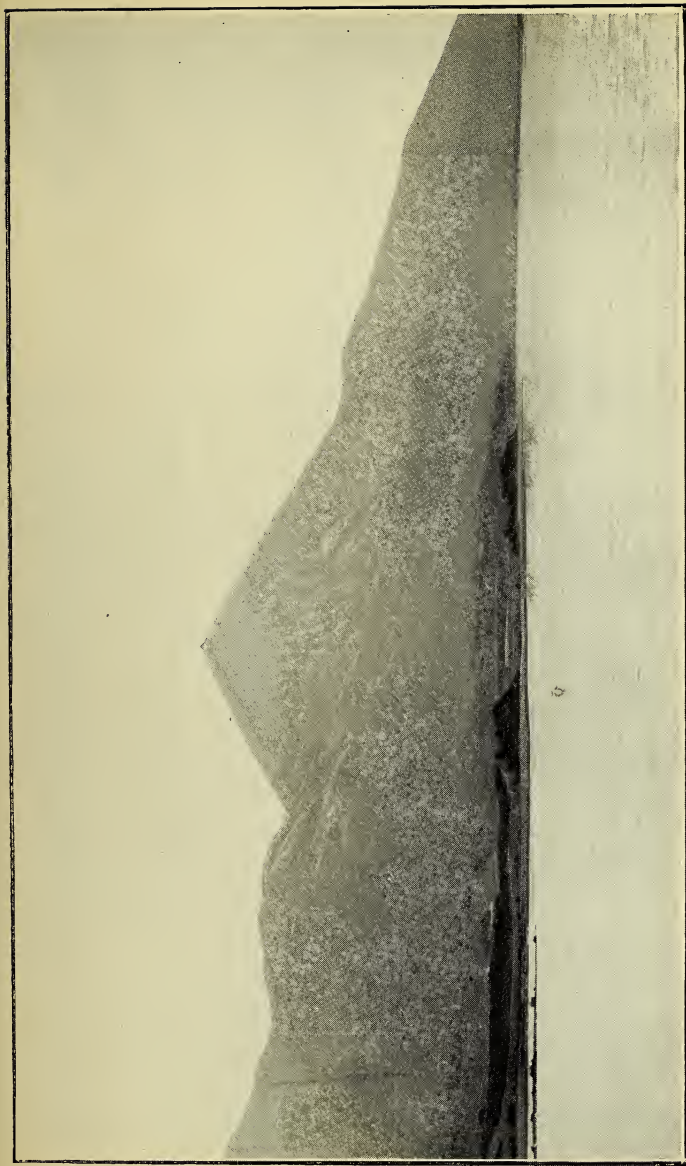


Photo by]

CROAGH PATRICK, FROM THE SEA, 2,510 FEET.

[D. J. McLoughlin, Westport.

close of the twelfth century, expressly states that from the day the Saint blessed the Reek, and from the Reek all the land of Ireland, with all the men of Erin, no poisonous thing has appeared in Ireland. Patrick expelled them all by the strength of his prayers, and the virtue of the Staff of Jesus which he bore in his hand.

Gerald Barry, who wrote some years later, in the beginning of the thirteenth century, refers to the same popular belief as almost universal. He himself, however, does not attribute the absence of all poisonous reptiles to the power of Patrick and his crozier. He says rather that it is due to certain properties in the air and in the soil of the land which render it fatal to all venomous things; and he quotes Venerable Bede, who wrote in the eighth century and states the same. The Welshman declares, furthermore, that if anything poisonous was brought from other lands, it perished at once when it touched the soil of Ireland. I will not attempt to settle this controversy, or decide on the truth of the alleged facts. For eight hundred years at least the popular voice has attributed this immunity to the merits of St. Patrick and his blessing of Ireland from the Reek. That he drove away the demons of infidelity and paganism, corporeal or incorporeal, cannot be questioned; and Jocelyn says he drove away the toads and serpents also, in order that the demons, if they returned, might have no congenial abode in which to take refuge.

Patrick having received all these great favours from God descended the mountain on Holy Saturday, and returned to Aghagower, where he celebrated the great Easter festival with his beloved friends, Senach the Bishop, Mathona the Nun, and Aengus the student, who was then learning his catechism and his psalms.

PATRICIAN PILGRIMAGES.

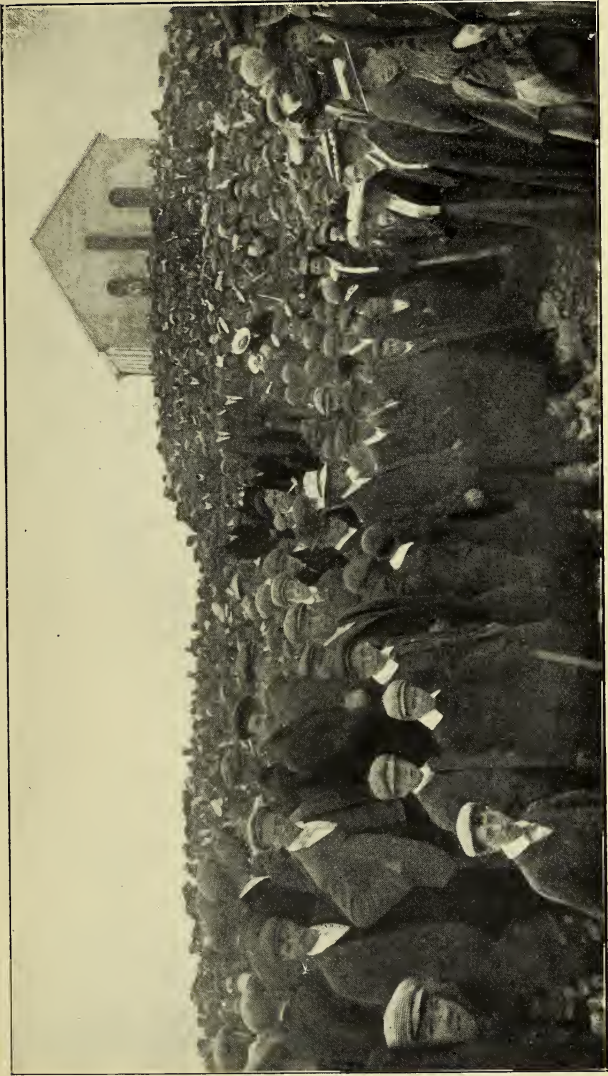
It may be well to say a few words concerning the PILGRIMAGE itself. It is hardly necessary to observe that pilgrimages of this kind, for the purpose of visiting in a spirit of faith and penance holy places, sanctified by the penance and by the labours of our Saviour and His Saints, have been in use from the earliest days of Christianity, and will continue to the end of time. They are the natural outcome of Christian piety, and they have always proved to be a most efficacious means of enlivening

Christian faith and deepening Christian devotion. Pilgrimages to the sacred scenes in the Holy Land were made long before the time of St. Helena, and, one way or another, are still made every year by members of every Church that calls itself Christian.

In Ireland, too, such pilgrimages have been made from the beginning, and not unnaturally to the places most intimately associated with the life and labours of St. Patrick. Of those, four stand out as the most celebrated—those of Armagh, Downpatrick, Lough Derg, and the Reek; and for many centuries the two last have been by far the most frequented places of penance and devotion. This is not the place to speak of Lough Derg, the most famous place of pilgrimage in the North of Ireland, and if we do not except the Reek, the most celebrated in all Ireland.

PILGRIMAGE TO THE REEK.

Now we find the pilgrimage to the Reek existing from the very beginning. The ancient road by which the pilgrims crossed over the hills from Aghagower to the Reek can still be traced, worn bare, as it were, by the feet of so many generations of Patrick's spiritual children. No doubt the celebrity and sanctity of the place in popular estimation arose not only from the fact that St. Patrick prayed and fasted there for forty days, and blessed the hill itself, and the people, and all the land from its summit, but also from the promise of pardon said to be made in favour of all those who performed the pilgrimage in a true spirit of penance. In the Tripartite Life the first privilege St. Patrick is said to have asked and obtained from God, is that any of the Irish who did penance even in his last hour would escape the fire of hell. That is, no doubt, perfectly true, if there be real penance; but in popular estimation it came to mean that penance at the Reek was an almost certain means of salvation, through the influence of the prayers, example, and merits of Patrick. Moreover, if any sinners were likely to obtain the special favour of the Saint, it would be those who trod in his sacred footsteps, praying and enduring, where he himself had prayed and endured so much. This is a perfectly sound and just view. Penance—sincere penance—performed anywhere will wash away sin, even in the latest hour of a man's life; but the penance is far



PILGRIMS SURROUNDING THE ORATORY ON THE SUMMIT OF CROAGH PATRICK.

[D. J. McLoughlin, Westport.

[Photo by

more likely to be sincere, and the graces from which it springs are far more likely to be given abundantly, in the midst of those places which Patrick sanctified, and through the efficacy of his intercession for such devoted disciples. He prayed for all the souls of Erin; but naturally enough, he prays especially for those who honour, and love, and trust him. On the soundest theological principles, therefore, a pilgrimage to the Reek is likely to be a most efficacious means of obtaining mercy and pardon through the prayers and merits and blessings of Patrick. And Colgan tells us, in a note to the promise referred to above, that the Reek was constantly visited by pious pilgrimages with great devotion, from all parts of the Kingdom, and many miracles used to be wrought there. That was some three hundred years ago. But the pilgrimage was an old one many centuries before the time of Colgan, for Jocelyn tells us in the twelfth century that crowds of people were in the habit of watching and fasting on the summit of the Reek, believing confidently that by so doing they would never enter the gates of hell, for "that privilege was obtained from God by the prayers and merits of St. Patrick"—and that hope is, no doubt, the chief motive of the pilgrimage. Even in those ancient days it was considered a great crime to molest any persons on their way to the Reek; and we are told in the Annals of Lough Ce that King Hugh O'Connor cut off the hands and feet of a highwayman who sought to rob one of the pilgrims. Sometimes, too, the pilgrims suffered greatly, like St. Patrick, not only on their journey thither, but on the Reek itself. St. Patrick's Day also being within Lent was a favourite day for the pilgrimage, and we are told in the Annals "that thirty of the fasting folk" perished in a thunder storm on the mountain in the year A.D. 1113, on the night of the 17th of March. But like those who die in Jerusalem on pilgrimage, no doubt their lot was considered a happy one.

It was doubtless the hardships and dangers attendant on the pilgrimage to such a steep and lofty mountain that induced the late Archbishop, Most Rev. Dr. MacEvilly, to apply to the Pope for authority to change the place of pilgrimage to some more convenient spot. The petition was granted on the 27th May, 1883, and at the same time a plenary indulgence was granted on any day during

the three summer months to all who would visit the church designated by the Ordinary; and a partial indulgence of 100 days for every single visit paid to that church during the three months named—June, July, and August. There is nothing, I believe, to prevent the Ordinary still “designating” the little oratory on the summit of the mountain, and I did so last Summer, as you know, with very wonderful results. I should not wish to see this ancient pilgrimage discontinued. I know His Eminence Cardinal Moran is of the same mind. Moreover, it is practically impossible to transfer the scene of such pilgrimages to other places, and so it has proved here. The blessing of God and Patrick has been on the ancient pilgrimage, and on the pilgrims too. It will be with them still, and, for my part, I shall authorise the celebration to take place every year on the very summit of the Reek; and I believe it will bring graces and blessings to all those who ascend in fact and make the pilgrimage, or if they cannot ascend in fact, will ascend in spirit with the pilgrims to pray on Patrick’s Holy Mountain. I can say for myself that the vision of this sacred hill has been constantly before my mind for many years during all my Irish studies. I have come to love the Reek with a kind of personal love, not merely on account of its graceful symmetry and soaring pride, but also because it is Patrick’s Holy Mountain—the scene of his penance and of his passionate yearning prayers for our fathers and for us. It is to me, moreover, the symbol of Ireland’s enduring Faith; and, fronting the stormy west unchanged and unchangeable, it is also the symbol of the constancy and success with which the Irish people faced the storms of persecution during many woeful centuries. It is the proudest and the most beautiful of the everlasting hills that are the crown and glory of this western land of ours. When the skies are clear and the soaring cone can be seen in its own solitary grandeur, no eye will turn to gaze upon it without delight—even when the rain clouds shroud its brow we know that it is still there, and that when the storms have swept over it, it will reveal itself once more in all its calm beauty and majestic strength. It is, therefore, the fitting type of Ireland’s Faith, and of Ireland’s Nationhood, which nothing has ever shaken, and with God’s blessing nothing can ever destroy.

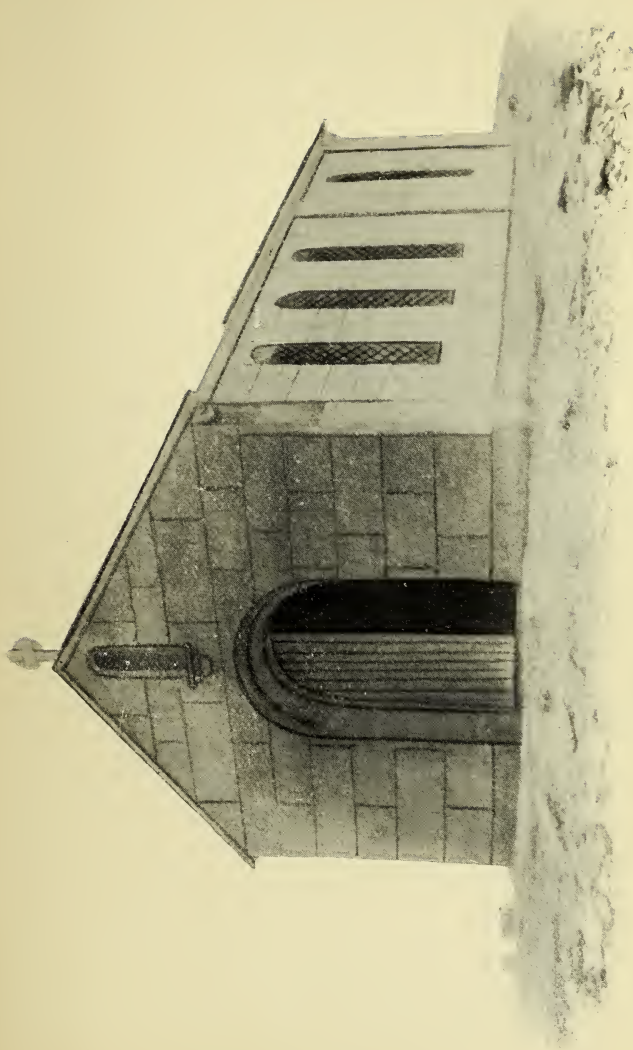


Photo by

ORATORY ON CROAGH PATRICK.

[*D. J. McLoughlin, Westport.*]

Two Royal Abbeys on the Western Lakes.*

THE natural beauty of our Western Lake-land is greatly enhanced by the historical associations, especially of a religious character, that still haunt its rifled shrines and ruined castles.

But there are two of these ruins which, more than all the rest, deserve the earnest attention of every Irishman who loves the ancient glories of his native land—I mean the Abbey of Cong on Lough Corrib, and the Abbey of Inismaine on Lough Mask.

From every point of view they are full of interest—the religious, the historical, the architectural, the picturesque. Memorials that bring back the past, visions of vanished glories, ghosts of bardic heroes, glimpses of kingly warriors and cowed monks and stately dames and tragic deeds—all these rise up before the thoughtful mind in the cloisters of Cong and the chancel of Inismaine more naturally, I think, than in any other place in Ireland.

The first thing that will strike every intelligent observer is the peerless beauty of the sites which those old monks chose for their religious houses and churches. No doubt they had then what we have never had in our time—a full and free choice, for the Irish kings and chieftains rarely grudged to give their best to God. But the monks then knew how to choose the best, which is more, I think, than can be said of some of us now; and they always chose sites of great natural beauty. Certainly they did so in the case of Cong and Inismaine.

The two Abbeys were closely connected. The latter, in fact, seems—at least in the twelfth century—to have been a branch-house of the former. There is not more than four miles distance between them, yet I venture to say there is not in all Ireland a district of more varied beauty and greater historical interest. No feature that enriches a landscape is wanting. Two noble wide-

* Lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Tuam, 29th December, 1904.

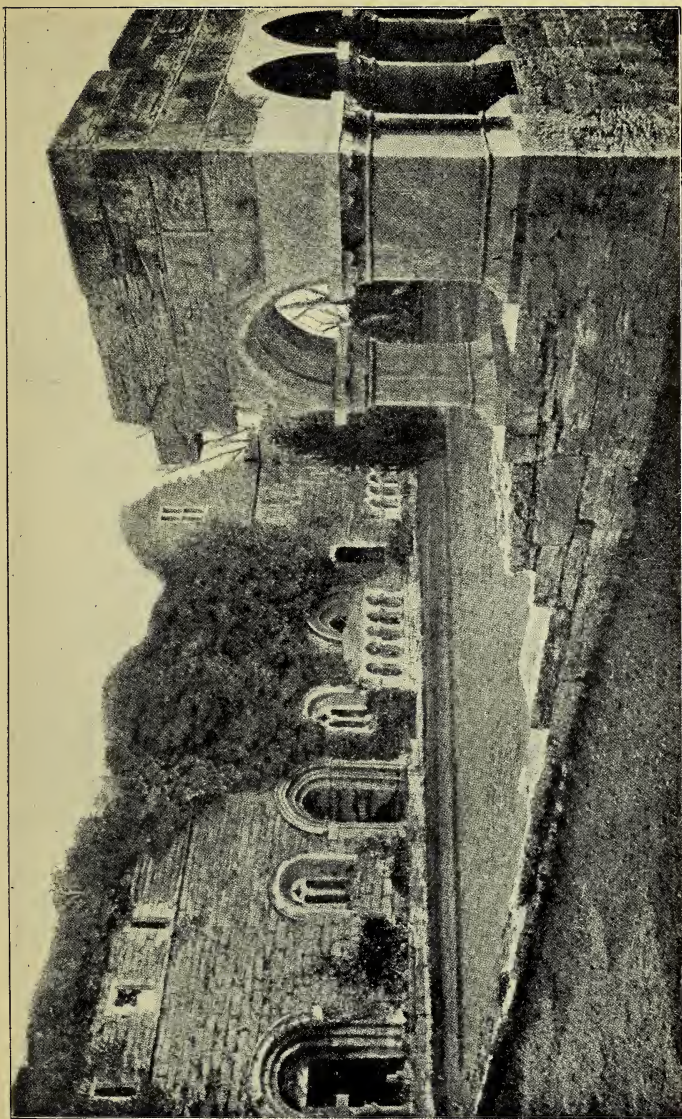
spreading lakes, like inland seas, dotted over with myriad islands and flanked by noble mountains; far-reaching woodlands; quiet groves and sunny waters; foliage of the richest green; early blooms never blighted by the nipping frost; underground rivers from lake to lake, suddenly bursting out from their sunless caves in mighty rushing floods; hill and dale and rock and mound intermingled in bewildering variety—all these scenic charms the old monks could enjoy in an evening's stroll around their beautiful homes.

At Cong the noble river rushed before their very doors. They had an abundance of purest water—the greatest of all human needs for health and pleasure; they had abundance of fish for fasting days, and they had the great lake before their eyes, lit up by every ray of sunlight in summer, and grander still, perhaps, in winter when lashed into foam by the wild rush of the storms from the western hills. Such was Cong; and its beautiful daughter in Inismaine stood in the midst of scenes no less varied and striking.

It is not to be wondered at that a land so rich in nature's choicest gifts should have been the battle-ground of warring races, and the choicest prize of conquering kings. And such it was in very truth from the morning prime of our island story down almost to our own times. The undulating plain between the lakes is dotted over with the burial mounds and monumental pillar stones of the warriors who fell in the first great battle between hostile races recorded in our history—that is, the famous battle of South Moyturey, or rather, Moytura.

This is not the place to give an account of that stricken field. If we had nothing but the bardic tale that tells us of it, no doubt the whole story would be set down as a pure romance. But as Sir William Wilde has shown, the bardic tale is confirmed in all its main features by the evidence of existing monuments, so that we can, partly by the tale and partly by the monuments, trace with tolerable accuracy the whole course of the three days' battle, and the varying fortunes of victors and vanquished.

There is one grand monument still remaining “in proud defiance of all-conquering Time”—Carn Eochy, which is undoubtedly the grave mound of the Belgic King Eochy, who was slain on the third day of the fight. It



CONG ABBEY.

overlooks Lough Mask and Inismaine, and is one of the finest monuments of its kind to be found anywhere in Ireland. It was raised over the dead warrior by his devoted followers more than 3,000 years ago, and it is likely to last at least 3,000 years more. Every other work of human hands around has either totally disappeared or is a shapeless ruin; but the grand old monument of the Firbolgic King seems to be as enduring as the lakes and mountains of the West.

It is still a most conspicuous object, towering over the whole storied plain, and as I gazed at it fronting the West, standing alone with strength and pride, I could hardly divest my mind of the idea that the great old Belgic King was not wholly dead, but from his royal mound still kept watch and ward over the fate of the descendants of the warriors who survived the fatal day of Moytura. They fled, it would seem, into the bogs and mountains and islands of the West. They are still, beyond any doubt, in the lands which were too poor to attract the greedy conquerors.

These conquerors, the Tuatha de Danaan, were themselves shortly afterwards conquered by the Scotie or Milesian races, and they have not left even a trace behind. No Irish family, high or low, traces its ancestry to them. They have no existence, except as the fairies of the forts, in the imagination of the people. The Scots or Milesians in their time had to give place to the Normans through all that fair western land around the Abbeys; the Norman, later on, had to yield to the Cromwellian, and the Norman keeps are now more desolate than the burial mounds of the Firbolgs.

Strangest of all, the ownership of those fair lands, which the Firbolgs held 3,000 years ago, is likely to revert in our own time to the sons of the ancient tillers of the soil, to whom all the nobles of every blood—Milesian, Norman, and Cromwellian—will find it necessary to yield up the ownership—to the very vassals whose sires were in utter bondage, and have worked it for some 3,000 years. Hardly anything more strange, in my opinion, and more just, has happened in the annals of human vicissitude; but the fact is there, and it is undeniable, although it is somewhat removed from the immediate subject of my story, to which I now return.

The primitive Monastery of Inismaine was founded

about one hundred years before the greater Monastery of Cong. A glance at the map—the Ordnance map if possible—will show you how it was situated. In the olden times, before the lakes were drained, there were three distinct islands running in a line from the eastern shore near Lough Mask Castle far into the lake—that is, Iniscoog, Inismaine, or the Middle Island, and Inishowen, which stood out far in the deep water. But now they form really one great promontory, and in summer weather can be reached on foot quite easily dryshod, and there is even a fair road by a raised causeway, over a half-broken bridge, from Iniscoog into Inismaine.

Inishowen, the most western of the group, is a flattish cone of green land bordered with a fringe of wood by the lake shore, and rising to a height of 142 feet from the level of the lake. On the summit there is an ancient dun, now so thickly overgrown with shrubs that on the occasion of my visit I found it impossible to effect an entrance, but from its outer edge, looking west and south-west over the lake to the giant hills beyond, there is one of the finest views I have ever seen. That ancient dun was called Dun Eoghain, and from the same old king this western island itself was called by the name, which it still bears, Inishowen.

This Eoghan—known in our annals as Eoghan Beul—was King of Connaught during the first quarter of the sixth century. He was a great grandson of the famous King Dathi, of whom you have all heard something, and inherited the bravery as well as the blood of that grand warrior king. He was mortally wounded in a fierce battle against the men of the North near Sligo, in the year A.D. 537. The Four Masters tell us that the Northerns carried off his head with them from the field of battle, with many other spoils, to their own country. But the *Life of St. Ceallach* (his son) tells a different story—that he survived the fight for three days, and that he told his own soldiers to bury him standing up in his grave, fronting the hostile North, with shield and spear in his hands, and that so long as he remained there facing the foe the Northerns would never gain a victory over the men of the West, the Hy-Fiachrach of the Moy.

And so it came to pass. But when the Northerns heard it they came stealthily by night, took up the body of the dead king, and carrying it with them over the

Sligo River buried it ignobly near Hazelwood, in low ground, with the face downwards. So the spell was broken, and the dead warrior cowed the foe no more. Now, this warrior king dwelt in his dun on Inishowen about the year 525, when a great saint called Cormac, coming from the South of Ireland, made his way to the royal dun, and asked the king for a little land on which to build his cell and monastery in that neighbourhood.

Cormac was a great saint, and he had six brothers, also very holy men, who founded churches in various parts of Ireland. Now Eoghan Beul received the saint very rudely, and refused his request, most probably because he did not care to give any lands to a man whom his tribesmen might be disposed to consider an interloper from the South of Ireland. But it is not safe to quarrel with the saints, and Cormac told the king that the day would surely come when his royal dun would be laid low, and the servants of Christ would dwell nigh to its ruins.

And all that came to pass, for Dun Eoghain, like Tara, became waste and silent, and the monastic establishment on Inismaine close by grew up from low beginnings to great power and splendour. I do not wish to think hardly of the gallant old warrior who built his dun on the summit of that lone island, so daringly fronting the western waves and mountains, and stood up in his grave, armed with shield and spear, to fight the foes of his beloved western land. Hence I am inclined to think—though it is not stated expressly in the *Life of St. Cormac*, it is implied—that either Eoghan or his sons who dwelt in Carra gave the saint a site for his monastery on Inismaine.

Of this we have a striking proof, for in the northern wall of the mediæval abbey there is incorporated a portion of the wall of the primitive abbey, with its own peculiar doorway formed of large stones, with flat lintel and inclining jambs, which every antiquarian knows is a characteristic feature of our earliest churches of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. It is there still—you can see it when you go to Inismaine—and it proves beyond doubt that the beautiful Romanesque church of the twelfth century was built on the very site of the primitive Church of St. Cormac. You will see, too, why it was the early kings of the Hy-Fiachrach race loved so well the glorious shrines and islands of Lough Mask,

flanked in the blue distance by its own noble ramparts of frowning mountain walls.

About a hundred years later, that is about the year 527, the first Monastery of Cong was founded. It came about in this way: There was a very famous saint called Fechin, a native of Leyney, in the County Sligo, who flourished during the first sixty years of the seventh century. He founded several monasteries in his native district, of which the most celebrated was the monastery of Ballisodare, four miles south of Sligo. While Fechin was sojourning there with his monks, an angel came in his sleep to tell him that it was God's will that he should journey to a certain island of the ocean situated in the extreme west of Connaught, called Imaidh, now Omey, to preach to the half pagan natives.

The saint set out with a few of his disciples and made his way to Omey—from Westport, I think—where he at once proceeded to build his little church and a few cells for himself and his disciples. The church is still there, nearly covered at times with the blown sand. But it was hard work at first to build it, for the natives received the saint and his monks badly, and during the night they used to steal their few tools and throw them into the sea-lake close at hand. But God did not forget His own, for angels brought back the tools in the morning. Then the islanders would give them no food, so that Fechin and his monks were nearly all starved—two of them, it is said, perished of want, but were restored to life at the prayers of the saint. Then Guaire, King of Connaught, hearing of their sore plight, sent them food for their needs, and a silver cup—with other good things—to the saint himself, which (says the writer of the *Life of St. Fechin*) is preserved to the present day, and is called Cuach Fechin, Fechin's Goblet. But true zeal always conquers, and in the end the islanders were all converted and baptised; their little church became the parish church of the large parish of Omey, which has ever since fondly cherished the memory of its patron saint.

From Omey he went out to High Island, where he and his companions founded another little church, and built their cloghans, some of which remain, though much dilapidated. It would appear that Fechin then returned eastward, preaching the Gospel everywhere through the great parish of Ross, until he came to Cong.

Memorials of the saint's sojourn in this wild country are still to be found in many places. We find his Holy Well, Toberfechin, near Maum, and there is another Toberfechin and Leac Fechin near Doon, which mark the saint's journey eastward until he came to Cong. He at once perceived the incomparable beauty of the spot, and its suitability, at the head of the lake and at the gate of the West, for a great Monastery, and, as expressly stated in the old rental of Cong, he got a grant of place with considerable lands, not from King Guaire of Connaught, but from Domnall, son of Aedh McAinmire, King of Ireland, in the year 628. This information I owe to Mr. Martin Blake, who has extracted it from a MS. in the British Museum. We must, however, always bear in mind that the primitive monasteries founded by St. Cormac and St. Fechin were very different from the stately and graceful buildings whose ruins we now admire at Cong and Inismaine.

The centre of the primitive monastery was a small church or oratory—in the West it was generally built of stone, because stone there abounded. Around it were grouped the little cells of wood, or wattles, or stone, in which the abbot dwelt with his monks—not, of course, together, but in twos and threes. Their food was roots, fish, or a little corn—sown, reaped, and ground by their own hands.

It might be said that they dwelt mostly in the open air; but that very fact coupled with their sober, self-denying lives made them superior to the hardships of the climate. So they lived in Omey, Ardilaun, Inismaine, and Cong, in the days of the saints. As Fechin had preached the Gospel all the way from Omey to Cong, his monastery at Cong naturally became the religious centre of all that western land, and its abbots appear to have exercised episcopal jurisdiction over all the western country which he had evangelized.

During the succeeding centuries down to the twelfth we know little or nothing of its history. No doubt it suffered greatly from the Danes, who certainly had their fleets on Lough Corrib for some time. But still it continued to be a place of considerable importance, for, at the opening of the twelfth century, we find that at the synod of Rath-Breasail it was counted as one of the five dioceses which that assembly was prepared to recognise in the province of Connaught.

This arrangement, however, was not carried out. When the final settlement of the dioceses was made at the Synod of Kells, in 1152, Cong was not recognised as one of the Connaught Bishoprics. Still the restored Abbey of Cong certainly continued to be one of the most important religious centres in the West of Ireland; and hence it would be interesting to know when exactly the restoration took place. There is, however, some doubt about the date—certain authorities placing it, in my opinion, too early, and others too late in that century.

Now there was a burning of Cong—which means the Abbey and Church—in 1114; but, in my opinion, that was too early for the restoration. The great Turlough O'Connor was only just then fighting his way to the front, and he had neither the leisure nor the means to restore the old Abbeys, although I do not say the will was wanting. But in 1133, and again in 1137, the Abbey was burned by the men of Munster in a hostile raid on King Turlough O'Connor; and, in my opinion, it was after that second or third burning the Abbey was rebuilt as we now see it in its ruins.

Turlough was then at the height of his power and resources, the acknowledged High King of all Ireland. He had for some years been engaged in great works of peace. He had in 1124 erected three strong castles to protect his dominions at Galway, Dunloe, and Colooney. He threw bridges over the Shannon at Athlone, and Lanesborough, and over the Suck at Ballinasloe, beside his castle there, and he was resolved not to be outdone by any of his contemporaries in building new monasteries and churches. It was an era of reform in discipline, and of great progress in architecture and its kindred ecclesiastical arts. A striking example had been set before his eyes both in the North and the South. The new Basilica of SS. Peter and Paul was dedicated by St. Celsus, Archbishop of Armagh, in 1127, and the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, as they were called, took possession of that church under the guidance of the holy Imar O'Hagan.

Some eight years later, in A.D. 1135, Cormac M'Carthy's beautiful chapel on the Rock of Cashel was dedicated in the presence of all the kings and nobles of the South. Turlough was determined in his own country to rival and, if possible, excel Cormac M'Carthy, in

architecture as in war. Tuam was burned the same year as Cong, that is, 1137, and, it would appear, by the same Munster raiders; so Turlough determined to rebuild both Abbey Churches on a scale of great magnificence, worthy of the High King of Ireland. And he succeeded. Petrie expressly says that the chancel arch of the old Cathedral of Tuam, with the east window, which now alone remains, is sufficient to show that "it was not only a larger but a more splendid structure than Cormac's chapel at Cashel," and the cloister of Cong shows, too, that there was probably no building in Ireland which excelled in elegance of design and elaborate decoration what the same Petrie calls the "beautiful Abbey of Cong." Now, I do not say that these buildings were completed so early as 1137, for they would require several years to complete. But I think they were undertaken after the burning of 1137. The two high crosses, one opposite the Town Hall, Tuam, and one that formerly stood near the Abbey of Cong, but of which the broken base now alone remains, were undoubtedly erected to commemorate the completion and dedication of the two Abbeys.

Now, on the base of the cross of Tuam there is an inscription which asks a prayer for King Turlough O'Conor, for the artist Gillachrist O'Toole, for the Comarb of Jarlath, and for Aedh O'Oissin, or O'Hessian, who, in the inscription at the base of the cross, is called "Abbot." This Aedh O'Hessian became Abbot of Tuam about the year 1128, and continued in that office until the death of Bishop Muireadhach O'Duffy, in 1150, when he himself became at first Bishop, but afterwards Archbishop, on receiving the Pallium at the Synod of Kells. Now, it appears to me clear that the Cathedral was rebuilt while O'Hessian was Abbot, and Muireadhach O'Duffy, Bishop of Tuam, and, therefore, before the year 1150, when O'Hessian succeeded Muireadhach.

The name, "Comarb of Jarlath," if applied to O'Hessian, does not mean that he was then Bishop of Tuam, for he gets that title in the *Annals of Innisfallen* so early as 1134, when he was sent by the king on an embassy to Munster. On the base of the high cross of Cong there is a mutilated inscription asking a prayer for Nichol and Gillebert O'Duffy, who was in the Abbacy of Cong. If we could find his date in the Abbacy we might easily know who restored the building, but his name is

not mentioned in the Annals. It is highly probable, however, that he was Abbot when his great namesake Muireadhach O'Duffy, Archbishop of Connaught, died at Cong, on St. Brendan's Day, May 16. The latter is described as "Chief Senior of Ireland in wisdom, in chastity, in the bestowal of jewels and food," and died at the age of seventy-five, in the new and beautiful Abbey by the Lake.

It is highly probable that O'Duffy had retired to spend the last years of his life with his namesake, and doubtless relative also, at Cong, and that O'Hessian had been his Coadjutor for some years before his death. It is my opinion, therefore, that the beautiful Abbey Churches of Tuam and Cong were both completed between 1137 and 1150, while Turlough was King, and O'Duffy was High Bishop, and O'Hessian was Abbot, who, with Gillebert O'Duffy and O'Toole, all co-operated in the buildings that have given so much lustre to their names and to their country. The great Turlough himself died in Dunmore, and was buried in Clonmacnoise in 1156, "a man full of mercy and charity, hospitality and chivalry."

These O'Duffys were a great ecclesiastical family, to whom we owe much, but of whom unfortunately we know little, except what we can glean from a few meagre references in the Annals, supplemented in some cases by the inscriptions on the crosses and stones. Yet for more than a century we find them at intervals ruling in all the important religious centres of the West—Clonmacnoise, Tuam, Cong, Mayo, Roscommon, Clonfert, Boyle—each had one or more of the O'Duffy's in its See, and everywhere, I believe, they have left enduring monuments of their religious zeal and artistic genius.

The great Turlough and his two sons in succession ruled the western province for more than a century, yet, without the O'Duffy's, I believe, neither Turlough nor Rory nor Cathal O'Conor could have left so many monuments of their own taste and munificence in the cause of religious art and architecture. I am inclined to think that this famous family must have dwelt somewhere in the neighbourhood of Cong or of Tuam—it is not easy to say which. The first of them we hear of was a professor in Tuam and Abbot of Roscommon. Certainly the greatest of them, Muireadhach and Cathal O'Duffy, both High Bishops of Tuam, retired from Tuam to spend the

closing years of their lives in the beautiful Abbey by the Lake—there they loved to live, and there they chose to die.

There is another striking trait in their character, and that is their unswerving loyalty and devotion to the O'Connor Kings through good and ill. It is something to praise in a cruel and treacherous time. Little can be said in favour of some of those O'Connor princes—faithless, pitiless, licentious, traitors to father and family and country. Turlough put out the eyes of one of his own sons for his treasons, and Rory, the last king, did the same to one of his sons, the traitor Murtoth O'Connor, who first allied himself with the Normans and led them across the Shannon, hither even to the very streets of Tuam, which the people fired rather than allow to be a resting-place for the foe. Even Cathal the Red-handed, one of the best of them, allied himself again and again with William Burke and the Normans, and brought them to Cong itself and Tuam in 1202, from which they pillaged all the country round about them.

Yet the O'Duffy's were always loyal to these false kings, and when Rory at length, in 1175, gave up his claim to the throne of Ireland, it was Cathal O'Duffy, the Archbishop, who, with Laurence O'Toole of Dublin, and the Abbot of Clonfert, went over to London to negotiate a treaty on behalf of the discrowned King with Henry of England; and, at a later period, when Rory, deposed by his own sons and weary of the world, retired to spend the last years of his life among the Canons of Cong, doing that penance which he greatly needed, it would appear that Cathal O'Duffy, Archbishop of Tuam for forty years, followed to Cong the aged monarch; that he closed his eyes in death, and then, doubtless, accompanied the body of his beloved but unhappy master all the way to Clonmacnoise, and said the last prayers over his grave, when he was laid to rest beside his noble father, near the altar of Ciaran, in the great Church of Clonmacnoise. Then he, too, weary of the world, returned to Cong to die.

I have called Cong a Royal Abbey, and so in truth it was, for it was founded by a High King, and was rebuilt by kings and by the sons of kings; it was ruled by their closest friends and relations; they loved to live in it and to die in it—both themselves and their kindred.

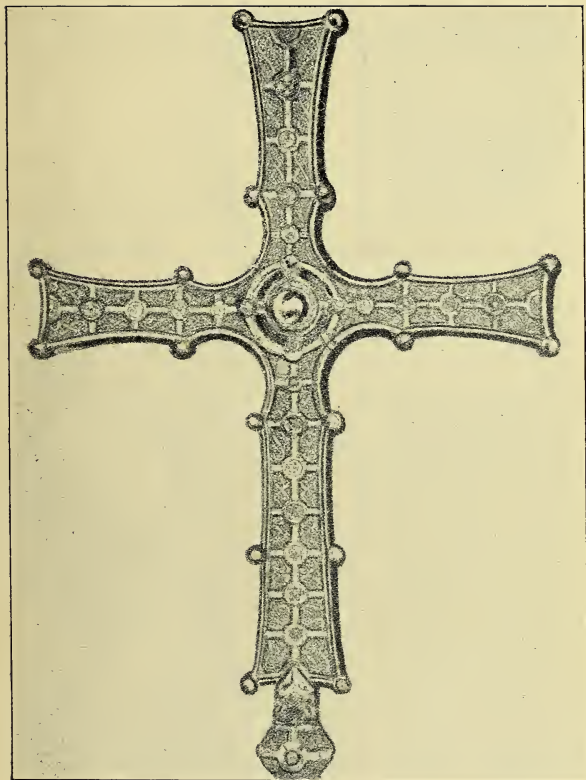
Let me give a few more facts about the O'Duffys and O'Conors, for while a stone of Cong remains their memory will cling to its mouldering walls. As we have already seen, Muireadhach O'Duffy, who is called Archbishop of Connaught, the greatest, too, of all his family, and, as I take it, practically Prime Minister of King Turlough for nearly thirty years, retired from Tuam to Cong, and died there on the 16th of May, 1150.

He is described as "Senior of Erin" on the Cross of Cong; as "Archbishop of Connaught" by the Four Masters, and as the "Head of Religion" in the *Chronicon Scotorum*. The eulogy pronounced on him by the Four Masters shows that he was regarded as the foremost of the Irish ecclesiastics at the time, "Chief Senior of all Ireland in wisdom, in chastity, and in the bestowal of jewels and food." He died at Cong, and is buried in Cong. I could wish we knew exactly where, for I have a great reverence for the man's memory.

In 1168, "Flannagan O'Duffy," whom the Masters describe as "Bishop (of Elphin) and chief doctor of the Irish in literature, history and poetry, and in every kind of science known to man in his time, died in the bed of Muireadhach O'Duffy at Cong." Here we have a great scholar who, like the Archbishop of Tuam, left his diocese in his old age, and retired to his beloved monastery at Cong to gain the victory of penance and to prepare for death. He lived in the room at Cong occupied by Archbishop O'Duffy, "and died in his bed." It was doubtless the cell and the bed kept for the archbishops at the Abbey, and it is not unlikely that he was a nephew or near relative of Archbishop Muireadhach.

No one in giving an account of Cong can omit all references to the famous Processional Cross of Cong. It was made, the inscription tells us, by Maolisa Oechan for Muireadhach O'Duffy, "Senior of Erin," and for Turlough O'Conor, King of Erin, under the superintendence of Flannagan O'Duffy, Comarb of Coman and Ciaran. It is clear, therefore, it was made for the Church of Tuam, at the expense of Turlough O'Conor, and designed to contain a relic of the True Cross, sent from Rome to Turlough about the year 1123.

It was a work of rare and peerless beauty, and was probably brought for safety sake from Tuam to Cong by Archbishop Muireadhach O'Duffy, for whom it was



THE CROSS OF CONG.

made, when he retired there to end his life in peace and penance some years before he died in 1150. It was carefully preserved by the Abbots of Cong during all the stormy years that followed, down to the time of Father Prendergast, the last Abbot of Cong, from whom it was purchased in 1839 for the Royal Irish Academy.

As we have already seen, there is reason to think that the O'Duffys founded technical schools of ecclesiastical art at Cong, at Clonmacnoise, and at Roscommon, and it was from these schools the noblest works of Irish Christian art emanated. But I cannot stay now to prove this at length. The glory of the school at Cong—technical and literary—began with the O'Conors and waned with their power as independent kings.

It would appear that Rory himself was first deposed for incapacity by his son and subjects, and then retired to his beloved Cong to spend the remnant of his days in peace and penance. But some years later the old king, growing tired of his seclusion, sought to recover his kingdom once more after the death of his gallant son, Conor Moenmoy, who was slain by his own friends in A.D. 1189. But the O'Conor princes and the clansmen would not have him, yielding submission to his brother, the illegitimate (it is said) Red Hand, in preference, so once more the old king was forced to return to his retreat at Cong without hope of restoration. There he spent the last nine years of his life in peace. He had time to meditate on his own misdeeds and on the vanity of human things.

It was his lot to sit on the throne of his great father, but he was not able to keep it. The crisis of Erin's fortunes, when Strongbow was besieged in Dublin, and Miles de Cogan made a desperate sally, found him in a bath instead of in the saddle. He and his men fled from Dublin like crows, and all Ireland knew that Rory was not the man to save his country. He had too many concubines. His life was the life of a sensualist rather than of a warrior. Cong was the proper place for him—to bewail his sins in its holy cloisters.

Looking out on the rushing river flowing for ever into the great lake, he had time to think on, and objects to remind him of the fleeting vanities of human ambition and the great ocean of eternity beyond the grave. He had his own consolations, however; he had a beautiful,

quiet home ; he had dear and trusty friends ; he had the solemn offices of the Church, with the converse and example of holy men around him. It was better—far better—for him to spend his last years in Cong than “in his wonderful castle” of Tuam, surrounded by false friends, with the din of battle in his ears, and his own sons and brothers waiting with ill-concealed impatience to see him die. His, from the spiritual point of view, was a fortunate lot, yet it was a sad if not inglorious end. And for my own part I can fancy the old king in the midst of his prayers and penance thinking mournfully of the past. There was another High King of Erin whose glorious end must have often occurred to his mind. Why did he not do what Brian Boru did on the famous field of Clontarf, when the clansmen of Erin, to the number of 30,000 gathered round him—why did he not risk his country’s fate and his own life in the glorious onset of one desperate day? If he won he would have kept his kingdom and his sceptre. If he fell, how could he have fallen more nobly than fighting to the last, with his face to the foe, for his country’s freedom, and his father’s throne?

It is quite certain that Rory was buried at Clonmacnoise, as the Four Masters distinctly assert, but several other members of his royal family sleep in the cloisters of Cong. We are told, A.D. 1224, that Maurice the Canon, son of Rory O’Conor, the most illustrious of the Irish for learning, psalm-singing, and poetic compositions, died, and was buried at Cong, after the victory of “Unction and Penance.” This shows, incidentally, that poetry and music were both cultivated by the Canons Regular of Cong ; and another entry in the *Annals of Lough Ce*, two years later, confirms it, for it tells us that “Aedh, son of Dunlevy O Sochlachain Airchinnech of Cong, a professor of singing and of harp-making, who made, besides, an instrument for himself, the like of which had never been made before, and who was distinguished in every art, both in poetry and engraving and writing, and in every science that a man could exercise, died in this year.” This shows that there was a real technical school of the fine arts at Cong—which their work proves abundantly.

The very same year, and in the same place—the Church of the Canons of Cong—was buried the Lady Nuala,

daughter of King Rory O'Conor, Queen of Uladh. She died at Cong, and was buried at Cong. Indeed, it is not improbable that King Rory had a castle near the Abbey, where he himself and many of his family subsequently dwelt. In 1247 Finola, his youngest daughter, died at Cong, and was doubtless buried by her sister's side. And as it was at Cong, so it was at Inismaine Abbey. There is some reason to think that King Turlough himself had a castle either on Inismaine or close at hand, near the present Lough Mask Castle, for we are told that his son, Cathal Crobhderg, was born at the port of Lough Mask, which was just under the castle. Moreover, the site of an ancient castle is shown near the Abbey, and we are told that an attack was made upon Inismaine in 1227 by Richard Burke and Aedh O'Conor, "who burned Inismaine," which seems to point to the castle rather than to the Abbey. It would appear that as the great Turlough had the Abbey of Canons Regular near him at Cong, he also restored the old Abbey of Inismaine, and placed his own son—some say "his eldest legitimate son"—as Abbot over it, for we are told that Maelisa, son of Turlough O'Conor, died Abbot of Inismaine in 1223, just the year before his brother Cathal, the Red-Handed, died in the habit of a Cistercian monk in the Abbey of Knockmoy, which he himself had founded. They were a strange race, the O'Conors, capable of great deeds, yet guilty of many crimes against God and their country, but they seldom failed to do penance when they got the chance to die in their beds.

The thirteenth century was a very trying time for the two royal Abbeys. During the whole of that period, especially after the death of Cathal Crobhderg in 1224, there was a fierce struggle for the ownership of the beautiful lakeland between the Celt and the Norman. The Celts might have easily held their own, except for their unhappy divisions. Not only were the O'Flahertys fighting against the O'Conors, but the O'Conors were divided amongst themselves—especially the sons of Rory were in constant feud with the sons of Cathal, and each side joined the Norman against the other. The consequence was that after the battle of Athenry in 1316 the Burkes drove them all out of the beautiful lakeland. The O'Flahertys were driven beyond Lough Corrib, and the O'Conors were driven eastward of the Suck, and so the

royal Abbeys became the inheritance of the stranger, and the baronies of Clare, Kilmaine and Carra knew their ancient lords no more.

Still both victors and vanquished were Catholics, and when the stubborn fight was done the conquering Norman was eager to repair the injuries inflicted on the royal Abbeys during the protracted warfare of the thirteenth century. The Burkes gave new grants of land to both the Abbeys, especially to Cong, and we are told that Edmond Albanagh gave considerable grants of land to the Abbey, and that Walter Burke, son of Thomas Fitz-Edmond Albanagh, gave the lands of Arry, containing one-quarter, to the Abbey of Cong, "on condition that any female descending from him and taking the vow of chastity, should be received by the Abbot and supported and maintained in this house"—which goes to show that there was a Nunnery as well as an Abbey at Cong.

This Walter Burke was grandson of that Edmond Albanagh who was responsible for one of the darkest crimes in Irish history. You have all doubtless heard of the dreadful deed. It took place in 1338, on the night of Low Sunday, and, like other crimes, had its origin in agrarian feuds. I follow O'Flaherty's account as the most reliable. When the Dun Earl, William de Burgo, was slain at the ford of Belfast in 1333, his only daughter, Elizabeth, then aged seven, became heir-general to all the vast estates of the Red Earl. Shortly afterwards her grand-uncle, Edmond de Burgo, a son of the Red Earl, was appointed the guardian of all these vast estates in the interest of the heiress. The western Burkes, headed by another Edmond, called Edmond Albanagh, determined to get rid of the guardian and seize the lands for themselves. Sir Edmond was seized by a party of the retainers of his cousin, Edmond Albanagh, in the Augustinian Monastery of Ballinrobe. That night they carried their prisoner to Lough Mask Castle over the lake, where it is probable that Edmond Albanagh then dwelt. Next night he was taken to Ballydeonagh Castle, near Petersburg, at the southern extremity of the lake. On the third night he was transferred to what is now called the Earl's Island, in the south-western extremity of Lough Mask. The Archbishop of Tuam, Malachy M'Hugh, who was associated with the unhappy prisoner in the government of Connaught, came to the island in

the hope of arranging terms between the cousins. It would appear, however, that, while the conference was in progress, certain of the Stauntons—McPaidins as they are called—fearing for their own safety if the prisoner was released, secretly tied him up in a bag, with a stone in its bottom, and then cast the bag into the lake, which is very deep around the island.

This tragedy changed the whole face of Connaught. The Burkes having no longer one head split into parties. Edmond Albanagh himself for many years became a fugitive, but his family still were able to retain the manor of Lough Mask, and we find his descendant in Perrott's Composition of 1585 claiming and obtaining as his patrimonial inheritance the castles and manors of Kinlough, near Cong, of Ballyloughmaske and of Ballinrobe—the very lands held by the royal tribes of the West from the dawn of our history.

This brings me to an interesting point in the history of Cong Abbey. Mr. Martin Blake, to whom our Galway archæology already owes so much, has sent me a rental of Cong Abbey, written in 1501, by the monk Tadhg O'Duffy, under the direction of his Abbot, Flavus O'Duffy, which shows that the O'Duffys were there still. The Abbot was departing for Rome and wished to have a certified copy of the rental duly executed before his departure.

This document—which I hope soon to publish *in extenso*—sets out the gifts of the land made to the Abbey by its founder, by Turlough O'Connor, and by the Burkes, among others by this Edmond Albanagh of whom I have spoken. But, strangest of all, it sets out how Cōrmac M'Carthy, chief of his nation, gave certain lands in Bere and Bantry to the Abbey of Cong, and, among other privileges a bell-rope for the Abbey from every ship sailing out of his harbours of Cork and Dunboy. It would appear that in 1133 Cormac and his friends from Munster burned Cong and Dunmore, and plundered a great part of the country; so when Turlough got the upper hand he compelled Cormac to give certain lands and privileges to his own beloved Abbey of Cong by way of restitution.

From immemorial ages the Kings of Connaught had held those lands and duns and castles, and so the chiefs of the Mayo Burkes, succeeding to their authority in the West, claimed their ancient and beautiful inheritance as

their own. They, too, in their turn passed away, and other men of another race and religion hold their lands and castles—destined, too, in their time to pass away. Old King Eochy has seen it all from his cairn over the lake, and his hoary monument will, so far as we can judge, outlive them all.

Let me say a word about the architecture of the two Abbeys. It belongs to what is known as the Irish Romanesque, which took its rise in its ornamental forms about the beginning of the eleventh century—say the time of the battle of Clontarf—and reached its perfection during the first half of the twelfth century, that is, up to the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion, when its further development was arrested, and it gradually gave way to the Gothic or early-pointed style of architecture.

From 1150 to 1220 was a period of transition, during which the two styles are often found together in buildings of that period—for instance, in some of the Cistercian monasteries erected towards the close of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth century. We have in Cong itself evidences of this transition, for the windows and one doorway are purely semi-circular or Romanesque, while we have the other two beautiful doorways slightly pointed, as if the artist wished to make a compromise between the two styles of architecture. It is impossible at present to say for certain whether the three doors are contemporaneous or, as I think more probable, the two pointed doors are later additions or insertions.

Now this Irish Romanesque in its most characteristic features is a purely national development of the foreign Romanesque of Italy and Southern France—Romanesque meaning simply an outgrowth of the Roman architecture. In this development, as an eminent professional authority (Brash) has said: "The Irish exhibited wonderful fertility of invention, taste, and fancy in design, the utmost accuracy in drawing, and of harmony in colouring;" but he admits that in their attempts to represent the human figure either in painting or sculpture they were "decided failures."

In book painting and decoration, and even in stone carving, they excelled; but in painting and reproducing the human figure they failed. You can perceive this yourselves if you notice carefully the figures of the two ecclesiastics on the base of the Tuam market cross, which

I take to represent Archbishop O'Muireadhach and Abbot O'Hessian—there is neither grace nor dignity about the figures. But in beauty of design and fertility of invention in ornament the Irish Romanesque school was unsurpassed and unsurpassable.

I know a beautiful thing, I hope—animate or inanimate—whenever or wherever I see it, and I must say I admire it also, but as I am no artist, I do not feel myself qualified to enter into minute details on this subject. I can only say I pity the man who has no eye to admire the cloister of Cong, with all its pure and graceful lines, and the infinite variety and delicacy of its ornamentation. And no less admirable, to my mind, are the window and doorway of Inismaine, and also the foliated sculptures of the capitals of its noble chancel arch, now, alas! in great part overthrown.

But I would say, visit these places for yourselves; examine them, not hurriedly, but leisurely and carefully. Let the eye and the mind drink in their beauty by thoughtful, patient observation. Take in the whole scene and its surroundings in the present and, if you can, in the past, when kings and prelates and monks and scholars trod these silent cloisters; when royal maidens touched their harps in tones responsive to their own sweet Gaelic songs; when the vesper bell woke the echoes around those pleasant waters; when the voice of prayer and praise rose seven times a day from the lips and hearts of holy men behind those chancel arches; when the hospice was ever open to the poor and the stranger; when many a sinful soul came to find pardon and peace among that blessed Brotherhood of God. And I believe that the thoughtful contemplation of these beautiful ruins in this patient and loving spirit will exercise an elevating and refining influence on your minds, and tend also, I think, to soften and purify your hearts. More than all, you can ever point to the architecture and the sculpture of these beautiful ruins as a very striking proof of what Irish genius can effect, and has effected, when inspired by the elevating influences of an independent national existence.

In spite of many unfavourable circumstances resulting from the almost continuous wars of the time, architecture and its kindred arts made marvellous progress on purely native lines during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Turlough O'Connor and his son Rory were the last of our native independent kings, and they were a fighting race; yet in their reigns marvellous progress was made. When the foreigner came all this progress was arrested. And, bear in mind, this wonderful development was the outcome of native genius—all these great and beautiful works were accomplished through the munificence of our native princes, under the inspiration of Irish talent, and by the hands of Irish workmen.

Of this there cannot be a shadow of doubt, for we have the names of many of them still—of the craftsmen who wrought the choicest of them all. This you should never forget; it affords solid grounds to glory in our country's past, and to hope for our country's future. For myself, the sight of these ivied ruins, so eloquent of glories gone, has been to me at all times an inspiration and a joy more pleasing than dainty fare, more exhilarating than generous wine. I have felt proud whenever I was able to point them out to sceptical strangers as the undoubted work of Irishmen before the Norman ever set foot on Irish soil. I readily admit that the great Anglo-Norman Cathedrals of England surpass our own in lofty grandeur and majestic dignity, but neither in England nor anywhere else can ancient churches be found to surpass ours in graceful symmetry of outline and proportion, or in the varied beauties of their marvellous ornamentation. And it was in the hope of awakening in your minds some of those ennobling thoughts that have long been familiar to my own that I have consented to prepare this paper.

Grania Uaile.*

EVERYTHING connected with Grania Uaile, the famous Queen of Clew Bay, ought to have a very special interest for the good people of Westport and its neighbourhood, for she is, so to speak, one of yourselves, and her memory ought to be for you a glorious inheritance, which you can fairly claim as your own. Her old castles around Clew Bay still plead haughtily, even in their ruins, for glories that are gone; the living traditions of her achievements still linger, like the mists on the slopes of Croaghpatrick, around your shores and islands, where she lived, and fought, and died. She was, as I shall show, famous in her own time as the warrior Queen of Clew Bay; and she still continues to be by far the most famous Irish heroine known to our island story. To find her equal at all in Ireland we must go back to the far-distant past—to that famous Queen Meave of Rath Cruachain, who flourished about the beginning of the Christian era. They were somewhat alike in war, diplomacy, and love, and both seemed to have ruled their husbands as well as their subjects. In her own times we can find no lady to compare with Grania except it be Queen Elizabeth of England, and although the Saxon Queen filled a higher place in a far wider sphere, I doubt very much if she were superior in any royal qualities to the warrior Queen of Clew Bay, and certainly, in some respects, she was much her inferior.

HER NAME.

Her proper name in Irish, as you all know, was Grainne Ní Mhaille; Grania Uaile is the popular form; and Grace O'Malley is the polite English form, which, I daresay, the lady herself never heard.

It is strange we find no reference to Grania in what may be called our National Annals. Neither in the *Annals of Lough Ce*, nor in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, nor in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, do we find the slightest

* Lecture delivered in the Town Hall, Westport, on the 7th January, 1906.

reference to Grania, because I daresay the official chroniclers would not recognise any female chieftain as head of her tribe. It is to the State Papers we must go to get authentic information about Grania—that is to say, to the letters written to the Privy Council in Ireland or in England, by the statesmen of Queen Elizabeth who visited Connaught. Above all, we have one invaluable document, written in July, 1593, containing Grania's answers to eighteen questions put to her by the Government about herself and her doings, the authenticity of which cannot be questioned, and which gives us the most important facts in her personal history. It is on these documents I base my narrative this evening. I cannot gather at present the floating traditions of Grania around Clew Bay, not because I undervalue them, but because I had not time to collect them, nor would I at present have time to narrate them.

HER PARENTS.

“ Her father was,” she tells us, “ Dubhdair O'Mailley, at one time chieftain of the country Upper Owle O'Mailley, now” (in 1593) she adds, “ called the Barony of Murrisk. Her mother was Margaret Ni Mailley, of the same country and family.” The O'Malleys had from immemorial ages been lords of the Owles, or Umhalls—that is, the country all round Clew Bay, now known as the baronies of Burrishoole and Murrisk. It is said they derived their descent not from Brian the great ancestor of the Connaught kings, but from his brother, Orbsen ; and hence they are set down in the *Book of Rights* as tributary kings to the provincial kings of Connaught. In the middle of the thirteenth century they were driven out of a good portion of the northern Owle by the Burkes and Butlers, but still retained down to the time of Grania some twenty townlands, or eighty quarters in Burrishoole, and held more of it as tenants to the Earl of Ormond. The Burkes had also in Burrishoole some twenty townlands or eighty quarters, and the Earl of Ormond had ten quarters or forty townlands, which were usually set on lease either to the Burkes or to the O'Malleys. Grania also tells us that O'Malley's barony of Murrisk included all the ocean Islands from Clare to Inisboffin, making in all, with the

mainland, twenty townlands, or eighty quarters of fairly arable land, not counting the bog and mountain.

BIRTH AND FOSTERAGE.

We do not know when or where Grania was born, but as her father was at one time chief of his nation, it was most likely at Belclare, which was one of the chief castles of the family, and she was probably baptized at Murrisk. As Bingham describes Grania in 1593 as the "nurse of all rebellions in Connaught for the last forty years," she must have been born about the year 1530, before Henry VIII. had yet changed his religion.

It is highly probable that Grania was fostered on Clare Island, which belonged to her family, and it was doubtless here she acquired that passionate love of the sea, as well as that skill and courage in seafaring, which made her at once the idol of her clansmen and the greatest captain in the western seas.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

"*Terra Marique Potens*," was the motto of her family, and Shane O'Dugan tells us that there never was an O'Malley who was not a sailor, but not one of them all could excel Grania in sailing a galley or ruling a crew. This open-air life on the sea, if it did not add to her beauty, gave her great strength and vigour. Sydney, the Lord Deputy, who met her in Galway in 1576, describes her, when she must have been about middle age, as "famous for her stoutness of courage, and person, and for sundry exploits done by her by sea." Whatever literary education she got in her youth she probably received from the Carmelite Friars on Clare Island, but I suspect, although she was afterwards married to two of the greatest chiefs in the West, that Grania knew more about rigging and sailing a galley than she did of drawing-room accomplishments. Sir S. Ferguson, in a fine poem, gives eloquent expression to her feelings while she dwelt on Clare Island, and sailed over the wide waters of the noble bay that spread around her, "where Clew her cincture gathers isle-gemmed"—

"Oh, no; 'twas not for sordid spoil
Of barque or seaboard borough
She ploughed, with unfatiguing toil,
The fluent, rolling furrow;

Delighting on the broad-back'd deep,
 To feel the quivering galley
 Strain up the opposing hill, and sweep
 Down the withdrawing valley.

“ Or, sped before a driving blast,
 By following seas up-lifted,
 Catch, from the huge heaps heaving past,
 And from the spray they drifted,
 And from the winds that tossed the crest,
 Of each wide-shouldering giant,
 The smack of freedom and the zest
 Of rapturous life defiant.

“ Sweet when crimson sunsets glow'd
 As earth and sky grew grander,
 Adown the grass'd unechoing road,
 Atlanticward to wander,
 Some kinsman's humbler heart to seek
 Some sick bedside, it may be,
 Or, onward reach, with footsteps meek,
 The low, grey, lonely abbey.”

HER FIRST MARRIAGE.

It is not unlikely that Grania was an heiress, and though she could never, according to the Brehon Law, become “the captain of her nation,” especially after marriage, she still seems to have always retained the enthusiastic love and obedience of her clansmen, especially in the islands. She must, of course, get a husband, and so they chose a fitting help-mate for a warrior Queen in the person of Donall an Chogaidh O'Flaherty, of Bunowan, in the barony of Ballynahinch. He was in the direct line descendant of Hugh Mor, and was acknowledged as the Tanist or heir-apparent to Donall Crone O'Flaherty, who claimed to be the chief of his nation, but Donall Crone had been set aside in 1569 by Queen Elizabeth, so that Donall the Fighter had no longer any claims as Tanist.

But when Donall of Bunowan, about the year 1550, sought and obtained the hand of Grania Uaile, he was the acknowledged heir to the headship of all the western O'Flahertys, and certainly after the death of Donall Crone ought to be the Chief Lord of all Connemara, although Teigé na Buile contested his claims.

This alliance, therefore, united in the closest bonds of friendship the two ruling families of Murrisk and Bally-

nahinch, with nothing but the narrow estuary of Leenane Bay, or rather the Killery, between them. Moreover, it made the united tribes chief rulers of the western seas, so that when Grania sailed away from her island home, with the sea-horse of O'Malley and the lions of O'Flaherty floating proudly fore and aft from the mast-heads of her galleys, the young sea-queen must have been a happy bride, and expected happy days in her new home at Bunowan Castle.

BUNOWAN.

Bunowan was at that time the chief castle of the O'Flahertys of Connemara. It was built near a small stream on the shore, and close to the old church of Ballindoon. There was an excellent harbour near at hand, sheltered from the west by the Hill of Doon, with deep water and good holding ground—just what Grania wanted. No doubt there were dangerous rocks and currents all round the entrance, but all these were well known to the natives, who could avoid them, but they were perilous to stranger craft, which would hardly venture to approach them, for there is no wilder coast all round the shores of Ireland, and there were then no lights either on Slyne Head or the Aran Islands. Hence, too, hostile galleys rarely ventured to approach that perilous rock-bound shore.

Regarding this marriage, Grania herself tells us in a business-like way that her first husband was called Donall "Ichoggy" O'Flaherty, and that during his life he was chieftain of the barony of Ballynahinch, containing twenty-four towns of four quarters of land to every town, paying the composition rent. After the death of her husband, Teige O'Flaherty, the eldest son of Sir Morogh O'Flaherty, entered into Ballynahinch, and ignoring the rights of the widow and her sons, "built therein a strong castle, and kept the same with the demesne lands of Ballynahinch for many years, until he was slain in the last rebellion of his father." This was a hard hit at Sir Morogh na Doe, especially as the facts were undeniable.

HER CHILDREN—MURDER OF HER SON.

By this her first marriage with Donall an Chogaidh, Grania tells us she had two sons, Owen and Morogh. Her eldest son, Owen, was married to Catherine Burke,

daughter of Edmund Burke of Castlebar, by whom she had a son, Donall O'Flaherty, still living when she wrote. This Owen, she said, was always a good and loyal subject, in the time of Sir Nicholas Malby, and also under Sir Richard Bingham, until the Burkes of McWilliam's country and the Joyes began to rebel. Then Owen, for the better security of himself, his flocks and his herds, did, by direction of Sir R. Bingham, withdraw into a strong island. At the same time a strong force was sent under the lead of Capt. John Bingham (brother of Sir Richard) to pursue the rebels—the Joyes and others. But missing them, they came to the mainland—right against the said island—where her son was, calling for victuals, whereupon the said Owen came with a number of boats, and ferried all the soldiers over to the island, where they were entertained with the best cheer that could be provided. That very night Owen was apprehended by his guests, and tied with a rope together with eighteen of his chief followers. In the morning the soldiers drew out of the island 4,000 cows, probably by ropes, 500 stud mares and horses, and 1,000 sheep, leaving the rest of the poor people on the island naked and destitute. The soldiers then brought the prisoners and cattle to Ballynahinch, where John Bingham halted. The same evening he caused the eighteen prisoners to be hanged, amongst whom there was an old gentleman of four score and ten years, Theobald O'Toole by name. The next night a false alarm was raised in the camp at midnight, when Owen O'Flaherty, who was lying fast bound in the tent of Captain Grene O'Molloy, a follower of Bingham's, was murdered with twelve deadly wounds, and so, miserably ended his life. Her second son, she adds, Morogh O'Flaherty, is now living, and is married to Honora Burke of Derrymaclaghney, of the Maghera Reagh, Co. Galway.

This murder of Owen O'Flaherty, eldest son of Grania Uaile, is one of the ugliest deeds of Bingham's black record in Connaught. It was not directly his own doing, but it was the doing of his brother and agent, Captain John Bingham. It was one of those utterly cruel and treacherous deeds which still tend to preserve bitter memories in the hearts of the western Gael.

Mr. Knox, in his paper on Grania in the Galway Archæological Journal, thinks that this isle of tragedy was Omey. I am inclined to think it was rather Innis-



CLARE ISLAND CASTLE—WEST VIEW.



CLARE ISLAND CASTLE—EAST VIEW.

turk, near Omev, for Omev could at any time be reached dry-shod at low water, or even at half-tide, but Innisturk has always a deep narrow channel between its shore and the mainland. The English account describes this channel as a " gut " of the sea, which is accurate enough.

CLARE ISLAND.

After the death of her husband, Donall O'Flaherty, Grania probably returned to Clare Island, where she felt most secure and most at home. Her sons were likely at fosterage, and it is probable she took her young daughter with her, for Bingham expressly tells us that the Devil's Hook of Corraun, their near neighbour in Clare Island, was her son-in-law. She doubtless made Clare Island her headquarters, and either built or strengthened the castle which still stands on a cliff over the little harbour. It was admirably situated close to the beach, on which her galleys were drawn up under her own eyes, so that when opportunity offered they were easily run down to the shore, and she would thus be ready to make her swoop on any part of the western coast without difficulty. With 'the Devil's Hook at Darby's Point or Kildavnet, and her cousins or nephews at Murrisk, and she herself at Clare, Grania held a very strong position against all her foes. But she was not content with one or two strongholds; she had at least half a dozen. At this time the Castle of Belclare was not in her hands. It belonged first to McLaughlin O'Malley, chief of the name, and then to Owen Thomas O'Malley, who dwelt there in 1593. There is reason to think that Grania had also the Castle beyond Louisburgh at Carramore, of which only traces now exist. It would be a useful stronghold to secure her passage to and from Clare Island. Then tradition connects her with the castle of Kildavnet, which she probably built to secure the passage through Achill Sound. It was thoroughly suited for that purpose, with deep water and secure anchorage against every wind and sea. Moreover, she took care to ally herself closely with the lord on the other side. This was Richard Burke, whom the Dublin officials called the Devil's Hook, which was an attempt at translating his Irish nick-name, Deamham an Chorain, the Demon of Corraun, because he was lord of that wild promontory, and I daresay, always

ready for any wild deed. Grania gave her daughter in marriage to this Devil's Hook, so between them they were well able to hold command of Achill Sound and Clew Bay. It is likely she gave him the ward of the Castle of Kildavnet. But she was not content with commanding the south entrance. From her castle of Doona, which, it is said, she seized by stratagem, she held control of the whole of Blacksod Bay, for Doona was situated on the seashore of Ballycroy, close to the Ferry, looking out over the noble Bay, due west, to where the Blackrock light house now stands. Doona is now the mere remnant of a ruin, with its stones scattered amongst the sand hills by that desolate shore.

HER SECOND MARRIAGE.

But Grania was not content with all these castles. She also got possession of Carrigahowley—more politely called Rockfleet—in this way. It appears that it belonged to Richard Burke, as sub-tenant to the Earl of Ormond, commonly called Richard an Iarainn, or as the English writers call him Richard in Iron, because he always wore a coat of mail. His mother was an O'Flaherty, and so he was closely connected with the family of her late husband, and he resolved to marry the young and enterprising widow ; nor was Grania unwilling, for so she would become mistress of Carrigahowely, which suited her well. She became, in fact, both master and mistress, for Sir Henry Sydney, the Deputy, tells us, that when he came to Galway in 1576, there came to visit him there “ a most famous feminine Sea-Captain called Grania O'Malley, and she offered her services to me wherever I would command her, with three galleys and 200 fighting men, either in Ireland or in Scotland. She brought with her her husband, for she was, as well by sea as by land, more than master's mate to him. He was of the Nether Burkes, and now I hear is McWilliam Eighter, called by nickname Richard in Iron.”

The Deputy clearly saw that Grania was master both on land and sea, but he made a knight of Richard in Iron, which greatly pleased that worthy himself, and Grania also, for she was now Lady Burke, although we never heard of her being called by that name, either in history or fiction.



KILDAVNET CASTLE.



CLEW BAY.

HER GALLEYS.

This passage also shows that Grania had several large galleys, capable of carrying sixty or seventy men each, with twenty or thirty oarsmen to work them. At that time there were plenty of oak woods at Murrisk, which supplied material in abundance, and she doubtless had also skilled shipwrights to work it. Then she had at Carrigahowley an excellent harbour, the best on Clew Bay—safe, deep, and well-sheltered; and Grania fully appreciated these advantages. With such a fleet at her disposal, well manned, and well equipped too from the spoils of the sea, Grania was more than able to hold her own against all comers, even against the much larger English vessels which dare not follow her into the creeks and island channels of Clew Bay. I am inclined to think that she and her seamen were not very scrupulous in differentiating their enemies; in fact she tells us herself, in reply to the Government interrogatories, that her former trade for many years was what she calls “maintenance by land and sea”; that is, she lifted and carried off whatever came handy on sea or shore from Celt or Saxon. We know for certain that she raided Aranmore more than once, and even the great Earl of Desmond’s territory at the mouth of the Shannon.

TAKEN PRISONER.

But there she came to grief, for having landed a party apparently near Tarbert on the Shannon, to raid the Earl’s country, she was taken prisoner by the Earl, who first put her in his own dungeon, and then handed her over to Drury, the President of Munster, by whom she was imprisoned, in all for nearly eighteen months. She was then sent on to the Lord Deputy, who met her at Leighlin Bridge, from which he sent her on to Dublin, but when he came himself to Dublin he released Grania, for whom he felt some admiration, and allowed her to return once more to the West. The Lord Deputy on this occasion describes her as governing a country of the O’Flahertys, which is probably a mistake for the O’Malleys, for Grania was certainly at that time the wife of Sir Richard Burke, but they lived mostly apart—he warring on the land, and she chiefly on the sea.

CARRIGAHOWLEY CASTLE.

Grania was not long returned from her Dublin prison when she began again to raid her neighbours from her castle of Carrigahowley, whereupon Captain William Martin was sent with a strong body of troops by sea to besiege the castle. This was in 1579. They set out on the 8th March, and spent three weeks before the castle, but the gallant Grania beat them off, and was very nearly capturing the whole band. There is probably, we may infer from this, some truth in the popular tradition that Grania held the castle for herself, and sometimes drove away even her own husband from its walls. The castle was finely situated on the bank of a small stream at the very head of the Bay, so that at high water the tide flowed over the rock on which it stood, and lapped its very walls. If Grania was hard pressed on the land side, she could easily escape by sea, and retreat to Clare Island or elsewhere. And if pursued closely on sea, she could retreat to her castle, from which the foe would keep a respectful distance, for it was protected by heavy guns mounted on its battlements, which her devoted clansmen knew well how to use, as Captain Martin learned to his cost.

GRANIA POLITIC.

Yet Grania was politic, and was always ready to pay her respects in person, and yield fitting obedience to the Deputy or his Governors. Sir Nicholas Malby, the Governor before Bingham, came down here to Westport, and put up at the Castle of "Ballyknock," which I take to be the old castle of Baun, near Pigeon Point. Iron Richard was in trouble at the time, and fled to some of the islands, where the Governor could not reach him, but Grania with some of her kinsmen visited Malby, promised all submission and obedience, and got off both herself and her husband with flying colours. Two years later, in October, 1582, the same Sir Nicholas Malby writes that "McWilliam (her husband) and many other gentlemen and their wives, amongst whom is Grania O'Malley, who thinketh herself no small lady, are at present assembled to make a plot for continuing the quietness." Malby was a kind-hearted Governor, and they were not disposed

to cause him much trouble. Next year Theobald Dillon went down to Tirawley to collect the Government rents which McWilliam had agreed to pay when he was knighted. "McWilliam," Dillon says, "and his wife, Grania ni Maille, met me with all their forces, and did swear that they would have my life for coming so far into their country, and especially his wife would have fought with me before she was half a mile near me." They yielded, however, when they saw the 150 horse with Dillon, and gave him his rent and also 30 beeves, with other provisions, for the soldiers. Moreover, McWilliam and Grania both went off to meet Sir Nicholas, and agreed to pay him the £600 arrears due upon their country, which, adds the writer, "they had never thought to pay." Small blame to Grania to evade payment if she could; but she was as politic as she was brave, and was always ready to temporise in presence of a power superior to her own—and, in my opinion, she was quite right.

AGAIN A WIDOW.

It would appear that Iron Richard, Grania's second husband, died in 1583, and was succeeded as McWilliam by another Richard Burke, described as "of Newtown" in Tirawley. Grania was now a second time a widow, and, as she bitterly complained seven years later, got no share of the lands of either of her late husbands, "as by the customs of the country the widow was entitled to nothing but the restitution of her dower," which very often could not be recovered at all, because the dower itself was spent, and the security for its repayment was worthless. But she was by no means without resources. Her sons of the second marriage, to whom she appears to have been greatly devoted, were doubtless at this period at fosterage with some of the Burkes, and caused her no anxiety or expense. The eldest son was called Theobald or Tibbot na Long, so called because he was born at sea, perhaps during one of his mother's many raids in the western seas. It would appear that later on his mother brought the youth to London to visit the Queen, and also with the hope of procuring a peerage for him—for was he not as good a Burke as the Earl of Clanrickard, or any of the peers of the Pale? And as a fact the peerage was conferred at a later date, not, how-

ever, by Elizabeth, but by Charles I., when Tibbot of the Ship became first Viscount Mayo, the ancestor of an illustrious but unfortunate line.

GRANIA IN REBELLION.

Grania being again a widow was once more free to set up at her old trade, and lost no time in doing so. It would appear she now made Carrigahowley her headquarters. The cruelty and greed of Sir R. Bingham drove the Mayo Burkes into rebellion in 1586; and the murder of her eldest son, already described, caused Grania to give her sympathies, and, to some extent, her help to the rebels. Her own statement is that after the death of her last husband "she gathered together all her own followers, and with 1,000 head of cows and mares she departed" (no doubt from her husband's residence), 'and became a dweller in Carrigahowley at Burrishoole, parcel of the Earl of Ormond's lands in Connaught (which she or her late husband rented from him). After the murdering of her son Owen, the rebellion being then in Connaught, Sir Richard Bingham granted her letters of protection against all men, and willed her to remove from her late dwelling at Burrishoole, and come and dwell under him (somewhere near Donomona or Castlebar). In her journey as she travelled she was encountered by five bands of soldiers under the leading of John Bingham (who had already caused her son to be murdered), and thereupon she was apprehended and tied with a rope—both she and her followers; at the same instant they were spoiled of their said cattle, and of all that they ever had besides the same, and brought to Sir Richard, who caused a new pair of gallows to be made for her last funeral, when he thought to end her days; but she was set at liberty on the hostage and pledge of one Richard Burke, otherwise called the 'Devil's Hook'—that is, Richard of Corraun, her own son-in-law."

"When she did rebel," she adds, "fear compelled her to fly by sea to Ulster, and there with O'Neill and O'Donnell she stayed three months, her galleys in the meantime having been broken by a storm. She returned then to Connaught, and in Dublin received her Majesty's gracious pardon through Sir John Perrott, six years ago, and was so made free. Ever since she dwelleth in

Connaught, a farmer's life, very poor, bearing cess, and paying her Majesty's composition rent, having utterly given over her former trade of maintenance by land and sea."

This was written in July, 1593, when Grania must have been well over sixty years of age; nevertheless, she wrote a letter later on to Burghley asking him to procure "her Majesty's letter under her hand authorising her to pursue during her life all her Majesty's enemies by land and sea." This was, no doubt, a bit of a bounce for the old widow, who merely meant to gain favour with Elizabeth. We do not know the year of her death. It was probably about the time that Elizabeth herself died, in 1603.

There are three points connected with the history of Grania Uaile which are more open to discussion than any of the afore-mentioned authentic incidents, and these are: (1) How far was she responsible for the murder of any of the shipwrecked Spaniards of the Armada cast away in Clew Bay? (2) Did she really visit Queen Elizabeth at Hampton Court? (3) Did she really carry off the heir of St. Laurence of Howth, and restore him only on conditions?

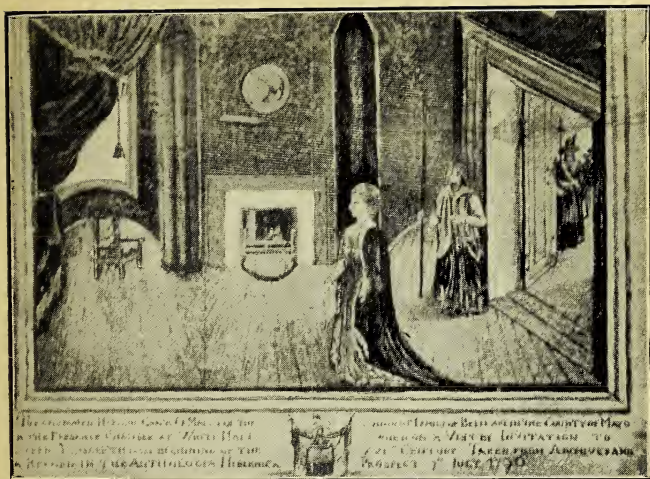
THE WRECK OF THE ARMADA.

With reference to the first point, I can find no indications in the State Papers that Grania in any way maltreated the shipwrecked Spaniards, or handed them over to be butchered by Bingham. We are told by an eye-witness that one great ship was cast away in the estuary of the Moy near Killala; 72 of her crew were taken prisoners by William Burke of Ardnaree, who treated them badly; most of the rest were either slain or drowned; and one cruel savage, Melaughlen Mac an Abb by name, boasted that he killed 80 of the shipwrecked men with his own axe. Another ship was driven ashore at Ballycroy, where her crew, to the number of 400 or 600 men, began to fortify themselves apparently in the Castle of Doona; but they were taken off by one of their own ships shortly afterwards. Another great ship was wrecked on Clare Island; 68 of her crew were drowned or slain, "probably after landing, by Dubhdairé O'Malley, chief of the island, and his followers." The author of *A Queen of Men* makes this Dubhdairé Roe a nephew of Grania, which is probable enough; but

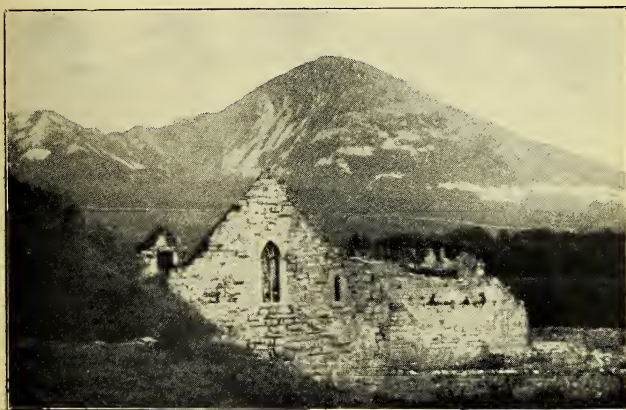
Grania herself appears to have had nothing whatever to do with this abominable crime ; nor does it appear that she was on the island at the time. Another account says that Don Pedro de Mendosa and 700 men were drowned in that wreck off Clare Island, and that Dubhdairé Roe O'Malley put, not 60, but 100 of the survivors to the sword. Comerford, the Attorney-General of Connaught, on September 13th wrote to Bingham that he stayed within view of another great ship at Pollilly by Torane, that her consort was wrecked and waterlogged close by, but the great ship after some delay took off her crew, and made sail to the south-west, having on board, it appears, the greatest man on the expedition, the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the first noble of Spain, who succeeded in reaching Santander. The ship that grounded had on board, he adds, a store of great pieces—guns and other munitions—with wine and oil. This Torane appears to be the townland of Tooreen near the Old Head, and it would appear that the Duke's great ship was able to ride out the fierce storm of September 10th under shelter of the Old Head. No word of Grania here except one that would imply that she helped the Spaniards, not yet at Burrishoole, where two more of the Spanish ships were wrecked on the sand banks, and their crews either drowned or reserved for Bingham's shambles ashore. He caused 200 shipwrecked prisoners taken in Conne-mara to be butchered in Galway in one day, Saturday, and he rested on Sunday, "giving thanks to Almighty God for our deliverance."

THE VISIT TO LONDON.

It is quite clear from the State Papers, although not expressly stated, that Grania did visit London, and had an interview with Queen Elizabeth, probably in 1593. In July of that year she had petitioned the Queen and Burghley for maintenance, and begged the Minister to accept the surrender of her sons' lands—that is her sons by both husbands—and grant them a patent for their lands on surrender. She also asked her Majesty's license to prosecute all her Majesty's enemies with fire and sword—a bold demand for an old lady overy sixty, with sons and grandsons ; but she knew it would please the Queen, and if granted would give her once more a



GRANIA UAILE BEFORE QUEEN ELIZABETH.



MURRISK ABBEY.

free hand on the western coasts. It was at this very time that Bingham, in a letter to the Privy Council, describes Grania as "a notable traitress, and the nurse of all the rebellions in the province for forty years." Grania renewed her petition to Burghley two years later (in 1595), "to be put in quiet possession of a third of the land of both her late husbands." She certainly went to London in 1593, in the month of August, as Bingham's letter of September 19th shows, and if she went to London, no doubt she saw the Queen and her Minister, for nothing else would or could have induced her to go there at all. Then Elizabeth and her Court would, no doubt, be very glad to see the rival Queen of the West in all her barbaric magnificence, accompanied by her wild attendants appparelled in native style. Unfortunately we have, so far as I know, no authentic account of this famous interview at Hampton Court. Popular writers, like the Halls, give free reign to their imagination in describing it, but it is all pure imagination. The two queens at this time were about the same age, and neither of them could be vain of her personal charms, for both were in the sere and yellow leaf. We may be sure they eyed each other with great curiosity, and took wondering note of each other's queenly raiment. The dialogue, too, must have been interesting, though doubtless carried on through an interpreter, for as Grania's husband, the late McWilliam knew no English, but was well skilled in Latin and Irish, we may fairly conclude that Grania, too, had no Beurla. There is reason to think that the English Queen granted Grania her requests, and sent her home rejoicing.

ABDUCTION OF THE HEIR OF HOWTH.

Grania, as she always preferred, travelled by sea, and on her homeward voyage landed, it is said, at Howth, no doubt to procure supplies. Tired of the sea, and perhaps hungry too, she sought admission to Howth Castle during the dinner hour, but she found all the doors closed, and was not admitted to the Castle. This was not the Irish hospitality that Grania was accustomed to in the West, so she was wrathful, and happening to meet the young heir of Howth with his nurse in the grounds, she carried off the boy to her galley, and made all sail straightway for Clew Bay. The Lord of Howth,

great nobleman as he was, found it necessary to come to terms with Grania, and the child was restored, not on ransom, but on condition of the Lord of Howth promising to keep his door open during dinner, and have a cover always set for the chance wayfarer by land or sea. More power to Grania for teaching them that lesson of hospitality! Such is the story, of which the strongest proof is the fact that this custom has been for centuries undoubtedly observed at Howth Castle, and that a picture in the Castle Hall depicts the whole scene of Grania's exploit; but there is no really authentic evidence of the truth of the story. Mr. Knox in his paper declares that it is borrowed from a really authentic incident recorded by McFirbis in his Great Book of Genealogies. McFirbis though writing only some 60 years later than Grania's time, makes no reference to this alleged abduction of the heir of Howth by Grania, but he does narrate the fact that Richard O'Cuairsce Burke, who was McWilliam from 1469 to 1479, "carried off the Lord of Benn Edair that is Howth, and brought him away to far Tirawley, and there nought else was required for his ransom but to keep the door of his court open at dinner time." Mr. Knox thinks this authentic story was transferred from the McWilliam of the fifteenth century to Grania at the end of the sixteenth. Yet, after all, why should not both stories be true? Grania might have heard her husband who was great great grandson of Richard O'Cuairsce, tell the story of that chief's exploit, and that knowledge would just naturally induce her to follow his example in similar circumstances.

I think I have given you all the authentic information obtainable concerning the Queen of Clew Bay, except perhaps one incident recorded by Bingham in 1590, when, he says, at the instigation of the O'Flahertys, "with two or three baggage boats full of knaves," she landed on Aranmore and spoiled two or three tenants of Sir Thomas Le Strange—who, we may add, had most unjustly got a grant of the island. But Bingham adds that "he heard the Devil's Hook, her son-in-law, had her in hands with a view to induce her to restore the spoils and repair the harms."

There are, as you know, many living traditions about Grania and her doing still lingering about Clew Bay, but I cannot now refer to them in detail. I should

greatly wish, however, to see them collected and embodied in a consecutive narrative. It is not quite certain where she was buried—some say at Burrishoole; others say in the old Abbey on Clare Island, which is more probable, and the islanders, as you know, still point out her grave there.

I cannot undertake to say that she was a paragon of virtue or piety; but she was a good mother and faithful wife, and her frequent raids on her enemies would not at all prevent her from being recognised as a good Christian in those wild days. At any rate she had all her castles near to some church or religious house. Murrisk Abbey was not far from Belclare or Carramore, and was founded by her ancestors for the monks of St. Augustine, so early as the middle of the thirteenth century. The "lone grey abbey by the sea," on Clare Island was also founded by her ancestors for the good Carmelites about 1224—and it was only a short mile or so from the castle on the beach. Then she had the Dominican Convent of Burrishoole, founded by the Burkes, quite near her castle of Carrigahowley; and she had the old church of Kildavnet, near her castle on Achill Sound. So when Grania wanted spiritual advice and absolution she had not far to go to find a confessor, and one, too, who would not be too hard on her for pillaging the Saxons and their adherents. It is fully 300 years since she died, but her memory still lives around the shores and islands of Clew Bay, and will outlive the memory of all her contemporaries. Every guide book tells some more or less fantastic stories about her; every tourist wishes to see her castles, especially on Clare Island and Carrigahowley. She has been the heroine of at least three novels by distinguished writers; one of the greatest of our Irish poets, Sir Samuel Ferguson, has left us a fine poem descriptive of her life on Clew Bay; our antiquarians write papers about her history; and grave prelates like myself make her the subject of popular lectures. I might have hesitated myself to take Grania as the subject of this lecture, but a greater Archbishop of Tuam made Grania the subject of a very stirring poem of which at least some stanzas may be found in the life of the illustrious John McHale by O'Reilly. The latter describes John of Tuam as pausing awhile from his battles with recreant statesmen and false patriots, for-

getting the sorrows of the past and the portents of the present, to call up and sing the praises of the heroine who faced and braved Elizabeth's wrath in London—he might have said more truly who for forty years had faced and braved Elizabeth's wrath on the shores of Clew Bay. Grania Uaile is no unworthy representative of what Ireland once was, and still might be, if she could once more launch her vessels on the main. Here are some of the Archbishop's stanzas about Grania :

One night as oppressed with soft slumbers I lay,
And dreamed of Old Erin oft thought of by day,
With the long, wasting wars between Saxon and Gael,
Up rose the bright vision of fair Grania Uaile.

Old Erin's green mantle around her was flung,
Adown her fair shoulders the rich tresses hung,
Her eyes like the sun of the young morning shone,
Whilst her harp sent forth strains of the days that are gone.

Of Erin's fair daughters a circle was seen,
Each one with her distaff surrounding the Queen,
Whose sweet vocal chorus was heard to prolong
The soul stirring anthems of harp and of song.

To Erin what shame and lasting disgrace
That her sons should be crushed by a vile foreign race,
Who have banished her priests and polluted her fanes,
And turned to a desert her beautiful plains!

The great Archbishop then, by a large stretch of poetic license, represents Grania as denouncing the payment of tithes, and foretelling a brighter future for Ireland :

When the dark reign of terror had come to its close,
And a period is put to its crimes and its woes,
Not leaving a record its trophies to tell,
But the cairn of rude stones where the Tithe Demon fell.

I am proud to note that my illustrious predecessor felt a similar interest to that which I feel in the great career of Grania Uaile. In her own person she typifies the unending struggle for Faith and Fatherland which ever goes on in Ireland. In her own day, and with her own weapons by land and sea, as Bingham said, for more than forty years she fought a stubborn fight on the shores and islands of Clew Bay. Her memory still clings as close as their sheltering ivy to the old castles that she built. No student of the past will ever sail over

the glorious expanse of Clew Bay without thinking of Grania Uaile, and I honestly believe that when the statesmen and politicians of our own time are dead and forgotten, the memory of the Queen of Clew Bay will still be green in the hearts of the men of the West ; yea, as long as the holy mountain of St. Patrick stands in its place of pride, looking down like a guardian angel on that beautiful bay with its myriad islands, which Grania kept so stoutly and loved so well.

Almost everything around Clew Bay is associated with her memory. Her undying presence still haunts its shores and islands. In the words of a great poet, slightly changed, it may be said that :—

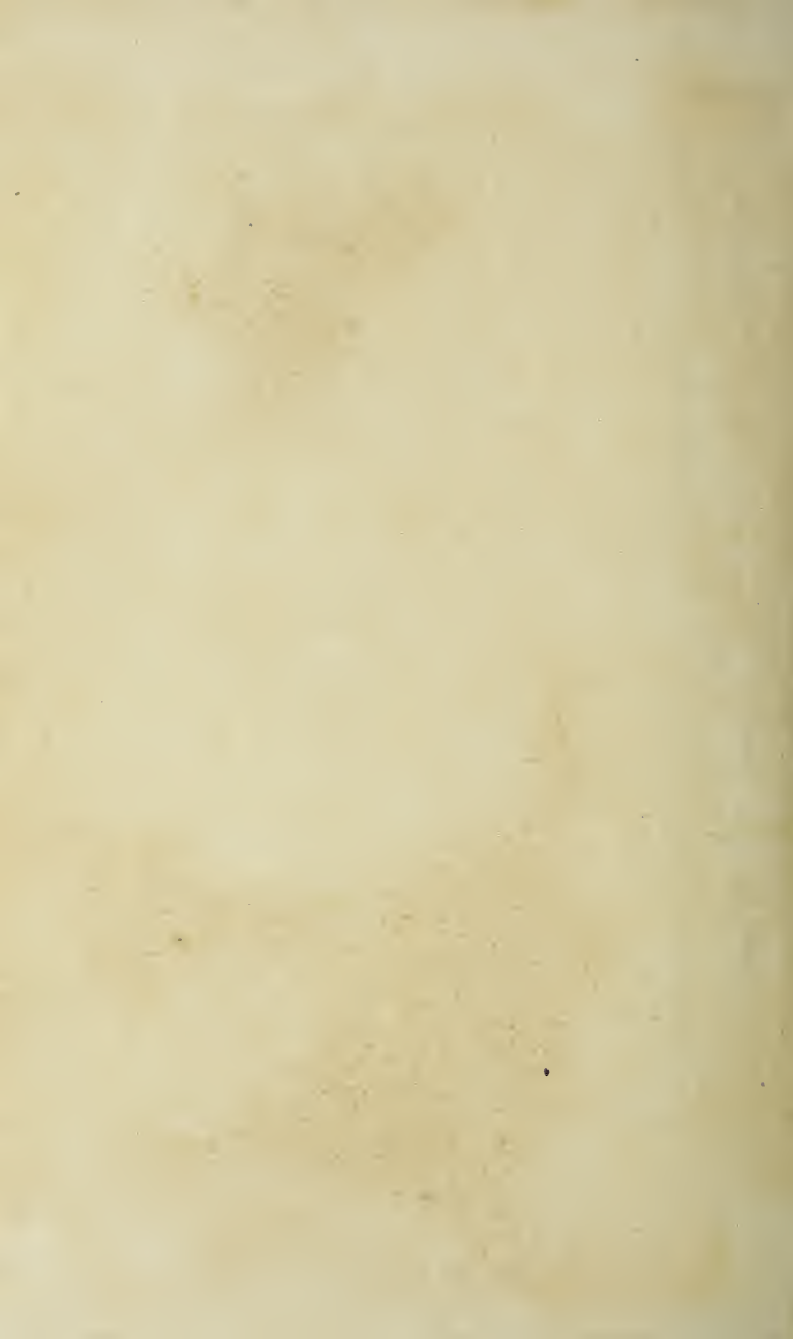
The waters murmur of her name,
The woods are peopled with her fame ;
The silent abbey, lone and grey,
Claims kindred with her sacred clay ;
Her spirit wraps the dusky mountain,
Her memory sparkles o'er the fountain,
The meanest rill, the mightiest river,
Rolls mingling with her fame for ever.

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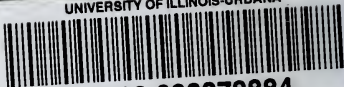
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north side from Cabill to
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South — the Clew Bay
Ballycroy dotted with
lakes + Clew Bay with
Cushkin Curragh

Lucan



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