end my life in the languishing torture of this close prison, where since my commitment I have bene threese tossed without any matter to chardge me withall,[1] and where, so long as God will spare me life, I will rest y^r L^dp's most humble and faithful to be commanded

FLORENCE MAC CARTHY.[2]

WOODS AND FASTNESSES, AND THEIR DENIZENS, IN ANCIENT LEINSTER.

BY HERBERT F. HORE, ESQ.

THE wide woods and lofty trees that adorn England so richly are the most prominent natural objects in a country devoid of the grander feature of broad and cloud-capped mountains. But as the few standing woods that remain in Ireland and all the finest timber grow only in sheltered vales, trees enter so little into the general scenery, that travellers are sceptical whether there is, or ever was, any considerable extent of sylvan shade in this island; and Americans, especially if backwoodsmen, admire the fact, that the country is "well cleared." Our archæologic readers, however, are well aware that, while, in the present time, Sir Robert Kane deplores the scarcity of wood, the number, vastness, and density of Irish forests formed a grievance to the English in the warlike days of Giraldus Cambrensis; and all lovers of "The Faerie Queene"

[1] *Without any matter to charge me withal.*—Both Carew and Cecil confessed one to another that Florence MacCarthy had left them no plea to imprison him; that "he had so drawn all his crimes within reach of his pardon, as they could not imprison him, except on discretion." Carew not being able to prove him guilty, calls him a *coward*, having mistaken his profound good sense and astuteness for cowardice. Carew's conduct proved himself to have been a *bully*, a *murderer*, and a *liar*.

[2] I have received the following from Mr. Mac Carthy since the foregoing was in type :—"Touching your doubt of the British Museum letter being written by the big hand of the gigantic author, all I can say is, that having now had Florence's writing under my eye daily for months, and having copied many scores of pages of it, I should not be one bit the more convinced that that letter is his writing if I had sat by his side whilst he wrote it. Be assured, Florence's hand, and no other, wrote that letter. Whatever theory may be requisite to explain the memorandum in Irish, I am sure you have ingenuity enough to supply." To the foregoing I have only to add, that it is distinctly stated in the Irish memorandum, already printed, that this letter, the composition of Florence Mac Carthy, was written (transcribed) by Conor, son of Murtough O'Kinga, who also carried it with him to Ireland. This memorandum was written by Gillapatrick, son of Donogh Oge [O'Kinga], on the eve of the festival of St. Francis, when the said Conor O'Kinga, for whom he prays, was dead.

As the letter on which this memorandum is written is considered by Mr. Mac Carthy to be undoubtedly in the handwriting of Florence, we can only infer that Gillapatrick, the son of Donough, was not well acquainted either with Florence Mac Carthy's handwriting, or even with that of his deceased friend, Conor O'Kinga, and that he wrote at random.—J. O'D.

remember the stanza in which the author, when a happy denizen of a sylvan district in Ireland, celebrated his adopted land as abounding in leafy honours. Yet the pleasing evidence poetry would give of the multitude and extent of our pristine woodlands must be abandoned for sober archaic accounts and stern statistics. It must do so, were we to proceed to give the true area of some of the larger woods as they flourished in Spenser's time, and if we subjoined some other notes on the topic, so as to enable a tolerably accurate idea to be formed of the real sylvan state of ancient Ireland. Local traditions often boldly declare that their districts were once so well wooded that the graceful little habitant of groves, the *cat croinn*, or martin, could leap from bough to bough for many a mile. But this amusing legendary exaggeration would be speedily dispelled by referring to the accurate maps of the Down Survey. A still more boundless continuity of shade, limited indeed only by the ocean, is claimed for Erin in the old rhyme:—

> "Ireland was thrice beneath the ploughshare.
> Thrice it was wood, and thrice it was bare."

None can believe that even one of these triad conditions was ever fully realized. Yet there can be no doubt that, primarily, this island, now so denuded, was clothed with trees wherever their growth was not forbidden by the violence of sea breezes and the nature of the soil. Ireland may, therefore, be supposed to have once been nearly covered with forests, of which swine, wolves, bears,[1] foxes, &c., and animals of the bovine and cervine species were the inhabitants, before

> "Wild in woods the noble savage ran."

Naturally, the best land was incumbered with the heaviest timber; so that the first settlers had, as in Canada, to make their fields by clearing the plains. The dates at which numerous fertile lowlands throughout Ierne were rendered arable are accurately chronicled by the Four Masters. Although no reliance can be placed on dates of so early a class, these entries tend to prove there were legends regarding cedual labours. Ireland must have remained utterly unfenced and, therefore, uncultivated, for many a century; and the sparse tribes that inhabited the country must have principally subsisted venatically. The cattle of the country, originally wild, would have required ages to become tame, and appropriate to communities. Another record in the chronicles, that at one primeval period milk was drawn from the does of the forest, as well as from kine, seems to point

[1] The skulls of bears were found along with those of the short-horned cow, &c., together with a large deposit of bronze and iron implements, weapons, and ornaments, at Dunshaughlin, in the Co. Dublin, and are now in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.

to experiments in taming the fauna or *feræ naturæ.* The cattle in a state of ferity were not white, like those preserved in Chillingham Park, as types of an antique breed, but "black," a designation still denoting mountain stock. Even almost all the sheep of the country retained the same mark of their wild origin so recently as the days of Cambrensis. Swine ran ownerless through the woods, unconscious of a "sty" or stay, and, for many centuries, of a herd; and when they became property, and when boars continued to give good sport in the chase, and were the best relished food at the feast, it was the most grateful of harvests that oak trees should be heavy with acorns. Venison must have been the ordinary meat of vigorous and skilful hunters, for red and fallow deer abounded; and it must have been long ere the last gigantic *Cervus Megacerus Hibernicus* fell either to the arrow or into the pitfall of the extinguisher of its species. Ireland was famous for stag-hunting in the time of the Venerable Bede; and the very name for a huntsman, *fiadhmuine*, given A.M. 4361 to one of the earliest kings, "Eochy Feemoney," on account of his passion for hunting stags in the woods, indicates that the chase took place in the *fiadha*, i. e. forests, rather than in the open country.

Besides the statement of Cambrensis, that the woodlands exceeded the area of the plain, or cleared land, there is evidence in an Act of Parliament,[1] dated in the century in which he lived, that the level country was so far covered with forests as that the few roads of the time, necessarily avoiding mountains and bogs, had also necessarily been cut through woods, however difficult in formation, and dangerous to the traveller; for, like the English forests to the rebellious and outlawed Saxons subsequent to the Norman Conquest, the Sherwoods of Ireland were the resort of *cethcrne coille*, or wood-kerne, whose leaders were less abstinent than William of Cloudesley and Robin of the Hood, for they preyed not only on the conqueror's wild deer, but on their cattle. The paragraph in the statute we allude to, which is of so early a date as 1297, is remarkable in a historic point of view. It recites that the Irish assume a boldness in their offences, by reason of the confidence they gain from the density of the woods, and the depth of the adjacent morasses; and that the king's highways are in many places so obstructed and impervious from the thickness of quick-growing wood, that even a pedestrian can hardly pass; and that, on account of this, when the Irish return to the woods after their misdeeds, they are able to disperse, so that, although the king's subjects commonly wish to pursue them, and that they are pursued, they often escape without loss, while, were the passage open, they might have been overtaken. Therefore it was ordained that all lords of woods, through which the king's highway anciently passed, should, together with their tenants, clear the passage

[1] "Arch. Miscell." vol. i. p. 21.

where the way ought to be, and remove all standing and fallen timber, so that the road should be of sufficient breadth.

The obsolete prophetic proverb, "The Irish will never be tamed whilst the leaves are on the trees," is generally misunderstood. It did not mean that the Gael could not be conquered so long as the country was full of woods, which formed their securest fastnesses; but implied that the best season for carrying on war against the natives was after the fall of the leaf; for they found shelter for themselves, and food for their horses and cattle, in and under forest leaves.

Sir John Davies thought that if the mighty lords among whom Ireland was cantoned—Strongbow in the east, De Courcy in the north, De Burgh in the west, Fitzstephen and De Cogan in the south, and De Lacy in the central plains—with all the great Norman peers who were the earls and barons of the Conquest, had been good hunters, and had afforested their woodlands according to the forest laws, the rigorous execution of these laws would have expelled the natives from out their sylvan retreats. Yet it was but fond imagination in James's Attorney-General to attribute greater power to the law in the twelfth century than it possessed five ages afterwards, at a time when these woods, diminished as they were from the continuous determined destruction of them, and the requirements of an increasing population, were still, during war, the redoubts of the natives, and at every period the abode of robbers. Davies also deemed it strange that, considering the great plenty both of vert (that is, forest or green land) and venison, he had seldom found mention made in records of a forest, and never of any park or free-warren; and also that, though the principal nobility and gentry were descended of English race (the most noted of all Europeans for love of hunting), there was, in his time, in the kingdom, but one park stored with deer. This latter deficiency is easily accounted for. It was needless to pen up deer so long as much of the entire country was either woodland or mountainous, and whilst it abounded in beasts of the chase. With respect to the first remark, we certainly can quote but one mention of free-warren, and none of a forest in the character of a preserve. Edward I. granted the Archbishop of Dublin right of free-warren in the see lands on the mountains in the metropolitan county, provided the land was not within the bounds of the royal forest—"foreste nostre."[1] This was the tract of wood and mountain afterwards known as "the king's commons," including *Fassagh Roe*, the red wilderness, *Rossaniera*,[2] &c. King John, when Prince and "Lord of Ireland," gave the Archbishop the custody of all his forests in Leinster which Richard Tyrrell had been keeper of. Probably this wood-ward, an ancestor of Tyrrell, of Tyrrell's Pass, in Westmeath, the famous rebel leader in Tyrone's rebellion, was a descendant of him whose

[1] "Chartæ Hib." p. 36. [2] "Cal. Pat." Jac. i. p. 61.

arrow deprived William Rufus of life. When Magna Charta was extended to this kingdom, the "great charter for Ireland,"[1] dated in the first year of Hen. III., was addressed to all "earls, barons, justices, *foresters*, sheriffs," &c. And in the account for Leinster in the sixteenth year of that king's reign, there is a payment of five marks to Mac Gormogille for venison[2] taken in the king's forests. This son of Gormogille was, of course, of Scandinavian extraction. At an earlier period, in the reign of Richard I., Walter de Lacy granted permission to the burgesses of Trim[3] to gather wood in the adjacent forest for firing, taking it in sight of his foresters, of whom one, Nicholas the Forester, witnessed the charter. This was *Coill mor na-m-Breathnach*,[4] the great wood of the Britons, or Welshmen, now Kilmore, about four miles south of Trim, and which, perhaps, received its name from the Welsh extraction of many of the Strongbonian settlers; yet should rather be celebrated as having been the resting-place of the illustrious Edward Bruce and his troops for several days during his return into Ulster, in the spring of 1317, from his successless military expedition through Ireland.

A wood was the point to which a Gaelic chieftain and his men usually made good their retreat whenever they were pursued. Its umbrageous shelter was also used by bands of cattle-lifters when driving away a prey to some other region. Thus, the Blackwood, in the county of Kildare, was a noted half-way resting-place for robbers and their four-footed booty, whilst on their way to and from the glens of Wicklow. Such receptacles for stolen goods were great nuisances to the lieges, and were accordingly cut down as speedily as possible. But as the gnarled stumps of oak and ash remained quick, as many sprouts grew from each as cow-stealers may have boasted of sons. The object of destroying the harbourage trees afforded is thus alluded to, as the principal cause of the denudation of the Pale, in a description of Ireland, written in the time of Elizabeth:—"There was then a great plenty of woods, except in Leinster, where, heretofore, for their great inconveniences, finding them to be ready hives to harbour Irish rebells, they have been cut downe, so that nowe they are enforced in those parts, for want of fewel, to burne turves."[5]

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the Pale had been so thoroughly cleared, that the want was felt of accessible timber for the uses of husbandry and building, and it was recommended that tenants of land should be obliged, when ditching their fields, to plant trees, and especially oak, in the new fences, so that within some years there would be remedy for "the derth and lak of tymbre."

[1] "Reports, Record Com." vol. i. page 160.

[2] "Reports, Record Com." vol i. p. 335.

[3] "Chartæ," p. 10.

[4] "Four Masters," vol. iv. p. 841, *note*.

[5] Add. MS. Brit. Mus. 1328.

Sir George Carew, Earl of Totness, in his rich MS. volumes of Irish Notabilia (Lambeth, No. 635), wrote the following memorandum, which shall form our text, as to—

"WOODES AND FASTNESSES IN LEINSTER.

"Glandilour, a fastnes in Pheagh M[c]Hugh's countrie.
Shilelagh, Sir Henry Harrington's, in the co. of Dublin.
The Duffrin, in the county of Wexford.
The Drones and Leverocke, in the county of Catherlogh.
The great bogg in the Queen's countie, which reacheth to Limerick.
The Fuse, in the countie of Kildare.
The woods and boggs of Mounster-Evan, Gallin, and Sleevmargy, in the Queen's county.
The Rowry, nere St. Mullins, where the Nur and Barrow meete together, and make yt halfe an island.
Parte of Coulbracke, joyning upon the county of Kilkenny."

"Glandelour" on old maps, *rectè* Glenmalure, *Hibernice*, *Gleann Maoilughra*, is the extensive and romantic valley environed by the highest mountains in the barony of Ballinacor and county of Wicklow. Edmund Spenser observed that it was "the strength and great fastness of Glen Malor" that made its chieftain so powerful; principally because, being situate near the richest lands of the Pale, it was frequented by numerous outlaws and robbers, who brought their spoils hither; and who, as they obtained the protection of its chief during peace, followed his banner in war. The good poet's animosity to Fiach Mac Hugh, so marked in his "View of Ireland," was doubtless owing to the galling defeat his patron, Lord Grey, received from this chieftain soon after he landed. Hooker describes the scene of the engagement as the "fastnesse of the Glinnes, by nature so strong as possibly might be, for in it is a valley, or combe, being in the middle of the wood, of great length between two hils; . . . . the sides are full of great and mighty trees, and full of bushments and underwoods." The heroic Red Hugh O'Donnell sought shelter in Glenmalure after his second escape from Dublin Castle, and was carefully concealed by its chieftain in a moate, "in a solitary part of a dense wood."

The name of the next fastness, Shillelagh, is translated "fair wood" by Colonel Hayes, of Avondale, in his charming little work on Planting; and "fair wood" is the name Lord Strafford gave the park he formed in this forest. But this flattering translation must be rejected for the more probable etymon of *Siol-Elaigh*, or the race of Elagh district, a designation derived from the ancestor of the O'Gahan family, who was known as "Ely of the wood," just as Shelmalier and Shelbyrne, in the county of Wexford, derive their names from having been the countries of races descended from Maolughra, and Bran, or Byrne. When that sylvan tract came into the possession of Strafford, who, in his princely

magnificence, had already commenced a palace near Naas, which he estimated would cost £6000, the noble viceroy determined to make himself a hunting-seat, whither he might occasionally retreat from the cares of government, and indulge in his passion for the chase, in a country in comparison with which Yorkshire was flat and tame. Many of his letters are dated from "Cosha, the Park of Parks," "a fine mountainous solitary place," that gave him "great content." Sir William Brereton, who visited this place in 1634, describes the park as seven miles round, and containing "great store" of red and fallow deer; and he speaks of the "abundance of woods, more than many thousand acres." The great Earl wrote to Archbishop Laud in 1637, that he had just given instructions for erecting a fine house, "a frame of wood," to be "set up in a park," wrote he, "I have in the county of Wicklow: . . . . that so I may have a place to take my recreation for a month or two in a year;" adding that it would cost about £1200, and that, should the king come to Ireland, he, Strafford, knew of no place "able to give him the pleasure of his summer hunting like that park and the country adjacent."

In the ensuing year the imperious viceroy was "playing the Robin Hood in the country of mountains and woods, hunting and chasing all the outlying deer he could light on." Writing from Fairwood Park, 10th August, 1639, he describes himself as less seeking his own pleasure in forming a residence there, than in accommodating for his son a place "which in the kind,' he declared, "I take to be the noblest one of them in the king's dominions, and where a grass-time may be passed with most pleasure of that kind;" and he added, "I will build him a good house, and, by God's help, leave him, I think, near £3000 a year, and wood on the ground as much, I dare say, if near London, as would yield £50,000." The Earl's intention of erecting a durable mansion seems, however, to have fallen to the ground; and although "Fairwood" is still the name of a townland, there is no trace of the site of the original timber house, nor is there any tradition that would tell where the renowned Strafford resided! Whilst in this abode of all the pleasures of which St. Hubert is patron, the English nobleman commenced to preserve a little denizen of the woods that is now nearly extinct, the martin, less for the sake of the sport it gave than for its beautiful skin, which was much prized for lining a robe of state. In the preceding century these furry little animals were found so plentifully in Irish woods, that the Earl of Ormonde had a special pack of small hounds for pursuing them. In 1638 Strafford wrote to the English Primate, promising to send him all the martin skins he could procure; but observed, that as the woods of Ireland decreased, her famous hawks and valuable martins became scarce: he purposed, however, "to set up a breed" of the last-mentioned animals in

his woods; for, says he, "a good one is worth as much as a good wether, yet neither eats so much, nor costs so much attendance; but then the pheasants must look well to themselves, for they tell me these vermin will hunt and kill them notably;" livelily adding, "perchance you think now I learn nothing going up yonder amongst them into the forests and rocks?" In replying, the Archbishop pleasantly told his correspondent, that even if the martins destroyed the pheasants, it was not much matter, as "their feathers are so much better than the others;" and in the following winter the noble preserver sent his Grace of Canterbury ninety-two skins—"scarce as many," said he, "as to fur a gown, but all he could procure for love or money." Pheasants, now so scarce and difficult to preserve in Ireland, were formerly numerous enough, when no care was bestowed on them, Moryson remarking that he had seen as many as sixty served up at a feast. If our memory serves us, the armorial bearings of the O'Mores of Leix derive from these brilliant wood-birds.

In a grant of Glencapp, &c., Edward I. gave right of hous bote and hay bote in his wood of Balyconyn.[1] This was the privilege of taking wood for household and farm purposes. The Wicklow woods, of course, furnished the metropolis with its chief supply of timber[2] for the construction of houses in times when they were, for the most part, as Moryson observed, built of timber and clay; and also with wood fuel, before sea-borne coal came into common use. In 1518 the tenants of Glencapp were bound to send a load of woods from each house yearly to the Earl of Kildare's mansion in Dublin. It would seem that Shillelagh obtained its pugnacious celebrity from supplying holly and oak sticks to the great metropolitan suburban fair, whereby a "sprig" from this place modernly obtained as much reputation, as a national weapon, as the Lochaber axe in Scotland, and the Toledo blade of Spain. So formidable was a sapling in the hands of Irishmen in the age of Cambrensis—a period when the fierce revenges of the recent invasion left many of the Englishry dead by the lonely way-side, as in England the forests of Yorkshire and Northumberland had been strewn with Norman corpses—that Giraldus, in the pettiest spirit of penal laws, proposed to interdict the natives of Erin from carrying walking-sticks! "It were good," wrote he, in a chapter "how the Irish people, being vanquished, are to be governed," as translated by Hooker, "that an order

[1] "Cal. Pat.," p. 1.

[2] The export of timber from Leinster to England at an early period must have been considerable. Besides the roof of Westminster Hall, we know of, at least, one other structure composed of Irish timber,—the spire of the ancient detached bell-tower of Worcester cathedral, erected in the thirteenth century, and taken down in 1647. In Tomkins's MS., "Observations on Worcestershire," in the possession of Sir T. Winnington, this spire, which rose 150 feet above the stone work of the tower, is described as of "massive timber," the entire "being Irish and unsawed, polished only with the axe, not having one sawed side."—See "The Builder," vol. xiv., p. 630.—Eds.

were taken (as it is in Sicilia) that none of them should weare any weapon at all; no, not so much as a staffe in their hands to walke by,[1] for even with that weapon, though it be but slender, they will (if they can) take the advantage, and bewreake their malice, and cankered stomacks."

From the description of the locality which was the scene of the meeting in 1399, during the march of Richard II. to the metropolis, between the Earl of Gloucester and the high-spirited Art Mac Murrough, it would seem it was in Glenart, near Arklow, that the Gaelic chief descended to the conference "from a mountain between two woods, not far from the sea." This meeting, of which an engraving, from a possibly contemporary drawing, is given in the "Ulster Archæological Journal," is the subject of a vignette in Moore's "History of Ireland." The composed attitude of the English feudal Earl contrasts well with the headlong impetuosity of the Irish king. The relator of Richard II.'s expedition described the royal army as in three divisions, hunting the Leinster chief in his woods. But the narrator declared, that in his opinion it was impossible to take the wild king while the leaves were on the trees, and he proposed to burn the woods in winter time, as the best means of harrying this indomitable rebel out.

Idrone was granted by Strongbow to Raymond le Gros, from whom it descended to his relatives, the Barons Carew, whence, in the printed map of the barony, dated 1570, an extensive forest, under *Sliabh Lein* [*Laighen*], now Mount Leinster, is called "Carew's Wood." Yet the clan Kavanagh have more claim to give their name to a sylvan district that was for many ages their abode and fastness. When in 1399 Richard II. marched his splendid army against the brave Art Mac Murrough, this chieftain, says the relator, "remayned in his house, the woods, guarded with 3000 stout men, such, as it seemed to me, the Englishmen mervayled to behold." The king's highway had anciently passed through this wood, which may, therefore, have lain between the mountains and the broad Barrow; and the road was so overgrown with trees that 2,500 men were employed to clear it. On the north-eastern side of *Sliabh Laighen* [now *Stuagh Laighen*] there was a large forest that also belonged to this clan. In 1634 Sir William Brereton passed from the county of Wicklow "through Sir Morgan Kavanagh's woods" to Clonmullen, the Gaelic knight's house, and describes them as having had good store of large timber, of which much had lately been cut.

The great morass in the centre of Leinster, mentioned by the

[1] Hooker has rendered his original incorrectly in this passage, as Giraldus alludes to some weapon, probably the famous *axe* which the Anglo-Normans found so formidable, and which, he says, "de antiqua, imo iniqua, consuetudine semper in manu *quasi pro baculo* bajulant."—"Hibn. Expugnata," lib. ii. cap. xxxvii.—Eds.

Earl of Totness as extending to Limerick, is, of course, the bog, or "fenns of Allan," as Spenser calls this extensive fen-land.

The name of the *Fiodha*, *Fuse*, or woods in Kildare, does not appear in the inquisitions; being, perhaps, a general name, including "the Blackwood," once a well-known haunt of cattle-lifters, and the woods of Rathangan and Ardscoill. The latter was the scene of Edward Bruce's victory over the Lord Justice of Ireland in 1316.

Monasterevan Abbey was founded in a wood called *Rossglass*. Dysart-Gallen was the fastness of the O'Mores of Leix, and is described by Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, in a letter dated 1573,[1] as a waste desert, twelve miles in extent, all bog, mountain, and wood, the names of which were Scaghafoure and Slecarerie, the Wolf's Mountain, Kildowny wood, and a long mountain called Sletamare. Derrybroke, "the great wood" of oak, is mentioned in the Calendar of Inquisitions. In a curious engraving in Derrick's "Image of Ireland," the famous rebel, Rory Oge O'More, is depicted as a vanquished and miserable outlaw, wandering, wrapped in a mantle, alone in his woods.

Upperwoods, the present name of the barony which comprises the eastern slopes of the Slieve Bloom range within its limits, indicates that, anciently, woodlands clothed the adjacent low-lying tracts of the Queen's County, as well as the mountain sides above them.

An extensive wood appears in the map of Idrone, dated 1570, between Slievemargy and the town of Carlow. In 1394 the Earl of Nottingham, Marshal of England, was met at Ballegory,[2] on the edge of this wood, by Art Mac Murrough and his subordinate chieftains, on which occasion they made formal submission.

The *Dubh-thir*, i. e. black district, now called the Duffry, contained the great wood Killoughram (*Coille augh-rim*), which was valued, in the year 1639, at the large sum of £8000, fully equivalent to £160,000 in the present day. In 1589,[3] Sir Henry Wallop wrote of this district:—"In the woods, not far from my house at Enniscorthy, there is as good and as great a store of plank and of timber needful for shipping to be had as in any place I do know either in England or Ireland." Like many another rich sylvan scene, this fine wood was reduced to a copse by the iron works of the seventeenth century. South of the Duffry, in the *Fassagh*, or wilderness of Bantry, was situated the ancient town of Old Ross, which takes its name from an oak wood that had dwindled to twenty acres in the reign of Edward I.[4] The banks of the Barrow were deeply fringed with wood above and below *Ross mic Triuin*, i. e. the wood

[1] State Paper Office.
[2] Dowling.
[3] State Paper Office, 8th Jan., 1588–9.
[4] Inquis. Tur. Lond.

of the son of Tréan, or Ross-pont, so called from the great timber bridge constructed by William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke. The surveyor sent over in 1608 to inspect Irish timber for the service of the royal navy reported that the extensive woods in the county of Wexford were nearly useless for want of good approaches by water; but such was their value that Lord Deputy Chichester recommended the English Government to establish a royal dock-yard at Ross.[1]

Offaly was distinguished for its extensive forests, which remained until the seventeenth century. In 1537 it was proposed that the castle of Trim should be repaired with four or five hundred great oaks, to be felled in Offaly. It is stated in the survey of this territory, made in 1550, that the island called Inchloghcowyr, the principal refuge of O'Conor, whenever this chieftain was hard pressed by his enemies, was "reputed a very fast place," being in the midst of a wide moor, and adjacent to "a great wood." The surveyor also noted that O'Conor had three eyries of goshawks in his woods. This was at the time of the construction of the forts of Maryborough and Philipstown, which, as Sir John Davies observed, were built "in the fastest places in Leinster;" and he added, that one effect of the establishment of garrisons in them was to waste the surrounding woods. Yet these ancient forests continued so undiminished in the time of Fynes Moryson that he speaks of them as "the great woods of Offaly." Besides these, there was a wood in the adjoining territory of Iregan, known as "O'Doyne's forest;"[2] and the adjacent district of Fircall, the country of O'Mulloy, was as "strong as nature could devise to make it by wood and bogge." In 1557 the Earl of Sussex made a military expedition into this lesser region, expressly to expel the plundering *Cethern Coille*, or wood-kerne, as the annalists term these sylvan marauders, from their harbourage, when the whole country, from the *coillmor*, or great wood, was ravaged, to chastise its chieftain for protecting the plunderers, and the woods were cut down. Still, in 1599, the "fiery" Essex, when at the head of his fine army, found the passage in Fircall leading through the thick woods of Durrow so entrenched, plashed, and defended, that he avoided to pass that way, having experienced the hazardous nature of a similar passage when marching through the wood of Cashells, afterwards celebrated as the "Pass of Plumes." There was a pleasant jest of an English knight, Sir Edward Herbert, to whom a grant was made in this district, that "traitors were as plentiful in the court of England as in his woods of Durrow,"—the difference being, that the uncourtly rebels were the least concealed.

John dates one of his charters from "the wood of Thomas FitzAnthony," which we may suppose fringed the Nore near where

[1] State Paper Office.

[2] "Cal. Pat.," Jac. i., p. 123.

Fitz Anthony afterwards founded the still existing town which bears his name—Thomastown; but Kilkenny county was not remarkable for woods, except in the *Robhar*, or Rowre, and around the abbey of Graigue. The annalist of Kilkenny, Friar Clyn, records how, in 1331, after the slaughter of the Earl of Louth and nearly all the males of the Birmingham family, Sir William Birmingham, who was afterwards executed, and would seem to have instigated the act, fled with his family into the woods of the monks of Graigue, and remained there during the summer; and also how the marriage of Eustace, Lord le Poer, with one of the daughters of the slain Earl, was celebrated in this shady retreat. The hills of Ui-Duach, comprised in the present barony of Fassadinan (the *Fassagh*, or waste, of the Dineen river), were densely wooded until the iron forges of Sir Christopher Wandesforde consumed the timber. There were woods of considerable extent, also, on the border lands of the Queen's County and Kilkenny, in the neighbourhood of Durrow.

Our readers were first presented to Leinster when this region was too well clothed with wood to please the Saxon, and they have seen how, before three centuries passed by, English bills and axes had made an unremitting warfare against Irish trees, as English bows and bills against Irish men. It is out of our province to enter into the archaicisms of sylvan places in other parts of Ireland. We may be, however, tempted at some future time to become such an antiquarian WOOD-RANGER.