

with a controversy arising thereon between him and Mr. John Hogan, extends to too great a length to be conveniently given in the "Journal" at present.

Mr. Arthur Gerald Geoghegan sent the following, accompanied by a sketch of an old house in Letterkenny and a facsimile copy of the inscription thereon :—

"The house, which is popularly known as Redmond O'Hanlon's, and erroneously attributed to the celebrated Rapparee captain of that name, is situated in the main street of the town of Letterkenny, at the foot of Lough Swilly, Co. Donegal. It has nothing in its appearance to distinguish it from its neighbours but the insertion in front of a stone tablet, containing an inscription, of which a copy is transmitted, with a rude sketch of the house itself.

"The date, 1698, is conclusive evidence against the assertion that these premises belonged to the notorious Redmond O'Hanlon, as it appears from Carte's "Life of James Duke of Ormond," vol. ii. p. 502, that he was shot in the year 1681, exactly seventeen years previous to their erection.

THIS	HOUSE	WAS	BUILT
BY	REDMOND	HANLON	MARCH
IN	LETTERKENNY	IN	THE
YEAR	1698	AND	IN
THE	38	YEARS	OF
HIS	AGE.		

"There are two curious carvings at the foot of the tablet—one of a boar the other of a nondescript animal, indulgently supposed to represent a lizard, or newt."

The following Papers were submitted to the Meeting :—

TOPOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SUBURBS OF KILKENNY.

BY MR. JOHN HOGAN.

(Continued from Vol. III., p. 387, *New Series*).

IN my last essay towards the illustration of the suburban topography of Kilkenny, we found that, as we traversed the old roadways that radiate from *Irishtown*, we were carried up the stream of time towards the earliest scenes of historic life in this island; and as we returned from localities venerable for their age, we were conducted by other pathways, equally time-worn, to the same central spot at which we had previously arrived from sundry and opposite situations; and then the inviting inquiry presented itself, namely :—

Was the *Irishtown* of the present city the common centre of the ancient roadways—the centre and the seat of civil and ecclesiastical authority in the ancient political constitution of the Kingdom of Ossory? As the solution of this problem embraced a field of inquiry too extensive and complicated to be entertained at the close of a paper devoted to a separate investigation, I now resume the subject, and humbly dedicate the following pages to the honour of that venerable locality whose reminiscences are associated with the earliest impressions within memory's confines, and whose hallowed precincts have acquired new claims on our affections with the advances of life.

Towards the elucidation of the history of Kilkenny, probably more has been effected by the two gentlemen to whom this Society owes its existence—both in the pages of its “Journal,” and in a separate work devoted exclusively to the “History, Antiquities, &c., of the Cathedral Church of St. Canice”—than has been achieved by any two living individuals for the place of their nativity; yet there remain scattered over the fields whence they and others have gathered their materials, large quantities of unwrought matter, which in my present design I contemplate to collect, to shape, and pile together, and from which a glance will then be afforded us into a period in local history hitherto unopened to view; and having now gleaned from various sources the materials for my design, I purpose to arrange them in the following order, viz:—

First—The origin and extent of the ancient kingdom of Ossory [Oisraigh], its subdivisions or tribelands; and a special inquiry respecting the situation and extent of the district anciently called “*Cluain Ui Cearbhaill*,” *i. e.*, the sheltered plain of O'Carroll.

Secondly—An inquiry respecting the succession of the Kings of Ossory, and the seats of their respective administrations; with an account of the reign and public deeds of Cearbhaill Mac Dunghal, King of Ossory, in the ninth century. To him I assign the erection of the round towers in this county, and the original foundation of the fortress, which preceded the castle, and three of the ancient churches of the city of Kilkenny.

Thirdly—The topographical and historical illustration of the *Irishtown* of Kilkenny, with an inquiry respecting the seats and titles of the bishops of Ossory anterior to the Anglo-Norman invasion.

ORIGIN AND EXTENT OF THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF OSSORY.—The earliest recorded division of the territory of Leinster appears to have been that known as “*Laighin tuath Gabhair*” (or Laighin north of Gabhair), in contradistinction to “*Laighin deas Gabhair*” (or Laighin south of Gabhair). Both sentences are invariably rendered North and South Leinster, respectively, by the late Celtic scholar O'Donovan. It will be observed, however, that the word

"*Gabhair*" is not translated in either. He acknowledges it to have been the common boundary between the two ancient territories of *Laighin tuath Gabhair* and *Laighin deas Gabhair*;¹ he supposed *Gabhair* to be a road which was situated near Carlow, and led thence through the present Queen's County; he did not succeed in ascertaining its position, which, he writes, it is necessary to fix before we can determine the boundary between the two territories of "*Laighin tuath Gabhair*" and "*Laighin deas Gabhair*," But according to the views to be now submitted, the word *Gabhair* did not imply a road, but a mountain, the situation of which we shall have little difficulty in determining.

The word *Gabhair* seems to be cognate with *Gabharrann*, *Gabhra*, *Gabhraun*, &c.,—the difference in the several terminations being no more than occurs in that of most proper names through the "*Annals of the Four Masters*" and the "*Book of Rights*." By this word *Gabhair*, *Gabharran*, or *Gabhra*, we find designated different districts, and frequently the same place on the mountain ridge which runs from near *Athy* to *Gowran*. In the historical tale quoted from the "*Book of Leinster*" by Dr. O'Donovan, and from which he inferred "*Gabhair*" to imply a road;² we read that *Lughaidh*, addressing *Conall Cearnach*, said: "I shall go on *Bealach Gabhrúain*; go thou upon *Gabhair* on *Mairg Laighean*, that we may meet at *Magh Airgead Ros*." In other words, he says, go thou upon the mountain "*Gabhair*" in *Mairg*, i. e. in *Margy*, now the barony of *Sliabh Margy*, where this ridge rises in the south-east of the Queen's County; and "I will go on *Bealach Gabhraun*," i. e. through the pass or mouth of the *Gabharran* or *Gabhair*, that we may meet at its opposite side. In the "*Book of Rights*" the King of *Ossory* is distinguished as the hero of *fierce Gabhair*.³ We have it established from the extract just quoted from the "*Book of Leinster*," that *Gabhair* was identical with, or was situated on "*Mairg*," now "*Sliabh Margy*," in the south-east of the Queen's County; but we know from other authorities that the title of *Mairg*, or *Mairgi*, was not confined to the present barony of that name, but was usually understood of the entire mountain ridge which rises in that region, and runs thence south to the present town of *Gowran*. In the "*Martyrology of Tallaght*"⁴ compiled by *Aenghus* in the eighth century, at the 23d

¹ "*Book of Rights*," Introduction, p. lx.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Id.*, p. 67.

⁴ See "*Martyrology*," &c., published and edited by Rev. M. Kelly, D. D., 23. May, also at page 17. This saint is, most probably, the *Gobban* who governed the church of *Old Leighlin* about the year 625, when *St. Laserian* is said to have returned from *Rome*. *Gobban*

entertained so high an esteem for the reputation of *Laserian*, that he received him most hospitably, and resigned to him the government of his monastery there; he may have thus acted through a love of greater retirement, and in quest of it removed further south on the mountain, and, availing himself of the undisturbed seclusion of "*Tigh Scúithin*," spent there the remainder of his

May, St. Gobani is set down as of "*Mairgi O' Tigh Scuithin*," i. e., Tigh Scuithin, or Teach Scuithin on Sliabh-Mairgi, a locality which has given its name to the parish of Tascoffin in the Johnswell Mountains: hence, if "Gabhair" was recognised as identical with "*Mairgi*," it must have been coextensive with this entire ridge of hills. In the "Will of Cathier More,"¹ the territory of "Ui-Drona" is described as situated at "Ceann Gabhra," i. e., the head of Gabhra or Gabhair. The barony of Idrone West stretches over the southern extreme of the eastern side of "Sliabh-Margy;" and this section of that mountain was here called the "head of Gabhra," from its forming the termination or bluff of that ridge. Dr. O'Donovan translates Ceann Gabhra, the head of the horse;² but adds that it must have been the name of some *remarkable hill* in Idrone, which fully sustains the views now contended for, as Sliabh-Margy is the great and most remarkable hill in that barony. Again, in the "Book of Rights" the King of Ossory is distinguished as "the King of *blue Gabhran*,"³ which implies his right to the possession of this lofty territory; the word "blue" obviously refers to the peculiar hue of this mountain ridge, occasioned by its geographical situation,⁴ and which may be observed on any afternoon of the present day from a railway carriage, as it sweeps from Athy to Carlow, from which the outlines of Sliabh-Margy disappear in the distance, and insensibly blend into the azure of the horizon. O'Donovan

life. Some are of opinion that this Goban is identical with a saint of the same name, who was honoured as patron of the church of Killamery, below Callan. See Lanigan, vol. ii., pp. 402, 404. The word Tascoffin is derived from Teach, a house, and Scuithin, the patron saint, literally St. Scuithin's house. This Scuithin or Scotthin is said to have been of an illustrious Irish family, and a disciple of St. David of Wales. On his return to Ireland, he constructed a cell on Mount Margy, which was called *Teach Scotthin*, or Scotthin's house, and from which is formed our present word Tascoffin. Lanigan, who supposed Sliabhmargin to imply the present barony of that name, places Teach Scotthin in the Queen's County, but this is a mistake of that learned writer; for Sliabhmargin was applied to the whole ridge, and Tascoffin is situated amongst the Johnswell hills, where Scuithin built his house on the brow of the mountain stream, and most probably on the site of the present church of Tascoffin near Frenystown. See Lanigan, vol. ii., pp. 323, 324.

¹ See this document embodied in the

"Book of Rights;" the quotation will be found at p. 213.

² Book of Rights, p. 212, note 1.

³ Id., p. 71.

⁴ As the Sliabhmargin or Gabhran hills run from north to south, each side is necessarily shrouded in the gloom of its own shadow at different parts of the day. In the forenoon, the eastern slopes are illumined by the morning sun, and the western or Ossory side, when viewed from the direction of Munster, appears as if enveloped in a garment of blue clouding; but as the orb of day attains his meridian altitude, and passes out through Bealach Gabhran, he soon dissipates the morning fog, as he sheds his golden rays on the "district of Glens," as the "poet of Aileach" designated the valley of the Nore; and now the eastern or Leinster side of the mountain assumes its cloudy garb, and when observed from beyond the Barrow, will not fail to remind a reader of the "Book of Rights," of the aptitude of the bard's idea in titling the chief lord of Ossory, "the King of blue Gabhran." Such epithets were, however, often fancifully used.

translates the word Gabhair, or Gabhra,¹ a horse; Sliabh-Margy may have been originally so designated from some fancied similitude between its outlines and the configuration of that animal; but whatever may have been its original derivation, we may safely accept as established, as the result of the foregoing inquiry, that the mountain chain which separated Leinster from Ossory, and which forms so remarkable a feature in the landscape of both territories, was at some very early period recognised as Gabhair, Gabhra, or Gabhran, and consequently that “Laighin tuath Gabhair” implies Leinster north of this ridge, and “Laighean deas Gabhair,” Leinster south of the same. “Laighean tuath Gabhair” has been identified as being coextensive with the districts now known as south Dublin, Wicklow, and Kildare. No satisfactory effort has been made to identify the country which now occupies the site of the ancient “Laighean deas Gabhair;” we shall therefore endeavour to determine the situation, the extent, and the confines of that primitive territory.

In the “Annals of the Four Masters,” A. D. 920, we read, “Tadhg, son of Faelan, lord of *Laighin deas Gabhair*,” who was called *Ui Ceinnsealach* died;” but previously, at the year 916, we read that “Mor, daughter of Cearbhall Mac Dunghal, Queen of *Laighin deas Gabhair*, died after a good life.” We shall see lower down that Cearbhall, the father of this lady, was King of Ossory, and held his court within the present county of Kilkenny; and consequently the *Laighin deas Gabhair*, over which Mor ruled as Queen, was not identical with *Ui Ceinnsealach*, over which Tadhg was lord. “Of the tributes and refectons” to be paid to the King of Leinster, out of the provinces of Laighin appended to the “Will of Cathier Mor” in the “Book of Rights,” and of which “the gifted Benean sung,” we find—

“No tribute is due
From the brave *Ui Ceinnsealach*.”

But, lower down in the same poem, the bard requires

“Two hundred cloaks, and two hundred milch-cows,
Two hundred wethers good, the assistance
From the *Laighin deas Gabhair*.”

This is conclusive that *Ui Ceinnsealach* was not politically nor properly recognised as *Laighin deas Gabhair*. But this is so decidedly set forth in another passage of the “Book of Rights,” as enables us to define the extent and the boundaries of this historic

¹ In each form of the word Gabhair, Gabhra, Gabhran, the “b” is aspirated, leaving the sound Gauair, Gaura, Gauran, from which comes our present word

Gowran, the name of the largest barony of our county. The word Garran or Garrawn, more usually applied to an old horse, comes from the same root.

territory. Before quoting the extract, it is necessary to premise that the compiler is about to enumerate "the seats of the King of Caiseal in Mumha" (Munster); and as some of the localities to be named lay within the territory then subject to the King of Ossory, the bard appeals to history in defence of his master's claims—

"Knowest thou what is called
The eric of Fearghus Scannal?¹
I know it; I will give a knowledge of it,
From the Eoir to Dumha Dreasa."¹

The interrogative form of this extract implies that the "Eric of Fearghus Scannal" was then only known as a tradition; and from the "knowledge of it" which the writer so pedantically gives, we learn that it consisted of the land extending from the *Eoir*, i. e., the river Nore, to "Dumha Dreasa," at one time the residence of the Kings of Munster, near Knockgraffon hill, on the bank of the river Suir; and then the bard continues thus:—

"The eric of Fearghus the King,
Both in jewels and territory,
They obtained in full satisfaction for his death,
Laighin deas Gabhair even to the sea."

From the light reflected on the "eric of Fearghus Scannal" in this quotation, we understand it to have consisted "in jewels and ter-

¹ *The Eric of Fearghus Scannal*.—The primitive criminal code in Ireland was known as the "Law of Retaliation," which most unquestionably was borrowed from the Mosaic dispensation, which enacted, "He that giveth a blemish to any one of his neighbours, as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, shall he restore; what blemish he gave, the same shall he be compelled to suffer." (Lev. ch. xxiv. vers. 19, 20). The many cases in practical jurisprudence, such as the violation of female chastity, and other crimes of equal turpitude, to which this law could not be applied, rendered it necessary at a very early period, even amongst the Jews, to change the punishment into a more lenient and rational penalty, according to the nature and enormity of the offence. Thus we read in the Third Book of Kings, ch. xx. ver. 39, "Thy life shall be for his life, or thou shalt pay a talent of silver." In Ireland the law of retaliation is said to have continued in force down to the time of Fedlimidh, surnamed *Reachtmap*, i. e., Lawgiver, who, according to the "Ogygia," commenced his reign in A. D. 164.

¹ He ordained that whosoever should render himself amenable to the law should be enabled to change the penalty from payment "in kind," to payment "in cash," or to its equivalent; and this form of penalty was called his "eric," or "er-uic;" hence, in the "Book of Rights," the annexation of *Laighin deas Gabhair* to Munster is called "the eric of Fearghus Scannal," because the Lagenians consented to its sequestration in payment or satisfaction for his death ("Ogygia," pars III., ch. lvii.). The practical application of the eric as a penalty seems to have received the approval of Christian jurists in most countries in Europe. In England, during the Anglo-Saxon period, the eric, or fine for murder, varied according to the quality or dignity of the person slain: "The price of killing an archbishop or duke is fifteen thousand thrymsas, eight thousand for killing a viscount, two thousand for assassinating a priest or baron; also, if he be a churl (farmer), two thousand," &c., &c. A thrymsas was equivalent to a third part of a shilling. Laws of King Athelstan, quoted by O'Flaherty, "Ogygia," pars III. c. lvii.

ritory;" and this latter being described as *Laighin deas Gabhair*, it follows that the eric of Fearghus Scannal and the territory of *Laighin deas Gabhair*, about which we have been inquiring, were identical: and as the former extended westwards from the Nore to the Suir, and the latter southwards to the sea, it appears that *Laighin deas Gabhair* was bounded on the east by the river Nore, and on the west by the Suir; it comprised more than half the present county of Kilkenny, and that part of Munster formerly known as *Magh Femin*.¹ And now, before we determine its northern confines, it is necessary that we inquire who this Fearghus Scannal was, and something of the history of the "eric obtained in full satisfaction for his death."

¹ *Magh Femin*.—Though the position of this ancient tribeland is satisfactorily ascertained, yet there are few districts respecting the extent and boundaries of which there is more diversity of opinions. Lanigan (vol. i., p. 281), confines *Magh Femin* within that part of the diocese of Lismore situated north of the River Suir, because, as he argues, the country of the north Decies was identical with that part of the now county of Tipperary. In this view he is sustained by Dr. O'Donovan ("Book of Rights," p. 18, n. b.), who makes it comprise the whole of the barony of Iffa and Offa East. The following antiquarian authorities, however, give *Magh Femin* a much greater extent of country; Smith ("History of Waterford," p. 4), includes in it the whole of the barony of Middlethird; O'Flaherty describes it as "comprehending Clonmel and a *third part* centrally situated," or, in other words, it comprehended the barony of Middlethird ("Ogygia," pars. III. c. lix.). Harris, in his Annotations on Ware (Bishop of Ardagh), includes in *Magh Femin* "all that far-extended flat country which surrounds the town of Cashel, called Gowlin Vale." As Cashel is situated in Middlethird, if the plains which surround that city belonged to *Femin*, so did the barony also. Lastly, Keating (vol. i. p. 286,) makes "the lands of *Magh Femin* consist of the third part of Cluin Mell and the *Middlethird*." Thus, according to Lanigan and O'Donovan, *Magh Femin* was confined within the barony of Iffa and Offa East; whilst Keating, O'Flaherty, &c., include in it also the whole of the barony of Middlethird. If by *Magh Femin* is described the tract of country originally conquered by Aenghus Ossory, and which, when united to Lower

Ossory, constituted the principality of "*Laighin deas Gabhair*," it not only contained the barony of Iffa and Offa East, but also those of Middlethird and Sliabharda; for the boundary line of *Laighin deas Gabhair*, which, starting from the River Nore, was drawn along the top of the Dromdelgy hills to Grean or Kilcooly, would thence reach the River Suir towards the northern extreme of the barony of Middlethird; and as it was out of this territory that Aenghus Mac Nadhraigh expelled the Ossorians, the entire tract is described as *Magh Femin*, or the plains of Cashel. Keating seems to have written under the impression that Aenghus bestowed on the Deisies the entire extent of lands out of which he expelled the Ossorians, but this is historically incorrect; for he erected his own court, called Cashel, within the newly acquired dominion, which afterwards became the seat of the kings of Munster, and consequently was not included in the country bestowed on the Deisies; it was also the head of the archdiocese of Cashel, and therefore could never have been situated within the diocese of Lismore; but if by *Magh Femin* we are to understand the tract of country granted by Aenghus to the Deisies at the period of his marriage, no doubt can be entertained that it lay within the barony of Iffa and Offa East, and occupied the flat lands extending northwards from the River Suir to Sliabh-na-m-bhan; and east and west from the Dromderg hills, which run by Tullahought and Killamery to the down stream of the Suir, on its way to Clonmel. *Magh Femin* is described as extending northwards as far as "*Corca-Ath-ra*:" this name, as far as I am aware, is now obsolete; but there can be no doubt

Fearghus Scannal, or, as he is otherwise called, Eidirsceal, was monarch of Ireland, according to the chronology of O'Flaherty, A.M. 3944;¹ he was treacherously slain by "Nuad the White," a Leinster prince, at Allin, near Old Kilcullen, in the county of Kildare; Nuad became his successor, and enjoyed the sovereignty only six months, when Conaire Mor, son to Eidirsceal, then King of Munster, retaliated on the assassin, killed him in a pitched battle at a place called Cliach, in Idrone, in the present county of Carlow, and then marching victorious through Leinster, he levied a fine on the whole province; and as a further revenge for his father's death, obliged the Lagenians to consent that the territory extending south

that it was (as the word implies) a ford or pass over the River *Lingau*, which runs along the base of the Dromberg hills about two miles south of the Nine-Mile-house, and which, at the present day, forms the northern extreme of both the diocese of Lismore and the barony of Iffa and Offa East.

The word Magh Femín seems to be derived from *Sliab-na-m-bhan-Femín*, which has been translated, the Mountain of the Women of Femín. See "Transactions," vol. i., p. 340, first series. Who this Femín was that has left his name identified with one of the most celebrated districts of ancient Ireland, or who were the ladies that were privileged to assume his title, has baffled the researches of those who are adepts in the mysteries of ancient lore. (See a highly interesting paper on this subject by Mr. Dunn, "Transactions," vol. i., p. 340, first series.) Whether Femín may have been the primitive colonist who cleared this part of the island, and which, in consequence, assumed his name; or, whether Femín may be but a modification of Fenion, derived from Fion Mac Cumhal, the celebrated hero, the memory of whose exploits is perpetuated in the titles of the lofty summits and abrupt valleys of *Sliabhnaman*; whether he kept his palace amidst the leafy sweetness of the primitive woods of this elevated tract, and in oriental style adorned it with a "*Sidh*," or Celtic seraglio, whence the eastern peak of the mountain is called "*Sidh-ban-Feimean*," i. e., the fairy palace of the women of Femín; whether the ladies who graced this ethereal mansion were enchanted nymphs who fascinated the Fenion warriors, or were they selected from amongst the most beautiful of the sex, and constrained to dedicate their lives to the

refined sensualism of this mountain palace, can be no more than mere speculation. Yet the last-mentioned conjecture seems to derive a degree of probability from the singularly interesting prohibition imposed on the king of Cashel, and which strictly interdicted him "To listen to the groans of the women of Femín when suffering violation," Book of Rights, pp. 5, 19.

Sliabhnaman forms a natural line of demarcation between the level country of Middlethird and the plains of Iffa and Offa East; and as this hill was recognised as the mountain of Femín, it seems that the entire plain surrounding it was known as the plains of Femín. Thus the Ossorians are said to have been driven out of Femín, but it was from Middlethird they were expelled, for Mullinahone takes its name from the expulsion, and it is in that barony; and again we are told that St. Patrick, on the occasion of his first visit to Aenghus, King of Munster, was met in the fields of Femín by that monarch; and as the saint travelled from Leinster through Bealach Gabhran, towards Cashel, he must have entered Tipperary between the hills of Killamery and *Sliabharda*; and as this district was called Femín, and as it is now the barony of Middlethird, it seems to settle the question that Femín originally included that barony. In later times the title of Magh Femín seems to have been confined to the fertile lawn lying between the southern slopes of *Sliabhnaman* and the River Suir. In Christian times this district received the name of Cluain Mel, or the plain of honey, whence comes the name of the present and important town of Clonmel, the capital of Tipperary.

¹ "Book of Rights," p. 88, note i. "Ogygia," pars III., chap. xlv.

to the sea from a line drawn from the river Nore to the river Suir, should be taken from Leinster, and annexed to Munster for ever, the Lagenians binding themselves by a most solemn treaty in the formal words of surrendering "heaven and earth, sea and land, sun and moon."¹ The river Suir did not form the western boundary of Leinster since the establishment of Christianity in Ireland; hence the passage quoted above affords strong internal evidence of the remote era of the original compilation of the "Book of Rights." In its present form (as its learned translator has proved),² it is the production of a comparatively modern date; but the extracts above quoted must have been originally composed whilst "Laighin deas Gabhair" was still subject to Munster, and previous to the establishment of the kingdom of Ossory.

In the "Will of Cathier Mor," and in many parts of the "Book of Rights," *Laighin deas Gabhair* and *Airged-Ros* are referred to as distinct and separate territories, and this enables us to identify the mountain ridge that separates the two districts as the northern boundary of *Laighin deas Gabhair*. In early ages, and in every part of Ireland, men adopted mountain ridges as the boundaries of their respective possessions: hence, though in the "Book of Rights" *Laighin deas Gabhair* is said to extend from the Suir to the Nore, in later authorities, such as Keating, Kennedy, O'Flaherty, &c., the boundary of this territory is said to extend from "Gowran to Grein," because, when that part of Tipperary lying between the county of Kilkenny and the river Suir was taken from Ossory and united to Munster, in the time of Aenghus MacNadhfrach, the line of demarcation from the Nore to the Suir was intersected at "Grein hill," near the boundary of this county; and if from this venerable land-mark of ancient Ireland we follow that branch of the Dromdelgy hills that runs from Kilcooly by Clomanta, Glashacro, and Ballinamara, till we arrive at the termination of the ridge at "Thornback" church, we find ourselves on the bank of the river Nore, two miles above Kilkenny, and thus the "eric of Fearghus Scannal" was said to extend from the Nore to the Suir; and if we here cross over the river into the barony of Gowran, we meet the Gabhran hills, sending off a branch towards the Nore through the parish of Dunmore, called Drumerhin, and thus was the boundary line said to extend from "Gabhran to Grein," hence the district south of the Dromdelgy and Drumerhin hills, and extending thence to the sea at Waterford harbour, constituted the ancient territory of "Laighin deas Gabhair;" it comprised two-thirds of the present county of Kilkenny, and originally the territory of *Femin* in Munster, which was coextensive with the present baronies of Middlethird and Iffa

¹ "Book of Rights," p. 88, note i.
"Ogygia," pars III., chap. xlv.

² For Dr. O'Donovan's reasons see
"Book of Rights," Introduction.

and Offa East; and this extensive tract being described in the "eric of Fearghus Scannal" as *Laighin deas Gabhair*, it necessarily follows that, at the remote period referred to, the valley of the Nore had not as yet been dignified with the title of the kingdom of Os-sory.¹

The tribute imposed on the province of Leinster consisted in 300 white cows, 200 fat hogs, and 300 gilt swords, to be annually paid to the King of Munster,² together with the annexation of "Laighin deas Gabhair" to that province for ever. This mulct continued to be levied during the reign of seven Munster kings.³ I can find no record to indicate the era when Leinster asserted its independence of Munster, by shaking off the oppressive yoke of the above impost; but we can arrive at a very proximate period from the fact that King Conaire, who imposed the tribute, was the first of the Munster kings to whom it was paid. After the battle of Cliach he was raised to the supreme monarchy of the island, A. M., 3949;⁴ and if an equal number of years be granted for the reigns of his six successors on the throne of Munster, as we have historic evidence was occupied by the six monarchs who succeeded him on the throne of Tara, it will bring us to some period within the first century of the Christian era, about which period Aenghus Oisraigh distinguished himself as a great leader in the valley of the Nore, to which his name was given, and has so continued over a period of near two thousand years. Aenghus belonged to the romantic age of the three great tribes of famous warriors in Ireland, namely, the Red branch Knights, who were commanded in Ulster by the famous heroes, Conall, Cearnach, and Cuchulainn, the celebrated Fenian soldiers who followed the fortunes of the notorious Fionn Mac Cumhall, and the forces of South Munster, called the Clann Deaghadh, commanded in the first century by that great champion Curi Mac Daire, the ruins of whose huge cyclopean fortress of dry stone masonry still stand on the mountains of Miss, in the county of Kerry. This Curi was father to Kingit, the wife of Aenghus Oisraigh; and as he "was by all our monuments of antiquity contemporary with Connor, who was King of Ulster" at the time of our Lord's crucifixion,⁵ it follows that Aenghus would be distinguishing himself in the valley of the Nore sometime about the middle of the first century of the Christian era. Mac Geoghegan⁶ asserts that Lugny, the father of St. Kyran of Saighar, was descended in

¹ "Book of Rights," p. 89, note i. "Ogygia," pars III., chap. xliv. "Dissertation of the Royal Family of the Stewarts," p. 81; Keating, vol. i., pp. 237, 238.

² "Dissertation," p. 81.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ "Ogygia," pars III., chap. xliv.;

Keating, at the year A. M. 3970.

⁵ Kennedy's "Dissertation," p. 71; "Ogygia," pars III., chap. xlviii; "Battle of Gabhra," in "Transactions of Ossianic Society," vol. i., edited by Nicholas O'Kearney, Esq., Introduction, p. 33.

⁶ "History of Ireland," pp. 97, 123, Dublin, 1844.

the ninth degree from Aenghus Oisraigh. According to the calculations of Ussher and O'Flaherty, St. Kyran was born about the year 352; and if we ascend from Lugny his father nine degrees, and allow thirty years to each generation¹ it will bring us to Aenghus, towards the middle of the first century; and this agrees with what Mac Geoghegan states in another place, namely, that the first of the Oisraighs came into this district in the first century.

Aenghus Oisraigh, who may be truly styled the patriarch of the valley of the Nore, towards the end of the first century appears to have disputed the right of the Munster king to either jurisdiction or tribute within the territory of *Laighin deas Gabhair*. He accordingly conquered from the "Bearbha to the Suir," and erected it into an independent kingdom; and "from the patrimony thus acquired for his posterity² was derived his nickname of Uisraigagh, modernized into Ossory," and composed of the Gaelic words *Uisge*, water, and *Rioghachd*, kingdom—literally the kingdom between the rivers, a title highly expressive of its physical boundaries and local situation.³

The establishment of the kingdom of Ossory, and the deliverance of the province of Leinster from the annual impost levied from the time of Conaire Mor, appear to have been but one and the same epoch; for the last of the Munster kings who levied the fine must have reigned within the first century of our era, and this being the period when Aenghus was asserting the independence of *Laighin deas Gabhair*, it appears highly probable that to him was all Leinster indebted for the abolition of the "eric of Fearghus Scannal."

That the kingdom of Oisraigh was founded in the first century we may accept as fully established by the authorities just cited; and additional testimony is afforded by that ancient poem published by the *Ossianic Society*, entitled "THE BATTLE OF GABHRA," in which the King of Ossory is enumerated amongst those slain in that terrific engagement, fought in the year 283.⁴ Yet it appears certain that the original kingdom founded by Aenghus Ossory did not include the entire valley of the Nore, nor exceed in its extent the boundaries of "Laighin deas Gabhair;" and hence, in the ancient documents that have been transcribed and modified for the compilation of the "Book of Rights," the people of the original Oisraigh are described as the *Laighin deas Gabhair*. If the upper valley of the Nore, then called "*Magh Airged Ros*," was conquered by Aenghus, it was not recognised as part of the kingdom of his successors for some centuries later. This is directly proved from the "Will of Cathier Mor," a document purporting to be as old as the

¹ "Dissertation," p. 59.

² *Id.* p. 71.

³ Tighe's "Survey of Kilkenny," p. 11.

⁴ "Battle of Gabhra," p. 91.

second century, in which this celebrated dynast of Leinster is represented as placing his son Fiach, as

“ An illustrious man, over Airged Ros,”

which ignores the right of any such potentate as the King of Ossory to the possession of that territory; though lower down in the same document this same king thus addresses his other son, Daire Bar-rach—

“ Thou shalt harass the lands of *Deas Gabhair*,”

which recognises this district as an independent, though hostile territory; and in the oldest lives of St. Patrick, quoted by Ussher, “ Airged Ros” is described as being part of the kingdom of Leinster, being titled “ Occidentalis Luginensium plaga,”¹ or the western region of Leinster. The lower valley of the Nore is invariably known as *Laighin deas Gabhair*, or Southern Leinster; and hence we may safely conclude that the kingdom of Ossory, as originally constituted by Aenghus its founder, was confined within the districts then called *Laighin deas Gabhair*, which at that period comprised the entire territory lying between the Nore and the Suir south of a line drawn conterminous with the top of the Dromdelgy hills, from the Nore at Thornback church, by Grein hill, to Knockgraffon on the bank of the river Suir; and, therefore, when we read that Aenghus conquered from the “ Barrow to the Suir,” we are to understand it of the countries of Lower Ossory and Magh Femin, which, when united, were bounded east, west, and south by those two rivers, which originally constituted the “eric of Fearghus Scannal,” subsequently the principality of “ *Laighin deas Gabhair* ;” and, as already stated, assumed the title of Oisraigh from its stretching from the Barrow to the Suir, whence came the word Oisraigh, that is, the kingdom between the rivers; and thus it appears that the position and extent of the original Oisraigh differed very materially from its more modern geography. The transition in its territorial confines, the encroachment of other states on its primitive possessions, and its own assumption of new dominions, from which resulted the permanent establishment of the subsequent kingdom of Ossory, are shrouded in the fabulous grandeur of primitive romance, and, if truthful, furnish an interesting illustration of the state of social and political life in Ireland at the period of the first preaching of Christianity in this island.

During the reign of Nadhfrach, who was King of Munster in the

¹ “ Primordia,” pp. 865, 969, quoted in “ Book of Rights,” p. 17. The expression can only apply to the upper valley of the Nore, or Airged Ros, which was

then subject to Leinster. The lower valley of the Nore was then an independent kingdom, and known as “ *Laighin deas Gabhair*,” or South Leinster.

early part of the fifth century, so severe a scourge fell on his kingdom that the fruits of the earth were destroyed, the corn was blasted, and a dreadful famine spread desolation over all his dominions. The people of the Deisi, a country represented by the now county of Waterford, writhing under the severity of the visitation, deliberated as to whether they should await the issue, or seek new settlements in another part of the island, consulted their most eminent Druids as to whether the country should be totally destroyed by famine, or be again restored to happiness and plenty. The prophets informed their clients that they should not leave their own lands; that a certain lady was now far advanced in pregnancy, and would be soon delivered of a daughter, from whose birth would result prosperity and affluence to the people of Deisi. They were further advised to secure the education of the child, and to obtain possession of it from its father, by making him suitable presents immediately after it was born, and they accordingly became owners of the infant from its birth; but as the prophecy respecting its future destiny could not be accomplished until this young lady should attain the age of marriage, her growth and development were accordingly accelerated by feeding her on the richest and most luxurious viands; young and beautiful children were killed and daintily prepared for her repasts, owing to which nutritious regimen she gained the time of puberty much earlier than the usual age. The name of this lady was *Eithne Vathach*; and as the prophecy of her future fame must have gained for her a singular pre-eminence amongst her sex, she was espoused by Aenghus, son of Nadhfraich, the then King of Munster; but, before he could obtain possession of his bride, he was bound to provide a gratuity for the people who had regarded her as a child of destiny, and who had trained her in all befitting accomplishments. Aenghus accordingly delivered as a dowry to the people of Deisi the plains of Magh Femen, for which purpose he was first obliged to drive the people of Oisraigh out of those parts of Laighin deas Gabhair which now lie between the county Kilkenny and the river Suir, which had been then in their possession from the time of Aenghus Ossory, a period of near four hundred years; and having delivered these tracts of country to the Deisies, the prediction of the Druids was fulfilled, that from the birth of this lady great advantages would be derived to the people of that country.¹ The memory of this expulsion of the ancient Ossorians out of their

¹ This curious scrap of historic romance is abbreviated from Keating's life of Cormac Mac Airt. From whatever sources he derived his details of the transaction, he attaches much more importance to it than to most of the other extraordinary stories which occur in his works, as he refers to it a second time,

as an argument against the slanders of those writers who, accepting the assertion of St. Jerome as true, charge the ancient Irish with cannibalism. To disprove this odious assertion, he argues that this is the only case of that nature that can be discovered in the history of the ancient Irish.

original settlements in “*Laighin deas Gabhair*,” is still preserved in the traditions of the peasantry, and the topographical nomenclature of the great *Bealach* or pass lying between the *Sliabharda* and *Killamery* hills, through which the *Oisraighs* were compelled to retreat before the advances of the *Mummonian* forces, the line of retreat being marked by the localities of *Mullach*, or *Mullan Inneona*, now called *Mullinahone*, and which, according to my authority,¹ means a violent expulsion; and *Bealach Urluidhe*, Anglicised *Earlstown*, which implies “the blows or irresistible strokes of valiant men.”² The *Oisraighs*, being expelled from *Munster*, settled down in the fertile and expansive tract lying between the *King’s River* and the *Killamery* hills, then and subsequently known as *Magh Reighna*; and here the kings of *Ossory* were first called *Righ Reighna*, i. e. King of *Reighna*. *Eithne Vathach*, the immediate cause of the expulsion of the *Oisraighs*, seems to have grown up a virago of distinction, as she accompanied her husband *Aenghus* in his martial expeditions. It would appear that the peculiar delicacy of the unnatural condiments prepared for the acceleration of her womanhood excited also instincts and propensities as unnatural as themselves; for we are told that she attempted the commission of a crime of a most disgraceful nature, which so offended the piety of *St. Ciaran* of *Saighar*, that he predicted to *Eithne* that both herself and her husband, *Aenghus*, would be slain in battle as a punishment of the crime, which prophecy was fulfilled at the battle of *Cill-Osnadha*, fought in the now county of *Carlow*, A. D., 489, when *Aenghus* and his royal consort were numbered amongst the slain.³

It appears that in the events of this epoch of which we are treating were determined the extent and the boundaries of the future kingdom of *Ossory*; and it further seems more than probable that at this same period the upper valley of the *Nore*, or “*Airged Ros*,” was first wrested from the successors of *Cathier Mor*, and annexed to the portion of *Laighin deas Gabhair* still in the possession of the King of *Ossory*, as an indemnity for the encroachment made on this same territory by *Aenghus*, and granted by him to the *Deisi*. This would appear probable from the fact, that henceforward we find the kings of *Ossory* and *Munster* allied in open hostility to the kings of *Leinster*. It is certain from the “*Will of Cathier Mor*,” that in the second century “*Airged Ros*” was not annexed to “*Laighin deas Gabhair*,” nor did it belong to the King of *Ossory*’s dominions, as it is referred to as part of the kingdom of *Leinster*; and in the oldest lives of *St. Patrick* it is still described as the western region of *Leinster*, whence it would appear to have remained sub-

¹ Keating, vol. i, p. 286.

² See the events of this epoch given more in detail in my last paper, “*Transactions*,” vol. iii., p. 372, 3.

³ “*Annals of the Four Masters*,” A. D. 489. See also the annotations of the editor, and his quotations from *Colgan’s “Acta Sanctorum”* in the margin.

ject to, and to have formed part of, that kingdom down to St. Patrick's time; yet its annexation to Ossory must have been effected, if not previous to, most certainly during the preaching of St. Patrick, and the lifetime of Aenghus.

Aenghus Mac Nadhraich reigned in Munster during the public mission of St. Ciaran in Ossory.¹ According to history and tradition, St. Patrick, on the occasion of his first visit to Aenghus, approached Munster through Lower Ossory,² where he met St. Ciaran for the first time in Ireland; and there can be little doubt that the "Elder of Oisraigh" accompanied the "National Apostle" on his journey to Magh Femín, where both of them were received by Aenghus, and introduced by him to his court at Cashel. After the baptism of Aenghus by St. Patrick, when we are told the pastoral staff of the saint perforated the foot of the royal neophyte, we find St. Ciaran taking a prominent part in the deliberations of the council of Cashel, held immediately after, when the jurisdiction of St. Patrick over all Ireland was first acknowledged, and St. Ciaran was invested with ecclesiastical authority over the principality of Oisraigh. This ancient kingdom and the ecclesiastical territory of the same name are allowed to have been conterminous since the establishment of Christianity in Ireland; consequently the kingdom of Ossory must have been coextensive with the present diocese of the same name before it was placed under the guardianship of St. Ciaran. Shane More O'Dugan, chief poet of Hy-Many, who died in the year 1372, has left us a rather concise survey of the kingdom of Ossory. He gives its extent in four different measurements, or rather measures its extent between four of its greatest extremes: he first sketches the width of "Laighin deas Gabhair," or Ossory proper, before it was divided by the Munstermen; he next gives the extreme length of the entire kingdom; thirdly, the extreme of Upper Ossory; and, fourthly, the width of the kingdom at near the middle of its territory. The following extracts will form an interesting illustration for our present essay.³

¹ Lanigan denies that St. Ciaran, of Saighar, was contemporary with either Aenghus or St. Patrick; asserting that he lived at a much later date; and that the Council of Cashel is a mere fiction, unsupported by historical evidence of any authority. But the great majority of Irish scholars are opposed to him: Ussher, Colgan, O'Flaherty, Ware, Mac Geogheghan, and most modern antiquarians synchronize the public mission of the first bishop of Ossory with the reign of the first Christian King of Munster, and the preaching of St. Patrick in Ireland. See Lanigan's arguments, "Eccle-

siastical History of Ireland," vol. i., pp. 22, 29, 30, &c.; vol. ii., pp. 7, 8, 98, &c.

² In Colgan's "Trias Thaum.," we are told that St. Patrick approached Munster through Bealach Gabhrán, and was met in the field or plain of Femín by Aengus, son of Nadhraich, King of Munster, and was by him conducted to his habitation, called Caissel—p. 26, C. 60.

³ The portion relating to Ossory was translated by the late Dr. O'Donovan, and published in a tract along with the Ossorian part of O'Heerin's Topographical Poem, which had been edited by him for this society in the year 1850.

“From the Bearbha [Barrow] to the Siuir [Suir] westwards,
 Extends Ossory of high sunny land,
 From the soft Bladhma to the sea,
 The most irriguous fair part of Banbha” [Ireland].

No part of Ossory at any period extended from the Barrow to the Suir, since the time when Southern Ossory and Magh Femen were united under the name of “Laighin deas Gabhair;” hence this refers to that remote period when the Oisraighs were in possession of the entire territory between these two rivers. “From Bladhma to the sea,” expresses the extreme length of Ossory, from the Sliabh Bloom (or Bladhma) mountains, in the slopes of which the Suir, Nore, and Barrow, were said to have their respective sources, to the confluence of the same streams before they enter the sea below the town of Waterford.

“From Glaise-an-ionathar forth
 To Baile Daithi in re-measurement,
 Is the breadth of Ossory,
 Of aspect how like to loveliness!”

Glaise-an-ionathar is translated by O'Donovan *the stream of the entrails*, and he also asserts that it was the ancient name of the Munster river; Baile Daithi is now called Ballydavis, a locality in the parish of Straboe, in the Queen's County; hence a line drawn between these two extremes would extend from the Kilcooly hills, in which the Munster river rises, across the barony of Galmoy and Upper Ossory to the barony of Maryborough, in which the town of Balldavis is situated. This is called re-measurement, or the second measurement, because it describes the breadth of Ossory in its northern extreme, in contradistinction to the previous sketch of its southern confines—

“From Mullach-Inneona the hospitable,
 Is Ossory's part of the land of Gailian
 Of the country of Flann, eastwards to Leith-ghlinn:
 Fearless the division is defended by its kings.”

The line of measurement here indicated would pass close to the city of Kilkenny. The extract reads thus:—Ossory's part of the land of Gailian (one of the old names of Leinster) extends from the town of Mullinahone, famous for its hospitality, eastwards to *Leith-ghlinn*, or, as we now call it, Old Leighlin, situated on the Carlow side of the Johnswell mountains. These outlines of the ancient kingdom give us the extent of the present diocese of Ossory, which extends in length from the utmost bounds of the parish of Seir-Ciaran to the Ferrybank of Waterford, nearly sixty miles; and in breadth, from the parish of Kilmacahil, in the diocese of Leighlin,

to the west bounds of the parish of Callan, upwards of twelve miles.¹ In the reign of Edward II., when Kilkenny became a separate "Liberty," the entire kingdom of Ossory was included in that district, as also in the subsequently formed "county" of Kilkenny; and so continued until the reign of Philip and Mary, when the present Queen's County was being established, and on which occasion the portion of it till then included in Kilkenny was erected into the barony of Upper Ossory, which comprised about one-third of the present Queen's County. The Ordnance Survey in 1840 ignored this ancient barony altogether, and constructed out of it the present baronies of Clandonagh and Clarmallagh, thus civilly obliterating the last trace of the primitive title of the valley of the Nore. The illustration of the history or topography of Upper Ossory does not come within the design of the present essay. Our future inquiries shall be principally confined to the elucidation of the history and antiquities of the lower valley of the Nore, or Ossory proper.

(To be continued.)

ON AN ANCIENT RUNIC CASKET NOW PRESERVED IN THE DUCAL MUSEUM, BRUNSWICK.

BY GEORGE STEPHENS, ESQ., F. S. A., PROFESSOR OF OLD ENGLISH,
AND OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
COPENHAGEN.

IF not absolutely the oldest, this coffer,² still in fine preservation, is certainly the most elaborate and most precious specimen of this kind of western art now known. It is made up of thin plates of the ivory or tusk of the walrus, with settings of a sort of yellowish bronze, all whose ornaments are still quite sharp and clear. The bottom plate is also of walrus, or morse ivory, in a similar manner fixt in slips of bronze, on which are carved the Runic letters. These repeat the inscription twice over, the two long lines and the two short ones answering to each other. The shrine now holds a couple of unimportant relics, but Senator Culemann pronounces these to be, as it was natural to expect, of far later date, perhaps

¹ Ware's Bishops, at Ossory.

² The plates which illustrate this paper are engraved full size from photographs of every side, and from a photograph, a rubbing, and a cast of the bottom plate, all taken from the original in the Ducal Museum, Brunswick. For these favours I am indebted to His Excellency, Mr. Gordon, British Minis-

ter, Stuttgart, and to the Senator Friedrich Culemann, of Hanover, who has personally controlled the execution of every piece, and who kindly took the rubbing with his own hand. I also beg to thank the Geheime-Hofrath Eigner, curator of this museum, for the exceeding courtesy he has shown me on this occasion.