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Yours faithfully
P. W. Joyce

THE WONDERS OF IRELAND

AND OTHER

PAPERS ON IRISH SUBJECTS

BY

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PREFACE

This little Book needs no Preface.

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THE WONDERS OF IRELAND.

IN treatises on Geography it was customary in days of old to devote a chapter to the curious and remarkable things—or “Wonders” as they were commonly called—whether artificial or natural or supernatural, of each particular country; and in those credulous and superstitious old times the fabulous and the supernatural were sure to loom largely. We too here at home had our Wonders, the fame of which travelled far beyond our shores; and when the reader has perused the relation of them given here, he will perhaps come to the conclusion I have arrived at, namely, that for Wonders—or *Mirabilia* as they are called in Latin—no other country in Europe was fit to hold a candle to Ireland.

There are two detailed accounts of the Wonders of Ireland in two Irish documents: one is in the “Book of Ballymote,” a large manuscript volume containing a great number of miscellaneous pieces in the Irish language, copied into that book towards the end of the fourteenth century. The Book of Ballymote is now preserved in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. The transcriber of the tract on Irish Wonders states that he copied it from an older volume called the “Book of Glendalough”; but this book is not now known to exist—probably lost, like many

others of our valuable old manuscript books, in times of wars and troubles. The other relation is in an ancient manuscript (H. 3. 17) in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. These two differ considerably, both in the number and in the order of the wonders they describe; and each contains some wonders not given in the other.

In the edition of the Irish version of Nennius issued by the Irish Archæological Society in the year 1848, Dr. James Henthorn Todd has published the text and translation of the tract in the Book of Ballymote; and he has also given in footnotes the most important portions of the Trinity College tract.

Besides the above two main accounts there are several shorter notices of our Wonders given by other writers. The most important of these are the following:—

Roderick O'Flaherty translated into Latin verse in the third part of his "*Ogygia*," a short account of the Wonders of Ireland: but I do not know from what Irish original he took his version.

Giraldus Cambrensis, who visited Ireland with Prince John in the year 1185, and who some time afterwards wrote in Latin his "*Topography of Ireland*" from materials collected during his visit, has a long chapter headed "*Of the Wonders and Miracles of Ireland.*" He drew his information from native sources; partly from oral tradition, and partly from Irish writings translated for him by native scholars. Some of our modern Irish writers strongly condemn Giraldus for recording these "nonsensical stories"; but here they do him some injustice; for he merely, and very properly, records the legends as he found

them, though he occasionally somewhat alters or adds to them in the supposed interest of the Anglo-Norman invaders.*

Sir James Ware, in his "Antiquities of Ireland," has a short chapter (xxxiv.) on the same subject, the greater part of which is devoted to a description of the Giant's Causeway, which he regards, justly enough, as among the Irish wonders, though I have not found it included as a wonder in the ancient Irish accounts.

As there was constant intercourse during the ninth, tenth, and early eleventh centuries, between Ireland and the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, the fame of our Wonders—as might be expected—reached the far north. There is still extant a book called "Kongs Skuggio,"—*Speculum Regale*—"The Royal Mirror," written about A.D. 1250, in the Norse language, by some Scandinavian author, in which among many other pieces is an account of the Wonders of Ireland. This section relating to Ireland has been translated and edited by Dr. Kuno Meyer in "Folklore" (vol. v.) and in "Eriu" (vol. iv.) with valuable annotations. He has shown that the Norseman did not derive his information from any of the books mentioned above, but took it down from a narrative given orally by an Irishman. Most of his Wonders are found, with some differences in details, in the Irish authorities, but he has some not recorded in our books.

Our Wonders are noticed by some other writers ;

* The extracts from Giraldus given in the following pages are taken from Bohn's translation.

but as the information they give us adds nothing to what is given here, they need not be mentioned further.

The following account is founded on the tract in the Book of Ballymote ; but I have interwoven with it the narrative of the Trinity College manuscript.

I have also made use of the information given in the other documents mentioned above as well as of the annotations by the several learned editors, so far as I thought it necessary to illustrate my subject : but I have always done so with acknowledgment. And I have utilised information obtained from several other sources, which will be found mentioned in the proper places.

It is hardly necessary to remind the reader that my presentation of the Wonders of Ireland is popular, as distinguished from what is commonly understood as scientific. The original written accounts, which to the general run of people are all but unreadable and meaningless, I have set forth in a simple plain narrative easy to read and easy to understand. My function has been something like that of a person who is preparing supper for a number of people from highly condensed meat—pemmican—which is itself hard and heavy and indigestible :—namely, turning it into a palatable food by a judicious mixture of other ingredients, and by proper treatment. But as the whole of the pemmican remains in the dish, though now diffused and savoury, so here the Wonders are fully to the fore, but in a more pleasing form. I have added nothing that is not warranted by the originals, whether written or oral : and I have not altered the meaning or intention of the old narrators.

1. IRELAND HAS NO VENOMOUS REPTILES.

It is very well known that Ireland has no toads, and no venomous reptiles of any kind. There are some small lizards indeed, but they are quite harmless; and though we have now plenty of frogs, it is only within the last few hundred years they have been introduced. Perhaps this is the best known and most widely spread of all the legends of Ireland; and it may be interesting to bring together all the available information regarding it, whether from written or oral, ancient or modern, tradition. Besides the testimonies on this point given below there is a note in a very ancient Irish manuscript now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, in which Ireland is compared to Paradise. For each is situated at the extremity of the world; Paradise at "the extreme east," and Ireland at "the extreme west": and as "Paradise has no savage beasts, no serpents, nor lions, nor dragons, nor scorpions, nor mice [nor rats], nor frogs"; so it is also with Ireland as regards all these animals.*

As to frogs, Giraldus Cambrensis tells the story—indeed he devotes an entire chapter to it with the heading "Of a Frog lately seen in Ireland"—that soon after the Anglo-Norman invasion, while Robert le Poer was governor of Waterford, a live frog was brought one day to his court, which had been found in one of the meadows round the city. It was viewed with great astonishment, especially by the Irish; and when Donall Mac Gilla Patrick, the native Prince of Ossory, saw it, he beat his head with

* Stokes: *Trip. Life*, xxix., where the original Irish text is given.

grief, saying that the reptile was an omen of woe to Ireland, and that it plainly foreboded the conquest of the Irish nation by the English. Probably this story has a foundation in fact; but it is pretty certain that Giraldus gave it a twist of his own in favour of the Anglo-Norman invaders—as he did in many others of his stories—to make the natives believe that the conquest was inevitable.

It seems however that our present day Irish naturalists have discovered a species of native frog in Kerry, which they say must have been there from the beginning. If this be so we must conclude that these cute Kerry frogs, getting early intelligence of St. Patrick's intentions (see below), betook them to remote hiding places, where they lay low till the storm blew over, and thus evaded the saint's sentence of banishment.

The reader will find Ireland's exemption from all these noxious and venomous creatures fully explained in the following legend of

*ST. PATRICK AND THE REPTILES.**

In every part of the country the people have a tradition that all poisonous reptiles were expelled from Ireland by St. Patrick; and the tradition is not of recent growth, but is, on the contrary, many hundred years old. Jocelin, a monk of Furnes in Belgium, who wrote a biography of St. Patrick in the *twelfth century*, relates this great Wonder in

* Reprinted with modifications from the "New Ireland Review" (Dublin), for which journal I wrote this narrative many years ago.

much detail. He tells us that before the time of St. Patrick Ireland was troubled with a three-fold plague of *reptiles*, *demons*, and *magicians*. As for the reptiles, "these venomous and monstrous creatures used to rise out of the earth and sea, and so prevailed over the whole island, that they wounded both men and animals with their deadly stings, often slew them with their cruel bitings, and not seldom rent and devoured their members." "The demons used to show themselves unto their worshippers in visible forms: they often attacked the people, inflicting much hurt; and only ceased from their baleful doings when they were appeased by foul heathenish prayers and offerings. After this they were seen flying in the air and walking on the earth, loathsome and horrible to behold, in such multitudes that it seemed as if the whole island were too small to give them standing and flying room. Whence Ireland was deemed the special home of demons. And lastly, magicians evil-doers and soothsayers abounded beyond what history records of any other country on the face of the earth."

So in those days Ireland must have been rather an unpleasant place to live in; and it was high time for St. Patrick to come.

Our biographer then goes on to relate how the saint cleared the island of the three plagues, expelling first the reptiles and then the demons from the top of Crochan Acla,* and converting the

* *Cruachan Aicle*, "Eagle Hill," which since the time of the Saint has borne the name of Croagh Patrick, a beautiful conical mountain rising over the southern margin of Clew Bay in Mayo, celebrated in legend all over Ireland.

magicians from the worship of the evil one to the worship of God.

This narrative has been seriously discussed by not a few of our learned men. David Rothe Bishop of Ossory in the early part of the seventeenth century, maintains its truth ; while Colgan, a far greater man, writing a little later, quite rejects it and remarks that Ireland must have been always free from venomous creatures ; as in the most ancient Irish writings—many of them reaching back to a period long before the time of St. Patrick—there is no mention whatsoever of reptiles, though the other native animals are mentioned often enough. And Lanigan, in the last century, observes that if such a wonderful occurrence had taken place, it would have been recorded in our annals and in the early Lives of the Saint ; which it is not.

Jocelin was the first, so far as I know, to commit to writing a detailed account of the expulsion of the reptiles and demons by Saint Patrick. It is highly probable that he combined, in the account he has left us, the written tradition and the popular legends prevalent in his day, throwing the whole into such shape as befitted a literary composition.

It is quite certain that this story, with all its varying versions, from Jocelin's Latin narrative to the popular traditions of the present day, took its rise from the following beautiful and tender and very ancient legend of Patrick's contest with demons on Crochan Acla, which we find in the *Tripartite Life* of the Saint, written in the Irish language in the tenth century or earlier.

The Saint, after having visited Ulster, Leinster, and Munster, was now journeying through Connaught, preaching and baptising multitudes; and on the approach of Lent he retired to the wilderness of Crochan Acla. On this mountain he spent the whole forty days of Lent, after the manner of Moses on Mount Sinai; and his bed was a flat stone with four flags placed round him for shelter.

When now it was coming nigh to Easter Sunday, vast numbers of demons in the shape of great black birds, loathsome and fierce-looking, came to the mountain from the four quarters of the sky to assail him; and they flew round him in clouds so as to hide both the heavens and the earth from his view. He prayed fervently and sang hymns to curse and banish them; but they heeded neither prayer nor curse, and for many days and nights they kept flapping their hateful sooty wings around him nearer and nearer, giving him no rest. Then at last becoming alarmed and exasperated, he rang his bell so that it was heard throughout all Erin; and in the end flung it among them with such violence that he broke a gap in its side, on which the whole hellish brood flew away and left the mountain clear. And now that he was freed from their attacks the Saint sank down, overcome in mind and body after his long and fearful struggle; and he wept, wept so much that his outer vestment* was wet with his tears. But presently an angel came to comfort him, bringing a number of beautiful white birds. And when he had spoken words of consolation and dried

* Irish *cassula*, i.e., the chasuble.

the vestment, the birds sang music so sweet and joyous that Patrick quite forgot all the agony he had suffered from the demons, and became again cheerful and happy. And after that day no demon came into Erin for seven years, seven months, seven days, and seven nights. (See below, Memoir of St. Patrick.)

On this simple and ancient legend, as I have said, the tradition recorded by Jocelin is evidently founded; and on it too the people have built up in the course of ages a version of their own, very vivid and very circumstantial, which you may hear even at the present day among the peasantry of Connaught.

Now for this popular version:—It appears that St. Patrick first collected all the snakes and other reptiles of Ireland into one place in the west of Connaught. And here it must be remarked that the mere natural reptiles were in very bad company indeed; for we can gather that among them were many real demons who had taken on themselves the shapes of serpents. Indeed according to some versions of the popular legend they were all more or less demoniacal.

The Saint having brought them together, drove them before him towards Crochan Acla, and commanded them to go forward to the summit. Now the reptiles did not at all relish this. They knew very well that at the other side the mountain hangs right over the sea; and they naturally enough suspected that the next move would be into the Atlantic Ocean. So they went forward very unwillingly. Sometimes they got tired and had to rest; sometimes they turned and twisted and pretended to lose their way. They made a hundred excuses for delay; and

altogether they looked as if they were about to rise in open mutiny against the Saint.

But Patrick was armed with something far more powerful against evil spirits than mere commands. He had his melodious sounding bell, which had been given him by angels, and which since his time has been known by the name of *Finn-Foya*, "Sweet-voice." Now of all sounds in the world, it seems the tinkling of a consecrated bell is the most intolerable to a demon; and the silvery tones of this particular bell—the *Finn-Foya*—had more terror for our Irish reptiles than all the other bells of the country set ringing together. So when the Saint saw that the reptile brood were plainly disregarding all his commands and threats, he uncovered the bell, which brought them at once to their senses; and at the first tinkle they rushed forward in a body up the side of the hill, merely to get beyond range of the hated sound.

They soon reached the summit, and had not long to wait before the Saint came up. He made a sign that they should come close to him; and the bewildered reptiles crowded round him to hear their doom. No escape. Pointing to the sea far beneath the brow where they stood, he ordered them forward; and to prevent any further dallying he began to uncover the *Finn-Foya*. This was enough: down the steep incline they rushed and tumbled helter-skelter; and before the bell was freed from its case, they had got half way to the waves.

About midway down this face of the mountain there is a deep hollow opening out towards the sea but walled in on the mountain side by tremendous

precipices. Here they made their last stand: they hid themselves in the innermost recesses of the chasm, and thought they were quite safe under the shadow of the fearful cliff overhead. The Saint followed as far as he dared advance, and looking down over the brow of the rocky wall, commanded them to go forward, and rang his bell as loudly as he was able. But whether it was that the sounds were softened and lost by floating down the immense descent, or that the roaring surf beneath frightened the unfortunate reptiles more than the denunciations from above—at any rate neither voice nor bell could dislodge them; and they obstinately refused to move an inch from their shelter.

Seeing that things had come to a serious pass, the Saint at last took a decided step: he swung the bell round his head and flung it forward with all his might over the brow of the cliff. Down it came, clinking clattering and ringing, bound after bound, down it came on their very backs. This was more than the most hardened and desperate demon could stand; there was an instant rush towards the sea, and in a few moments the whole crew disappeared among the waves. From this event the chasm has ever since borne the name of Lugnademon,* or the Demons' Hollow; and the peasantry say that the bell still remains hidden under the earth where it fell.†

The Saint was in great joy, having as he thought

* This is the form of the name given on the Ordnance Maps, but the people call it Lughnanoun, as nearly as their pronunciation can be given in English letters, which represents the correct Gaelic name *Lug-na-ndeamhan*, the chasm of the demons.

† Here however the peasantry are mistaken. The very bell

rid the country of the demons, seed breed and generation; but some of them were too cute for him. The great body to be sure were never heard of more, unless indeed some of them be the sea-serpents that are now often seen by American mariners; but a few of the biggest and most knowing made their way across the bay and took up their abode in the remote wilds of Glencolumkille in Donegal, where two hundred years afterwards, they gave much trouble to St. Columkille before he was able to dislodge them.

Thus far as regards Ireland's freedom from venomous reptiles. But the marvel did not end here. If it did indeed there would not be much to wonder at—according to Giraldus; for as he remarks, it is only natural to expect some countries to be free from certain sorts of animals that are produced abundantly in others. Moreover Giraldus does not believe the story told of St. Patrick, and accounts for the absence of reptiles by the nature of the soil.

But another thing there was which, as he remarks, was really wonderful—namely, that no venomous creature could live in Ireland; and those that were brought from other countries died as soon as they touched the Irish shores. He relates that serpents which certain merchants brought over with them from England in their ships, for the sake of trial,

that St. Patrick used in his ministrations—the sweet-toned *Finn-Foya*—is now preserved in the Science and Art Museum, Kildare Street, Dublin, where it may be seen by any visitor, with the beautiful shrine or case made for it long after St. Patrick's time. See my "Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland," pp. 165-6-7, for an account of this bell and its shrine, with drawings of both.

did not wait for their arrival on our coast, but died off as soon as they had got the first sniff of the breeze from the Fair Hills of Holy Ireland, half way across the Irish Sea. Even poison, which was deadly enough so long as it was kept abroad, quite lost its venom as soon as it had got into the pure air of Ireland. And if any one in a foreign country had a garden infested with noxious creatures, he had only to send over for a few handfuls of Irish earth and sprinkle it thinly over the surface, when the reptiles at once retreated with speed and left his garden free for ever after—betaking themselves of course to his neighbour's premises.

Giraldus quotes the Venerable Bede on the same subject; and when we turn to Bede, there sure enough we find very decided testimony to the same effect, with additional circumstances of a still more marvellous kind—showing how widely, even among wise and learned men, the belief prevailed at that early age, and how firmly it had taken hold of people's minds. The following are Bede's words :—" No reptiles are found there [in Ireland] and no snake can live there; for though often carried thither out of Britain, as soon as the ship comes near the shore and the scent of the air reaches them they die. On the other hand almost all things in the island are good against poison. Indeed it has come to our knowledge that when certain persons had been bitten by serpents, the scrapings of the leaves of books brought out of Ireland were put into water and given them to drink, which immediately expelled the spreading poison and cured the swelling."*

* Eccl. Hist., Book i., chap. i. (Bohn).

Several other instances are given by Giraldus, some of which are so amusing that I will quote them:—A thong of leather made from the hide of an Irish animal was on one occasion placed on soft ground in the form of a complete circle, and a toad was put in the middle. “I and several other persons (says Giraldus) saw with our eyes that when he touched the thong trying to get out he fell back as if he were stunned. Next he tried the other side, but did not so much as touch it this time, but drew back his nose when he came near the thong as if it were poison. At last he dug a hole in the mud with his feet in the centre of the circle, and buried himself safely in it.”

“Certain merchants* affirm that when they had unladen their ships in Ireland they found by hap some toads under their balast; and they had no sooner cast them on the shore than they (the toads) would puff and swell immeasurably, and shortly after, turning up their bellies, they would burst in sunder.”

Giraldus tells us that there was at one time a dispute whether the Isle of Man belonged to Great Britain or to Ireland. But the matter was settled by the fact that reptiles brought from Great Britain to the Isle of Man did not die but lived on in good health and spirits, which showed beyond doubt that this island belonged to Great Britain, not to Ireland.

“It happened in my time,” saith Giraldus Cambrensis (following up his account of Ireland’s

* In this and the next story I use Richard Stanyhurst’s rich and racy translation of Giraldus’s words in preference to any other.

fatal influence on reptiles—still in Stanyhurst's translation), "that in the north of England a knot of youngkers toke a nap in the fields. As one of them laie snoring, with his mouth gaping as though he would have caught flies, it happened that a snake or adder slipt into his mouth, and glided down into his bellie, where harboring it selfe it began to roame up and downe and to feede on the young man his entrals. The patient being sore distracted and above measure tormented with the biting pangs of this greedy ghest, incessantlie praied to God that if it stood with His gracious will, either wholie to bereave him of his life or else of His unspeakable mercie to ease him of his paine. The worme would never cease from gnawing the patient his carcassee; but when he had taken his repast and his meat was no sooner digested then it would give a fresh onset in boring his guts.

"Diverse remedies were sought, and medicins and pilgrimages to saints, but all would not prevaile. Being at length schooled by the grave advice of some sage and expert father, that willed him to make his speedie repaire to Ireland, would tract no time, but busked himselfe over sea and arrived in Ireland. He did no sooner drinke of the water of that island and take of the vittels of Ireland, but forthwith he kild the snake, and so being lustie and livelie he returned into England."

This legend of the reptiles with its main features is given in the Norse "Kongs Skuggio."

In conjunction with this wonder of exemption from reptiles, some of the old books add that St. Patrick obtained for Ireland this blessing: namely, seven years before the Day of Judgment the sea shall flow

over the whole island. By this means the Irish people who are then alive will be saved from the persecutions and traps and perils of Antichrist. See the Most Rev. Dr. Healy's *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 232.

2. THE VOICES FROM THE FOREST OF FOCHLUTH.

Those who have read the *Life of St. Patrick* will remember that he spent about six years of his youth in slavery, herding sheep and swine on the slopes of Slemish mountain in Antrim, under a hard master. After he had escaped and returned to his own country, he was ceaselessly haunted with the remembrance of the land of his captivity, and his mind brooded on the dark cloud of paganism and superstition that overshadowed the people; so that their conversion became the absorbing desire of his life.

It was during this time that a circumstance occurred which is related in the ancient *Lives of the Saint*, as well as in his own "Confession," and which is numbered among the Wonders of Ireland in the *Book of Ballymote*.

On a certain night when he was about thirty years of age—living then in the islands of the Tyrrhene Sea off Italy on the west side—he had a vision; and he saw a man from Ireland named Victor coming up to him, having in his hand a great number of letters, one of which he gave to him. Patrick took it and began to read; and the first words were "The voice of the Irish people." Before he had time to read farther, he heard voices crying to him from the forest of Fochluth or Fochloth or Fochlath in Ireland near

the western sea. They spoke on behalf of the children of Ireland ; and their words were “ Come, O holy youth, and walk among us ! ” And hearing this, he was greatly afflicted insomuch that he was not able to read any more ; and immediately he awoke.

These were the voices of two unborn babes, who spoke from their mother's womb ; and some of the old narratives say that the words were heard all over Ireland, and even by Pope Celestine in Rome. The children were the twin daughters of a chief named Glerain, who lived at Fochluth, a woody district in the present county Mayo.

Long years afterwards, when Patrick had returned to Ireland and was in Connaught preaching and converting the people in thousands, he remembered his vision, and turned his steps towards the wood from which he had heard the infant voices in days gone by. Among other most interesting incidents of this journey, we are told that he met the two children, now young women, who were named Crebrea and Lasserá, in their father's house, baptised them, and consecrated them to a religious life. They subsequently became saints and were greatly venerated for the holiness of their lives ; and after their death their remains were interred in the churchyard of Kill-Forclan, in their native place at the wood of Fochlut.

Dr. John O'Donovan was the first to locate Fochluth (‘*Tribes and Customs of “ Hy Fiachrach ”*’ : p. 463). It extended along the western bank of the river Moy in the County Mayo, from Ballina to Killala and on north to the seashore at Kilcummin. It is deeply interesting to find that the very name Fochluth is still extant, as the Most Rev. Dr. Healy,

archbishop of Tuam, has pointed out—and pointed out for the first time—in his *Life of St. Patrick* (p. 258). He traversed the whole district, and in the course of his reverential and successful search came upon the name “Foghill,” now that of a townland and little hamlet near the seashore—“near the western sea” just as the “Confession” gives it—in the parish of Kilcummin, four miles almost directly north from Killala. Foghill is a correct anglicised form of Fochluth or Fochlath. For in the first place Fochlath would be sounded in three syllables, by the insertion of a short vowel between *ch* and *l*, according to a well known grammatical law (see my “English as we speak it in Ireland,” p. 96 : and *Irish Grammar*, p. 7, par. 8) ; and in the second place the final *th* is aspirated and drops out altogether in pronunciation. This reduces the old name to “Foghilla” (where *gh* represents the original *ch*, both having the same guttural sound) : and during lapse of time the final short vowel sound got omitted, as we see in many other names—“Columkill” for *Columkilla*, “Lough Gill” for *Lough Gilla*, “Ballinakill” for *Ballinakilla*, &c., &c. So at last we arrive at *Foghill*, as the name stands at the present day, a venerable name, bringing a faint echo of St. Patrick’s preaching, and with an antiquity of fifteen centuries.

3. THE ISLAND OF LOUGH CRE OR INISHNAMEO.

About two miles from Roscrea in Tipperary stands the beautiful little church ruin of Inishnameo, or as it is now generally called, Monahinsha (the “Bog of

the island," properly the name of the bog surrounding the island and church) which appears from the style of its architecture to have been built in the eleventh century. This church is the only remnant of a great and well known monastery founded in the eighth century by St. Hilary the "Scribe and Anchorite." After Hilary's death the establishment continued to flourish for eight hundred years, till it was suppressed in the reign of Elizabeth; and for a portion of this long lapse of time, it was governed by Culdees.*

The spot on which the church stands was formerly an island two acres in extent in a lake; and it was chosen by the founder, in accordance with that very general desire of solitude among the early hermit monks of Ireland, which led them to fix their dwellings and build their little churches in remote and lonely situations (Joyce's *Smaller Social Hist. of Anc. Ireland*, pp. 152, 153). The spot fixed on by Hilary, surrounded as it was by water and morass, proved too unhealthful for his successors; and after a time they removed to Corbally, half way towards Roscrea, where they built themselves a new church and a dwelling.

But the removal of the monks did not at all lessen the people's veneration for the island, which continued for generations to be a great resort for pilgrims; and though this has long ceased, several of the prayer-stations are still pointed out. About two centuries ago, the owner drained the lake, forbade all pil-

* Culdees, the term applied to a class of ancient Irish monks. The original Gaelic form of the word is *Céle-Dé* [pron. Caila-Day] that is to say "Servant of God."

grimaces and burials, destroyed the tombs, and had a circular fence built round the church.

According to the tradition preserved in our old manuscript records, no woman, and no female of any animal, could enter on this island. Moreover, no one who was guilty of any great sin could die in it: howsoever long he was kept there in his mortal illness he still lived on: but as soon as he was removed he died off at once. And lastly, if by chance an unrepentant sinner who had died elsewhere was brought there to be buried, it always turned out a failure; for owing to one difficulty or another the people were never able to bury him in any part of the sacred island, and had at last to bring the body to be buried elsewhere.

Giraldus Cambrensis notices this Wonder, but his account is somewhat different: for he records two islands, and has a Wonder for each. Wherever he may have got his information—and it was very likely from the oral traditions of his time—his description is much more circumstantial than the native written record. The following are his words:—"In the north of Munster there are two islands, one larger than the other. On the larger one is a church which has been held in great veneration from very remote times; and on the smaller stands a chapel which is devoutly served by a few unmarried men called Culdees. As to the larger island, no woman can land on it without dropping down dead as soon as she touches the shore; and the same thing happens to the female of any of the lower animals. This has often been proved: for the females of dogs, cats, and other animals have been brought over to make trial:

and they have always died the moment they reached the island.

“It is very extraordinary”—continues Giraldus—“to see male birds of every kind in great numbers on the bushes all over the island, and not a female among them. For the instinct of the females teaches them to avoid it; and when they come near the shore with their mates they fly suddenly back, as if the place were infested with a plague.

“In the smaller island, no one dies, or can die, a natural death; wherefore it is called ‘*Insula Viventium*,’ the ‘Island of the living.’ Its inhabitants are not indeed more free from sickness than other people; they are often afflicted with deadly diseases like the rest of the world; and the sick linger on in misery till their life is nearly worn out: but they will not die. So when all hope of recovery is gone, and when their sickness and suffering have come to such a pass that they would rather die than live, their friends ferry them over to the larger island, where, as soon as they are placed on the shore, they quietly give up the ghost.” So far Cambrensis.

Lynch in his “Cambrensis Eversus,” Lanigan in his Ecclesiastical History, and other native Irish writers are very wicked on Cambrensis for recording this “nonsensical story,” as Lanigan calls it; and indeed some go so far as to hint that he invented it himself. But here they are wronging Cambrensis. There is no doubt that he found the tradition current among the Irish people. For the Gaelic name of the island, as we find it in native writings, and as it exists among the people even at the present day, is *Inis-nam-beo* [pron. Inish-nam-yo], meaning “the island

of the living people," of which the "*Insula Viventium*" of *Cambrensis* is an exact translation. It may be added that the people of the neighbourhood have at the present day a distinct tradition that before the lake was drained there were *two* islands with a church on each : one called Monks' Island to which women were not admitted, and the other called the Women's Island where women were allowed to visit and pray : which confirms Giraldus's account.

It seems obvious that the legend about the larger island took its rise from the strict rules of the monks ; for as they never employed women in their establishment or allowed them to come near the place at all (like St. Senan of Scattery Island) the story grew up in course of time that no female could live on the island. This wonder is noticed in the *Kongs Skuggio*, which however places the island in Lough Ree : but this is a mistake.

4. ST. COLMAN'S DUCKS.

The old church of Templeshanbo in Wexford, from which the surrounding parish has its name, lies about three miles from the eastern base of Mount Leinster. It was anciently called Shanbo-Colman (Colman's old tent or booth) from St. Colman O'Ficra, the founder and patron, who lived in the seventh century, and who was held in great veneration there during the long lapse of years that the monastery continued to flourish after his death.

There is now a large graveyard attached to St. Colman's old church, and another about two hundred yards off. Between the two is St. Colman's holy

well which was formerly much frequented by pilgrims in honour of the patron on his festival day, the 27th of October. But no pilgrim ever makes his "rounds" or prays there now : the well has lost its reputation : even St. Colman's festival day is quite forgotten.

At this spot there was in former days a large pond supplied from the well, where for ages after St. Colman's death a number of ducks were kept, which were believed to be under the saint's special protection, and on this account were regarded with affection and treated with great tenderness. They were quite tame and took food from the hand, never flying away at the approach of pilgrims, and never avoiding the gentle familiarities of the people.

Nothing could harm them : and the legend tells us in particular that it was impossible to cook them. Not that any of the good people of Templeshanbo would dare to molest or even frighten them ; and the insane thought never entered into any one's head to kill and cook them for food. But as they were so tame, persons fetching water from the pond on a dark night—so the legend goes on to say—sometimes by an unlucky chance brought one of them away in the vessel without knowing it, and threw the contents, bird and all, into a pot over a fire to be boiled. Whenever this happened no matter how the people heaped on wood, or how long the fire was kept up, the water still remained as cold as when it was taken from the pond ; and in the end the little duck was found not in the least harmed, swimming about unconcernedly on the top. It was of course brought back to the pond : and after this the water in the pot got heated and boiled without further trouble.

This is indeed a marvellous relation : but the version given by Giraldus is more marvellous still : and the birds, as he states, were not the common domestic ducks but the small species of wild duck commonly called teal. He tells us that if any one offered injury or disrespect to the Church, to the clergy, or to the ducks themselves, the whole flock flew away and betook themselves to some other lake at a distance. Soon after their flight the clear water of the pond grew muddy and putrid, emitted a foul smell, and altogether became quite unfit for either man or beast to use. They never returned till the offender was punished according to his deserts ; and the moment they alighted on their old place, the water became clear and wholesome as before.

A kite once carried off one of these ducks and perched with it on a neighbouring tree. But the moment he set about killing his prey, his limbs grew stiff, and he fell to the ground dead before the eyes of several persons who happened to be looking on ; while the duck flew back unharmed to its companions.

On another occasion a hungry fox seized one of them on a cold frosty evening, near a little cell dedicated to the saint that stood on the shore of the pond ; and he ran into the cell with it to have a comfortable warm meal. But in the morning the brute was found lying on the floor choked, while the little duck was alive and well, with its head out of the fox's mouth and its body in his throat.

We find according to certain old authorities, that in the remote little island of Inishmurray in Sligo Bay, where this same Colman was also venerated,

there were tame ducks under his protection as in Templeshanbo, about which the very same story was told—that it was impossible to cook or harm them. From these facts and legends we may gather that St. Colman O'Ficra had an amiable love for birds, and that he kept a number of them as pets, ducks being his special favourites. And in memory of the good old man, the custom was affectionately kept up in both places by his successors. If we are allowed so much of a foundation to rest on, it is not hard to account for the growth of the marvellous part of the legend. The legend of St. Colman's ducks is now altogether forgotten in the neighbourhood; which is to be regretted; for the people would be all the better for a memory of it.

Many of the Irish saints were fond of animal pets; and this amiable trait has supplied numerous legends to our literature. St. Patrick himself, according to Muirchu's seventh-century narrative, showed them a good example of tenderness for animals. When the chief Daré gave the saint a piece of ground at Armagh, they both went to look at it: and on their arrival they found there a doe with its little fawn. Some of St. Patrick's people made towards it to kill it: but he prevented them; and taking up the little animal gently on his shoulder, he brought it and laid it down in another field some distance to the north of Armagh, the mother following him the whole way like a pet sheep.

Giraldus records that when on one occasion St. Kevin of Glendalough had his hands stretched out in prayer, palms up, through the little window of his cell, a blackbird laid her eggs in one palm and sat on

them ; and when the saint at last observed the bird, after his prayer, he remained motionless in pity ; and in gentleness and patience he held on till the young ones were hatched and flew away. St. Columkille had a pet crane which followed him about like a dog while he was in Iona ; and St. Brendan of Clonfert had a pet *prechaun* or crow. But I suppose the oddest pet of all was the one kept by Marvan, a holy hermit, the brother of Guary the Hospitable, king of Connaught in the seventh century—namely a white boar. Of this Marvan and his white boar many strange stories are told.

5. O'DANGAL'S VISION.

The great St. Martin of Tours (in France) was much venerated in Ireland, mainly on account of his connection with St. Patrick : for he was Patrick's tutor for four years, and according to some authorities he was his uncle and had a good hand in sending him to Ireland. Among other marks of reverence, churches and crosses were dedicated to him in various parts of this country, his principal church being at Desertmartin in Derry : special devotions were instituted in honour of him : and it was quite usual for Irish pilgrims to visit his tomb at Tours, or as it was called by the old Irish writers “ Torinis of Martin.”

On a certain occasion a pilgrim from Ireland named O'Dangal, returning from Rome, stopped at Tours on his way to make his devotions at the tomb of the saint. One morning as he was walking through the town he observed a little crowd of people a short way

off busying themselves about something. Stepping up to know what was the matter, he there saw quite plainly, in the open day, his own mother Kentigern standing in the midst of the crowd distributing flesh-meat and new milk among the poor people. All were busy—very busy—and were talking at a great rate ; but yet there was dead silence—not a word or sound did he hear, though he was beside them. He looked on for a while, amazed ; for he was quite well aware that at that very time his mother was at home in Ireland.

He suspected that it was some baseless self-illusion, and in order to put the matter to the test—to find out for a certainty whether he saw a real vision, or if his eyes might not be playing false with him, he watched his opportunity and secretly snatched the cover of the milk vessel. He now watched his mother very attentively while he stood back among the crowd that she might not catch sight of him ; and he saw that when she missed the cover she searched about for it, looking perplexed. But he retained it ; and after some time the whole vision vanished from his view.

When he had performed his devotions at the tomb of the saint he resumed his journey homeward, bringing the cover with him ; and after a year's absence he reached his mother's house at Ross-Allither.* He soon made inquiry about his vision, and found, what indeed he expected, that his mother

* Ross-Allither [pron. Ross-Alliher] or the “ wood of the pilgrims,” now Ross Carbery in Cork, where there was formerly a great religious establishment. It appears from the context that there was a cell there dedicated to St. Martin.

had never been at Tours, or out of Ireland at all. But one thing she remembered quite well, that on the very morning in question she had sent for her poor neighbours and distributed meat and drink to them at her own house, in honour of St. Martin; and that while doing so she had lost in some way—she could never tell how—the cover of her milk vessel. He then showed her the cover, which she at once recognised as her own, and bringing it to the vessel, it appeared quite plain, even to O'Dangal himself—as his mother had already testified—that it was the proper cover, for it fitted exactly.

The old chronicler who relates the story concludes from this that a person who wished to pay honour to St. Martin need not put himself to the trouble and danger of a long pilgrimage; for the vision of O'Dangal clearly showed that alms-giving or any other charitable work performed in the saint's honour at his cell in Ross-Allither was as meritorious and acceptable as if it were done at "Torinis of Martin." As to this last belief, we find a statement of much the same kind in an old Irish religious piece edited in "*Ériu*" (vol. v., p. 25) from the Yellow Book of Lecan, by Mr. J. G. O'Keeffe:—That to be hospitable to the houseless stranger—to give him fire, bed [and food]—is as meritorious as to go all the way to Rome on a pilgrimage—which was at that remote time a long and dangerous and very expensive journey—to the tombs of the apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul.

6. A SHIP AND CREW IN THE AIR.

On a certain day when Congalach, king of Ireland,* was at the fair at Tailltenn† with a great assembly of the men of Erin around him, he looked upwards and saw a ship floating about in the air high over his head. While the king and his people were gazing at this strange sight and following it with their eyes in silent wonder, they saw one of the crew come forth and cast a dart at a salmon, which appeared also suspended in the air near the ship. He missed his mark, and the dart fell to the ground in the presence of all : so the man walked out over the side of the ship, and floating gently down towards the spot where his spear was lying, he stretched forth his hand to pick it up.

The people were so bent on watching the ship and the man that they neither spoke nor stirred till the stranger was near the ground ; when one of the king's attendants, bolder than the rest, ran forward as the man was about to ascend with the spear, and catching him by the head, held him down. The voyager struggled to get free, shouting out at the same time in the hearing of all "I am drowning ! I am drowning !"

* Congalach reigned A.D. 944 to 956—when he was slain in battle by the Danes. This is the same king who figures in the Wonder of the Buried Giant farther on.

† Tailltenn, now Teltown on the Blackwater, about midway between Navan and Kells in Meath ; where in old times great fairs were held yearly, and games celebrated like the Olympic Games of Greece. (For this fair and others like it, see my "Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland," chap. xxv.)

The king on hearing this, came forward and commanded the man to let the stranger go. As soon as he was set free he floated upwards, much in the same way as he had come down, moving his hands and feet gently all the time, like a person swimming, and when he had got to the ship he went in over the side and the people saw no more of him. The ship itself then moved slowly away, and they soon lost sight of it among the clouds.

The Norse Kongs Skuggio's account differs somewhat. Here it is related that on a Sunday, while the people were at Mass in Clonmacnoise, there dropped from the air, hanging from a rope, an anchor, the fluke of which caught in an arch at the church door. The astonished people looked upwards along the rope and saw a ship floating on top. One of the crew leaped overboard and dived and swam down to loosen the anchor, when some of the congregation seized and held him while he struggled to free himself; till the bishop, who happened to be just then present, directed them to let him go; for, as he said, if held down he would die as if held under water. They let him go and up he floated, when the crew cut the rope at top and the ship sailed away out of sight. The old Norseman gravely adds, of course as he heard the story:—"And the anchor has since lain in Clonmacnoise church as a witness that the event really occurred."

One can hardly help thinking that the original narrator of this extraordinary occurrence had in his mind an idea something like this:—that the crew of the ship were the inhabitants of the upper air, the region beyond the clouds, who had ventured for once

on an unusual voyage of discovery down towards the earth. The air of these elevated regions is extremely thin and ethereal, and the bodies of the people must be correspondingly pure and light; so that the air at the surface of the earth appeared to them as gross and liquid and as unfit to live in as water does to us.

7. A STEEPLE OF FIRE IN THE AIR.

In the year of our Lord 1055, on Sunday the feast day of St. George, the people of Rosdalla, near Kilbeggan in the present county of Westmeath, saw standing high up in the air, a great steeple of fire, in the exact shape of a circular belfry, or what we now call a round tower. For nine hours it remained there in sight of all: and during the whole time, flocks of large dark-coloured birds without number kept flying in and out through the door and windows. There was among them one great jet-black bird of vast size; and while he remained outside the others flew round him in flocks; but whenever he entered the tower they nestled in thousands under his wings, remaining there till he returned to the open air, when they again came forth and flew round him as before.

Sometimes a number of them would swoop suddenly down, and snatch up in their talons dogs, cats, or any other small animals that happened to lie in their way; and when they had risen again to a great height they would drop them dead to the ground.

At last they flew away towards a neighbouring wood; and the moment they left the tower it faded gradually from the people's view. The birds perched

on the trees, the great bird choosing a large oak for himself; and so great were their numbers that the branches bent to the ground under their weight. There they remained for some time as if to rest; when suddenly they all rose into the air; and when the great bird was rising he tore the oak tree by the roots from the earth, and carried it off in his talons. The birds then all flew away, no one could tell whither, for they were never seen or heard of afterwards.

8. A CROSS RAISED UP IN THE AIR.

A very strange circumstance happened one time at Slane, a village in Meath near the north shore of the Boyne, where there was formerly a very celebrated religious establishment. A large heavy stone cross that stood on the green of the village was all on a sudden lifted up bodily into the air, and when it had risen to a great height, it was shattered into fragments with such violence that some of the pieces fell at Fennor on the other side of the river, some flew westwards as far as Teltown, ten or twelve miles off, while others fell at Tara lying as far towards the south.

It is a bit provoking that the old chronicler gives no further particulars. He does not tell the date, or whether the thing happened during a storm, or in a whirlwind: he has left nothing that would warrant us in hazarding a conjecture as to what gave rise to this strange story.

9. AN ISLAND SPLIT IN THREE BY A STORM.

On the 16th of March, the eve of the festival of St. Patrick, in the year 804, there happened a great storm of thunder, lightning, and wind, which exceeded so much in violence all the storms ever before witnessed, and so terrified the people, that it was recorded among Ireland's Wonders. It raged chiefly in the county Clare; one thousand and ten persons perished in the old territory of Corcobaskin alone, in the west of the county; and when the people of the coast looked out on the morning of St. Patrick's Day, they found, as part of the fearful work of the night, the island of *Inis-fithi* divided into three parts.

Inis-fithi is the well-known island now called Inish-Keeragh (" Sheep Island") or Mutton Island, near Miltown-Malbay; and the portions severed from the main body are the two masses of rock which rise out of the waves immediately north of the island.

It will be observed that this wonder is a natural occurrence. Moreover it is historical, as it is recorded in all the principal annals, such as those of Ulster, of Clonmacnoise, and the Four Masters; and although it is eleven centuries since it happened, a vivid tradition of the catastrophe is current to this day among the people of the west of Clare.

10 AND 11. SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE OF TWO LAKES.

Among the wonders of this country, the old writers include the sudden disappearance of two lakes. One

of these, called Lough Lee (the lake of the calf), was situated in Burrishoole near the shore of Clew Bay in Mayo. The following are the words in which the event is recorded in the Book of Ballymote:—
“Lough Lee in the territory of Umallia (i.e. Burrishoole) ran off into the sea, so that nothing remained of it but its place.” According to the Four Masters, who notice the same event, it occurred in the year of our Lord 848.

Another lake, called the lake of Seeoran, in the mountains of Slieve Gorey in the County Cavan, flowed away suddenly, its water running into a river called Favall. This event happened, according to the Four Masters, towards the end of the night of the festival of St. Michael, A.D. 1054. The next morning when the people looked out the lake was gone, and the Four Masters add, what we may well believe, that the occurrence caused great amazement throughout the whole neighbourhood.

Seeoran is the name of a townland about four miles north-west from Bailieboro' in Cavan, but there is now no lake, and the people have quite lost the tradition of its former existence and disappearance. The little river that flows southward through Virginia into Lough Ramor is probably the stream anciently known by the name of Favall; but this name is also forgotten.*

* Occurrences like those recorded here, though very rare and very extraordinary, are not wonders as we commonly understand the word; for they are due to natural causes. We know that lakes sometimes disappear very suddenly, especially after earthquakes, owing to the formation of underground clefts or passages which carry off the water.

12. LOUGH LEANE TURNED INTO BLOOD.

In the year of our Lord 864 a fearful thing happened to Lough Leane, a small lake near the village of Fore in the County Westmeath. Without any known cause it was turned into blood for the space of nine days ; and the astonished people, when they came to examine it, saw all round the edge great masses of clotted gore floating about on the surface.

13. A SHOWER OF BLOOD.

Eleven years after the occurrence last recorded viz., in the year 875, there was a great storm of wind and thunder all over Ireland, which ended in a shower of blood. After the shower had ceased, splashes and clots of blood were seen on the ground in various districts, especially at a place called Duma Dessá near Duleek in the County Meath, where all the houses and fields were thickly covered over.*

* These two last wonders (12 and 13) were merely natural occurrences, like the ninth, tenth, and eleventh, magnified by the excited imagination of the people. Showers quite as wonderful as those recorded above have fallen in recent times. Some years ago a shower of little fishes fell near Merthyr Tydvil in Wales, and sprinkled the ground with sticklebacks for several square miles all round ; and in India there have been showers of fishes as large as herrings which have generally reached the ground dead, but occasionally alive. These fishes must have been raised from the surface of the neighbouring seas or lakes by violent whirlwinds or waterspouts, carried to considerable distances through the air, and deposited on the ground when the force of the wind was spent. After the great storm of

14. THE VIRTUES OF LOUGH NEAGH.

The great Lough Neagh in Ulster had a property as curious as any to be found in the records of natural history. If a stake of holly were driven down into the bottom and left standing there, at the end of seven years the part that was sunk in the ground was found to be iron, the part that was in the water was turned to stone, while the part that was over water was still nothing but holly. The Kongs Skuggio notices this wonder, and adds that no other wood but holly will suffer change.

This wonder is mentioned without the least question as to its truth, by several foreign writers; as by Nennius, and by Boethius in his "History of Stones and Gems"; and at the present day, in every part of

6th Jan. 1839—the "Big Wind," as it was—and is still—called, herrings were found six miles inland on the western coast of Ireland.

Red coloured snow is quite common in the Arctic regions; and it falls annually in parts of the Alps. Showers of "blood" have also fallen in recent times; but what appears to be blood to the simple people, is really nothing but water coloured deep red with millions of little scarlet fungi, which, like the water containing fishes, is raised by whirlwinds and deposited in distant places. And snow becomes coloured from the same cause.

It is very well known that fungi of various kinds grow and disappear under favourable circumstances with extraordinary rapidity; and it sometimes happens that a green field, which in the evening has nothing remarkable in its appearance, is white all over with mushrooms in the morning. It needed only a sudden growth of minute scarlet fungi in Lough Leane to make the people believe that the lake was turned into blood, and that it remained so, till the fungi disappeared as suddenly as they came and left the water clear.

Ireland, the people believe that the water of Lough Neagh will turn holly into stone. A very intelligent Limerick man once told me that the best razor hones in the world are procured in the following way :—cut a piece of holly into the shape of a hone and secure it at the bottom of the lake : at the end of seven years you will have, not a piece of holly, but a real hone, so excellent that it will make a razor sharp enough, as he expressed it, to shave a mouse asleep.

Geologists tell us, however, that the water of Lough Neagh has no petrifying quality. Yet the rise of this legend was natural enough, as we shall see when we know all the circumstances. Curious stones are found on the shore and in the neighbourhood of Lough Neagh, many of them retaining both the shape and the grain of pieces of wood. They are in fact petrified wood ; but the petrifications took place in old geological ages, millions of years ago, long before the lake was formed.

15. THE MAN-WOLVES OF OSSORY.

In the dim days of yore, the people of the kingdom of Ossory* had the power of changing themselves into wolves whenever they pleased. During the whole time that an Ossorian lived as a wolf, his own proper body remained at home as if he were dead : and when about to make a wolf of himself he gave strict orders to his friends not to disturb the body ; for if it were removed he was never able to regain his own shape,

* Ossory an ancient sub-kingdom comprising the present county Kilkenny and Queen's County.

but was doomed to remain a wolf for the rest of his natural life.

While he was in his wolf-shape he ravaged sheep-folds and devoured cattle, and was in every respect as fierce and bloodthirsty as any natural-born wolf. And if you came on him suddenly and attacked him in the act of eating a sheep, he commonly ran straight home and resumed his own shape. But although he was now, when you confronted him, a man, and looked as innocent as a lamb, yet if you insisted on examining him closely, you found on him all the marks and tokens of his savage feast :—splashes of blood here and there, and bits of raw flesh in his teeth ; and the wounds you inflicted on the wolf, you found them fresh and bleeding on the corresponding parts of the man's body.

This extraordinary superstition prevailed in Ireland from very remote times ; for we find it alluded to in the “ Book of the Dun Cow,” a volume *transcribed* about the year 1100, but whose contents belong to a much earlier age. In this old book there is a sermon on the Resurrection, in which the writer mentions several kinds of supernatural changes, for the purpose of pointing out that the Resurrection shall be different from them all ; and among them he mentions the transformation of a man into a wolf.

The superstition held its ground for many centuries ; and how very generally it was received as an undoubted fact is shown by its frequent mention in old writings, as well indeed as by the language of those who argue against it. Fynes Moryson, writing in or about the year 1600, speaks of it in these words :—“ It is ridiculous which some Irish (who

will be believed as men of credit) report of men in these parts [Upper Ossory and Ormond] turned into wolves, except the abundance of melancholy humour transports them to imagine that they are so transformed."

A circumstance so wonderful could not escape the notice of Giraldus Cambrensis ; and he firmly believed it, as he was ready to believe every other marvellous story. He devotes a whole chapter to it, which he heads " Of the prodigies of our times, and first of a wolf that conversed with a priest," at the end of which he has a learned argument to prove that it was not unusual for men to be transformed into other animals ; and to remove all doubt he gives examples of several supernatural transformations witnessed in his time.

He says that he himself saw persons who by magic arts could change, and often did change, an ordinary object, such as a stone or a clod of earth, into a fat pig. It was a common practice with these rogues to raise money by driving a pig extemporised in this way, to the nearest market ; and of course they generally disposed of them without delay, for they could well afford to undersell the owners of real honest pigs. These counterfeit pigs were always of a red colour ; if they crossed a stream of water they returned at once to their own shape—stick or stone as it might be—under the very eyes of the unfortunate purchaser ; and in any case they never retained their pig-shape longer than three days.

Giraldus also reminds us that in his own day there were many old women in Scotland and Wales, as well as in Ireland, who were in the habit of turning themselves into hares and running about the country at

night sucking the teats of cows. And here we are forced to acknowledge that he is corroborated by several Irish story-tellers of much later times, down even to the present day, who relate many curious stories of old women turning themselves into hares, and of some who were pursued by huntsmen and hounds and were caught almost in the very act of returning to their own shape. And after regaining the old-woman shape the wounds inflicted by the hounds were still on the corresponding parts of their bodies, raw and bleeding, as in the case of the man-wolves above mentioned.

The account given by Giraldus of the Ossorian wolf-transformation is somewhat different from that which we find in our own ancient writings. According to him there were always two of the Ossory people—a man and a woman—passing their lives in the shape of wolves: each couple remained so for seven years, at the end of which time, if they lived so long, they were permitted to return to their home and another pair took their place. It appears moreover—according to Giraldus—that it was a curse pronounced against the people of Ossory by St. Natalis* that brought this dreadful visitation on them; but Giraldus does not inform us what it was that moved the anger of the saint.

Giraldus is never wanting in a good story when it goes to confirm his statements; and he has here a

*Natalis, called in Irish *Nailè* [Nawly], is the patron saint of Kilmanagh, west of Kilkenny, and of Killenaule in Tipperary, which last took its name from him (Nawle's Church: Joyce's Irish Names of Places, i. 146). He was the son of Aengus mac Natfree king of Munster, and died A.D. 564.

very circumstantial one about a wolf who conversed with a priest three years before earl John's visit to Ireland. This priest, who was on his way southwards from Ulster, was benighted in a wood on the borders of Meath. He and a young lad who was his companion lighted a fire under a large tree where they intended to pass the night; and as they were sitting and watching by their fire, a wolf came up and spoke to them in very good Gaelic, telling them not to be in the least afraid, and that they need not run away, for there was no danger.

The travellers were of course astonished and frightened beyond measure; but after some further conversation, they became convinced that the visitor was really a man in the shape of a wolf. Giraldus then goes on to recount particulars of the interview, among them a relation about the administration of sacraments which is too revolting to be transferred to these pages. The wolf remained at the fire with them during the night, conducting himself with propriety and good sense, and in all respects—except shape—like a man. In the morning he led them to the verge of the wood and pointed out the straight road for a long distance.

Before resuming his journey the priest (who it must be remembered was an Irishman) inquired from the wolf whether the hostile people (the Anglo-Normans) who had lately landed in Ireland would hold the country for any length of time. To which the wolf (who was also of course an *Irishman*) replied, in a tone of great piety:—"The anger of the Lord has fallen on an evil generation; and on account of the sins of our (i.e. the Irish) nation and the monstrous

vices of the people, He has given them into the hands of their enemies. This foreign race shall be quite secure and invincible so long as they shall walk in the ways of the Lord and keep His commandments. But we know that the path leading to sinful pleasures is easy, and human nature is prone to follow evil example; so if this strange people shall hereafter learn our wicked habits from living amongst us, they will no doubt, like us, draw down upon themselves the vengeance of Divine Providence." So having finished his sanctimonious speech, he left them to pursue their journey.

It is much to be feared that this last part of the narrative, as well as other particulars which I have omitted, was invented by Giraldus himself for the double pious purpose of favouring his Anglo-Norman friends and having a good hearty slap at the Irish people.

The Kongs Skuggio has this man-wolf story also, not very different from what is related above; but the writer attributes the transformation to St. Patrick, who pronounced the curse against the Ossorians, because when he attempted to preach to them they howled at him like a pack of wolves by a preconcerted arrangement.*

* The Kongs Skuggio has among its wonders an account of the *Gelts* or Madmen who in lapse of time got covered with a growth of feathers and flitted about on the tops of the trees like so many squirrels. Our Irish writings have full records of these *Gelts* though they do not class them with the wonders. An account of them will be found in my "Smaller Soc. Hist. of Anc. Ireland" (pp. 96, 97), or in my Irish Names of Places under Glannagalt (i. 172).

The belief in the transformation of human beings into wolves prevailed very widely—almost all over the known world in fact—in ancient times; and it still holds its ground in some countries of northern Europe. Although however the superstition is now confined within comparatively narrow limits, it is still remembered in the popular legends of nearly every country of Europe; and here most readers will call to mind the horrible German legends of the “were-wolf.” The German were-wolf was a much more atrocious and fiendish animal than our Ossorian man-wolf; for his favourite repast was human flesh torn up from graveyards; whereas Giraldus Cambrensis, who would be only too glad to find a flaw in the behaviour of an Irish wolf, does not record that the Ossorian man-wolves ever did anything worse than devouring a cow or a sheep.

16. A PRECOCIOUS INFANT.

A wonderful male child was born in the year of our Lord 822, at a place called Creeve Lassera near Clonmacnoise, wonderful at least in one respect: for he spoke quite plainly when he was only two months old. This phenomenal infant is recorded by several of the native annalists, including the Four Masters. The Annals of Clonmacnoise state that the words he spoke were, “Good God!” (in Gaelic of course). But our Book of Ballymote, in noticing this infant among the Wonders of Ireland, goes much farther; for the writer asserts that it spoke like an adult, and revealed many strange things to the people.

17. THE SWAN-WOMAN.

On one occasion, as the poet Erard Mac Cossi* was standing on the shore of the river Boyne, he saw a flock of wild swans flying past very near him. Taking up a round stone, he flung it into the midst of them and struck one on the wing, so that it fell to the ground helpless and fluttering, while the others flew off. The poet ran immediately to catch it, but when he came up he found it was not a swan but a woman dressed in white. As soon as he had recovered from his astonishment he spoke to her and asked how it happened that she had been flying about in the shape of a swan. She replied that some short time before, she had a sudden heavy fit of illness, and that she grew rapidly worse, till one day, when she was lying at the point of death, a number of demons came into the house and carried her off silently, while it appeared to her friends that she had died. She and the demons took the shape of swans, and from that out she remained flying about with them from place to place, till the poet set her free by a lucky accident.

Mac Cossi then brought her to his house and treated her kindly, and after a little while restored her to her friends.

18. THE LONELY CRANE OF INISHKEA.

Near the coast of Erris in the county Mayo, out among the Atlantic billows, lies the little island of

* Erard Mac Cossi, a historical personage, well known in Irish literature, was chief poet to Fergal O'Ruarc, king of Connaught in the tenth century.

Inishkea, the name of which commemorates a virgin saint Kea or Gedia. Of this saint we know hardly anything, except that she founded a little nunnery on Inishkea in the early ages of the Irish Church, that she took her part in the work of Christianising and softening the rude natives of the west, and that the island perpetuates her name.

It is not however with the saint and her nuns that we are now concerned, but with an inhabitant of a totally different kind. On this island there lives a crane, one lonely bird and no more. From the beginning of the world he has been there, for ever looking down on the waves from his solitary perch, holding no communion with the sea birds around him, and never visited by one of his own kind. The virgin saint's humble little nunnery with its busy community rose and flourished and passed away before him like a shadow: and still he was ever the same. There he stands now; and there he will remain in the same unbroken solitude till the end of the world.

This striking legend is as prevalent to-day as it was hundreds of years ago. The people have no story to account for it; but all along that part of the western coast, they firmly believe that the lonely crane still lives and will live for ever on the island of Inishkea.

19. AN ISLAND THAT PRESERVED HUMAN BODIES.

There is a little island about half a mile in length called Inishglora,* lying one mile from the coast of

* Inishglora figures prominently in the story of "The Fate of the Children of Lir," for which see my "Old Celtic Romances."

Erris, and five miles west of Belmullet in Mayo, which in old times was very much celebrated ; for its air and soil had the virtue of preserving the bodies of the dead from decay. Instead of being buried therefore, the corpses were brought to the island, where they were left lying overground in the open air. They retained their ordinary looks unchanged, and their nails and hair grew quite naturally ; so that a person was able to recognise not only his father and grandfather, but even his ancestors to a remote generation. This property is mentioned in several of the old manuscript books ; and also by Nennius, as well as by Giraldus, who however confounds Inishglora with the island of Aran. The Norse Kongs Skuggio gives much the same account.

But in later ages the island lost its virtue ; for Roderick O'Flaherty, who wrote a good description of West Connaught more than two centuries ago, states that in his time there was no foundation for any such belief, and that bodies were no more preserved there than in any other place.

Nevertheless the tradition lives to this day ; the dead indeed are no longer brought to the island ; but the peasantry believe as did their forefathers a thousand years ago that human bodies will not decay on the island ; though it has never occurred to any one to make the trial.

It is probable that this little island owed its virtue and its reputation to the great Saint Brendan. For he visited it when setting out on his famous voyage of seven years on the Atlantic Ocean ; and in memory of his visit, a little colony of monks settled on it in the sixth century. No one lives there now ;

but the ruins of the old buildings, including several curious little beehive-shaped dwelling-houses built without cement, are still to be seen ; and the garden herbs introduced and cultivated by the community are found after so many hundred years growing wild on several parts of the little island.

20. THE CARN OF KING OCHY.

According to our legendary annals, the Dedannans came to Ireland in the year of the world 3303, and proceeded at once to wrest the country from the colony that preceded them, the Firbolgs. A great battle, lasting four days, was fought between them on the plain of Moytura* near Cong in Mayo, in which the Firbolgs were defeated. Their king, Ochy the son of Erc, fled northwards; but was overtaken and slain on the great strand of Trawohelly near Ballysadare in the County Sligo, by the three sons of the Dedannan chief.

He was buried where he fell, and a carn was raised over him on the strand. This carn stood till the year 1858; and though it did not rise high over the level of the strand, the tide never covered it, and never could as the old records had it, and as the peasantry firmly believed to the last day of its existence.

There are perhaps many who will fail to see any thing marvellous in this, but we record it among the Wonders of Ireland, as we find it in the old books.

* For the Battle of Moytura see Joyce's "A Child's History of Ireland," or "A Concise History of Ireland."

21. MAC RUSTANG'S GRAVE.

St. Kevin Brec, abbot of the monastery of Russagh near the village of Street in Westmeath, had a brother named Mac Rustang, of whom we know very little, except that he lived in the eighth century and was accounted a very learned man.

He was buried at Russagh; and for centuries after his death his tomb had a strange influence over women of every age and degree. No sooner did a woman catch sight of it than she began to laugh and scream hysterically; and nothing could stop her till she was removed out of sight of the tomb.

The old monastery of Russagh is still standing, and women may now safely venture into the graveyard, for the fame of the wonder has long since died out; and the people of the neighbourhood know nothing of Mac Rustang or his tomb.

In the Kongs Skuggio an Irish wonder is related somewhat resembling this, about a certain *druh* or *clessan* (a jester). The Irish tales are loud in their praises of the overpowering fun of the best gleemen or jesters:—"There was no care, fatigue or sorrow however great, that a man would not forget for a time while looking at this droll fellow and listening to his pleasantries; so that no man could refrain from laughing, even though the dead body of his father or mother lay stretched out before him" ("Smaller Social Hist. of Ancient Ireland," p. 516). But the Kongs Skuggio's *clessan* beat all other jesters hollow, for his laugh-provoking influence did

not cease with his life. Many years after his death the people went to bury a man in the grave where this *clessan* lay, and they took the poor jester's skull and placed it on a high tombstone in the churchyard (and "there it has stood ever since"). And whoever comes into that graveyard and looks on the skull at the place where the mouth and tongue were—whether he is disposed to sadness or cheerfulness—bursts into immoderate laughter on the spot, and cannot control himself but goes on splitting his sides without stopping till he takes away his gaze. "And that *clessan's* bones now make almost as many people laugh as he himself did while he was alive."

It would be for the good of the community if that skull lay there still; for a good hearty laugh is wholesome, as it helps to brighten life as well as to ward off disease and other ills that flesh is heir to. (How a good laugh will sometimes frighten away the devil:—for this see my "English as we speak it in Ireland," p. 56.) But the skull is gone; the poor *clessan* that owned it is forgotten; and the place is now as gloomy as any other graveyard.

22. THE TIDAL WELL OF CORANN.

The old writer in the Book of Ballymote describes this wonder in the following words:—"A well of sweet water in the side of Corann: the property of the well is that it fills and ebbs like the sea, though it is far from the sea too."

The Corann here spoken of is a plain in the County Sligo, from which rises Slieve Gamph, now

called the Ox Mountains, west of Ballysadare. The well is still known, though it has lost much of its ancient celebrity. It is situated on the eastern slope of the Ox Mountains, near the summit of the remarkable rock of Tullaghan, one mile north-east of the village of Coolaney. That this well ebbed and flowed, keeping time with the sea, is of course the creation of the people's imagination; but it is a fact known beyond doubt that it sometimes rises and falls in a remarkable and unaccountable way.

There is no regularity in these movements; but such as they are, it is not hard to see how they gave rise to the belief.

The people have another legend about this well—that it was miraculously produced by St. Patrick. When the saint drove the demon-reptiles into the sea from the summit of Croagh Patrick (see p. 11 above) one of them named Kerhanagh, or the “Fire-spitter,” instead of going towards the sea with the general body, slyly slipped aside and made his escape. The moment the saint had dealt with the others, he followed Kerhanagh; but the demon still kept ahead, and as he went along he poisoned all the wells with his foul fiery breath. When Patrick arrived at the hill of Tullaghan he was quite overcome with thirst; and striking the solid rock, a well of sweet water burst forth. Having quenched his thirst and renewed his strength, he pursued and overtook the demon, and banished him for ever from Ireland. This well was afterwards held in great veneration; and for many hundreds of years it was a favourite resort of pilgrims desirous of paying honour to Saint Patrick.

23. THREE MARVELLOUS WELLS.

In the parish of Galloon, County Monaghan, there was formerly a well whose water had a very strange virtue ; for if you poured some of it over a person's head, the hair at once turned grey.

Giraldus Cambrensis gives an account of another well of this kind, which he states was situated in Munster. He tells moreover in his usual chatty style a story in point—that he once saw a man who had washed one side of his head in the water of this well ; and that the half that had been washed was white, while the other half remained quite dark.

Giraldus mentions another well in some part of Ulster, which was gifted with the very opposite virtue ; for it prevented greyness altogether, or restored grey hair to its original colour. He tells us also, what indeed we might expect, that this well was in great favour, and that it was frequented by numbers of men and women from all parts of Ireland, who were no less anxious to escape grey hairs than people of the present day.

The writer of the *Kongs Skuggio* notices these two last, placing them both in the Slieve Bloom Mountains in Queen's County ; and he is still more explicit. Of the first he writes :—" If a man washes himself therein, whatever colour [of hair] he has whether red or white or black, then he becomes snow-white of hair as if he were an old man." Of the second :—" If you take either a white sheep or a neat or a horse or a man with white hair, and you bathe any one of these in that water, they become forthwith coal-black."

24. THE IRRITABLE WELL.

The well in which the river Barrow rises is situated high up on the side of Barna, one of the Slieve Bloom mountains, about five miles north of Mountrath in Queen's County. This fountain had in former days a very cross-grained temper; for if anyone only touched its water, or even looked into it, it immediately overflowed, and a heavy rain began to pour down till all the low-lying lands near it were inundated; and neither the rain nor the overflow ceased till Mass was offered up near the margin of the fountain. This well is no longer prone to take offence, age having probably toned down its temper; but to this day the stream that flows from it—the head-water of the Barrow—retains the vicious habit of inundating the lowlands for miles in rainy weather; which no doubt gave origin to the superstition.

25. THE WELLS OF DEATH; THE WELLS OF RICHES
AND POVERTY.

In some part of the baronies of Orior in the east of Armagh, there were formerly two wells situated near each other—and they are still there no doubt if we could only find them—which were much more deadly vengeful than the well of Slieve Bloom. Whoever tasted the water of one fell dead on the spot; and the other was quite as bad in its own way; for if a person looked into it three times, the water rose up furiously till it drowned him.

According to another old book however, the qualities possessed by these two wells were much less fatal, though equally surprising. Whoever took a drink of the water of one was sure to become rich ; but if he drank from the other, nothing could save him from becoming as poor as a church mouse. The puzzle of the thing was however that no one knew which was which ; and every man who drank made a hazardous venture, as he knew not whether he was drinking affluence or poverty.

26. THE PROPHETIC WELL OF RAPHOE.

At Raphoe in Donegal there was once a well which told people truly whether they were to be long or short lived. A person had only to stand on its brink and look into it ; and if his life was to be a long one the water bubbled and rose up with a loud murmuring noise and overflowed ; but if on the contrary he was fated to die soon, the water retreated and sank into the well.

This is something like the legend of St. Patrick's Well beside the old church on the top of the hill of Ardpatrik in Limerick. The water is down at the bottom of an open perpendicular stone-built shaft a yard wide and 12 feet deep :—

Within it gaze the peasants to see what may befall :

Who see their shadows down below, they will have merry cheer :

Who see not any shadows shall die within the year.

See this ballad (" The Well of the Omen ") in Dr. Robert Dwyer Joyce's " Ballads of Irish Chivalry," p. 6.

27. THE WAND-TRANSFORMING WELL.

The well of Mailgoban in Leinster, situated near the bank of the river Liffey, was quite as remarkable as any of those we have mentioned. It was called *Dech-flescach*, or the "wand-transformer"; for if a rod of hazel were put into it, it was changed at once into a rod of ash; and on the other hand a rod of ash immersed in it for a few moments came out a rod of hazel. But no one now knows where this marvellous well is.

28. ST. MOLUA'S LEPROUS POND.

There is a place at the foot of Slieve Bloom in Queen's County, now called Clonfert-Mulloe, or more generally Kyle; and here flourished in old times a noted monastery dedicated to St. Molua, from whom it derived its name. The wonder of this place was the mill-pond of the monastery; for any person, not a monk, who bathed in it, became immediately covered over with leprosy. It was however wholly free from danger for the monks; for they bathed in it without suffering the least injury; and what was equally curious, there was one little corner about four yards off from the body of the pond, where any ordinary person might bathe, and come out as clean as he went in, if not cleaner.

The venomous quality of the water, though a lamentable circumstance for the neighbours, was very convenient for the good brotherhood, as it left

them the sole use of the pond; for it was very unlikely that any one would venture a bath even in the safe corner, seeing that a single splash from another part of the pond might send him away a leper for life.

29. THE PIOUS MILL.

In the old monastery of Kilkeasy in Kilkenny, from which a modern village and parish have their name, the monks had a little mill for the use of themselves and their neighbours. This mill had some extraordinary virtues. It would never grind on a Sunday except the meal or flour was wanted for the guests of the monastery; and when this happened, the moment it had turned out enough for the purpose it stopped of its own accord. But if there were no guests it would not grind at all on Sunday. Under no circumstances whatever would it grind corn that had been stolen. And lastly, it was in one respect like the island of Lough Cre (p. 21); for no woman could go into it.

Giraldus notices this wonder, but calls the mill by a different name—the Mill of St. Lucherinus. He tells a story of another mill—the Mill of St. Fechin at Fore in Westmeath—where also there was a prohibition against women entering. This was a very sacred mill and resented liberties. Two of Hugh de Lacy's soldiers one time plundered some corn out of its stores; but the two horses that ate some of it died at once; and as to the men themselves, one of them knocked out his own brains that night, and the other fell dead in sight of all.

30. THE BLEEDING STONE.

There was a large stone in a certain church in Ulster, which, whenever the church was about to be plundered, always shed blood three days before, in order to give the clergy notice of the intended robbery. Where the church was situated, or what was its name, or when the stone lost its virtue—of all this the old writer gives us no particulars.

31. THE STONE OF LOUGH NAHANAGAN.

Most people who have travelled through the County Wicklow, will know a small lake at the head of Glendasan near Glendalough, now called by the name of Lough Nahanagan, a corrupt form of the old name *Loch na n-Onchon*, the lake of the otters. There was formerly a stone standing in this lake, near the margin, which was in its way quite as easily irritated as the Well of Slieve Bloom (p. 53) but more easily appeased. If any person assaulted it by striking it with a stick or even the smallest cane, it resented the affront by bringing down a heavy shower of rain. But it seems to have resembled certain quick-tempered people who are repentant and good-natured after the flash of temper has passed off; for the rain always ceased in a short time and was followed by clear skies and bright sunshine.

32. A PERJURER'S PUNISHMENT.

When people were put on their oath in Ireland long ago, it was the custom to swear them on some relic

of one of the great national saints, such as a crozier, a bell, a shrine, or a copy of the Gospels ; or under the very hand of the saint himself if the affair happened during his lifetime. And it was universally believed that if a man swearing in this manner perjured himself, he was sure to be punished sooner or later by some sort of bodily disfigurement, or perhaps by madness, or illness, or death. The people retained this custom from a very early age down to our own day ; and indeed it is doubtful if it has yet quite disappeared.*

One day in the year of our Lord 539, when the people were assembled at the great fair of Tailtenn in Meath (p. 30 above) a certain man named Abacuc had occasion to swear an oath ; and St. Kieran the illustrious founder of Clonmacnoise, who happened to be at the meeting, was asked to be present. So he came and placed his open hand on the man's neck while he was swearing—a usual form of administering an oath in presence of a saint.

Regarding in no degree either his oath or the presence of the saint, the man swore to what he knew was false ; but scarce had he finished the words when a gangrene broke out on his neck all over the place where Kieran's hand had touched it. It spread rapidly and ate its way into his neck ; till at last towards the close of the same day his head fell clean off in presence of all the people.

* See Carleton's story of "The Donagh." This custom prevailed in other countries as well as in Ireland. The reader will here be reminded of the oath on the relics extorted by William of Normandy from Harold of England, by a trick.

He did not die on the spot however, as one would naturally expect; but the loss of his head brought him to his senses. He repented of his crime and craved the forgiveness of Kieran, who gave him in charge to some of his monks to be brought to Clonmacnoise. There he lived for seven years among the community, walking about openly without his head, signalling regularly for food, and swallowing it through his trunk.

This extraordinary story was at one time generally believed; and it is hard to conjecture how it could have obtained currency. Dr. Todd thinks it may have arisen from some figurative description of loss of memory or reason, or some ecclesiastical or spiritual defect. He quotes as a case in point the following story told in a note at the 4th of August in the *Feilire of Aengus*, about St. Molua and St. Comgall, both of whom lived in the sixth century, Molua the patron of Clonfortmulloe or Kyle in Queen's County (see p. 55 above) and Comgall the founder and patron of Bangor in the county Down.

As the two saints went together one day into a church, they were greatly astonished to see that they themselves and all the others in the church appeared without their heads. But Comgall after a time addressed the congregation and said:—"The reason of this is that my spiritual director (i.e. confessor, or *soul-friend*, as Irish writers say) is dead; so that I am without a head, and you are also without heads; for a man without a spiritual director is a man without a head." Comgall then appointed Molua his confessor; and immediately the two saints and all the others recovered their heads.

The Four Masters record the story of Abacuc in the following words:—"The beheading of Abacuc at the fair of Tailltenn, through the miracles of St. Kieran: that is, he took a false oath upon the hand of Kieran while the hand was on his neck, so that a gangrene took him in the neck and cut off his head." Here there is no mention of a man walking about without his head; and perhaps we may take the account as something near the truth. It was probably nothing more than a case of unusually virulent disease, which was gradually magnified by story-tellers among a simple credulous people into the present wonderful legend.

33. THE BLIND EEL-FISHER.

A blind man once lived at Clonmacnoise, who was the most expert fisher ever read of in history; only with this drawback, that he appears to have never fished for or caught anything but eels. He used no artificial aids of any kind—no fork or bait or basket: he merely plunged into the Shannon where it flows by the monastery: and after remaining a few moments at the bottom, he came up with an eel "in each of the forks of his fingers and toes"—sixteen eels, all wriggling and twisting about his hands and feet! And this he did without faíl every time he dived.

34. THE BURIED GIANT OF CLONMACNOISE.

In the reign of Congalach king of Ireland (A.D. 944 to 956) there lived a poet named Erard Mac Cossi (for whom see p. 45 above) who at the

time of the present occurrence was on a visit with the king beside Lough Leane in Westmeath (near the village of Fore). Early one morning in summer this poet happened to be walking on the shore of the lake : and he saw at a little distance a very large woman—far beyond the usual size of women—sitting alone. She was dressed all in green, and as the poet came towards her he observed that she was extremely beautiful, and that she was weeping bitterly. He spoke to her and asked why she was weeping so. She replied that her husband had been killed that morning at the fairy-hill of Shee Codail ; and buried in the great cemetery at Clonmacnoise. After some further conversation the woman rose up and went away : and Mac Cossi immediately sought the king and told him of his strange adventure. The king was much surprised and interested ; and he felt so curious about the matter, and so anxious to test the truth of the story, that he set out at once with the poet for Clonmacnoise, where he arrived in the evening of the same day.

After the brotherhood had welcomed the visitors the poet told his story. But the monks knew nothing of such a person as he spoke of ; and they were quite sure that no one had been buried in the cemetery that day. So the king concluded that either the story told by the large green-dressed lady was an invention, or that Mac Cossi himself was under some strange delusion : and they thought no more of the matter.

It was too late to return that night ; so the king and the poet slept at the monastery. Early next morning they were awakened by the tolling of

the death bell; and on inquiry they were informed that one of the monks had died the evening before and was to be buried that day. The monastery was all astir in preparation for the funeral; and as the cemetery was close by, the king and the poet remained to see the interment.

When the monks went to dig the grave, they were surprised to find that the spot they had chosen had all the appearance of being quite recently disturbed—the red clay fresh and soft—as if a grave had been opened and closed again. But how this could have come to pass was more than any one could tell, seeing that the burial ground was within full view of the monastery windows; and that not even a single stranger, much less a funeral, could enter it without being observed. And what was more startling still, they found marks of blood on the clay, and fresh green leaves scattered about. Seeing this, they set about examining the place thoroughly while the king and Mac Cossi looked on; and they resolved to open the grave. Deeper and deeper they dug, tempted on by the blood-marks and leaves; till at length, at a depth far beneath the ordinary graves, they came upon the body of a great bearded man fifteen feet high, lying full length with the face downwards. It was surrounded with a thick covering of green birch-branches, carefully placed between it and the clay;* and when they came to

* At interments in pagan times in Ireland it was usual to wrap up the body and bury it in a thick covering of birch-branches, called *strophais*, which preserved it from the clay, like our coffins. See my *Smaller Soc. Hist. of Anc. Irel.*, p. 534.

examine the body, they found it all bloody, with many great wounds and other marks and tokens of a violent death.

After some time they replaced the body in the same position as before, after carefully adjusting the covering of birch-branches; and having filled in the grave, proceeded to bury the monk elsewhere. Meantime the story got wind; and next day the people of the neighbourhood came in crowds to look at the grave. But the sight of the place only raised their curiosity all the more: they brought spades and shovels and began to open the grave anew, determined to see and examine for themselves the body of the bearded giant.

The same marks were in the clay; and as the wondering people dug on and on, the blood and green leaves continued to increase. But when they came to the place where the body had been left the evening before, there they found indeed the branches of green birch lying the whole length of the grave, but no body. There was blood on the branches and blood on the clay beneath; but although the people dug and searched carefully downwards and sideways and all round, they found nothing more. So they closed up the grave and left the place; and from that day to this no one has ever been able to find out anything more about the buried giant of Clonmacnoise.

35. THE GRAVE OF THE DWARF.

Tara had three wonders; but as the first was in no degree important I will omit it. The second was

the grave of the Dwarf. If you went to measure it you found its length exactly three lengths of your foot; if another person with a different sized foot did the same, he found it to answer the length of his foot in like manner. In short whoever measured this marvellous little grave, whether man or boy or child, found that it was exactly three times the length of his foot, neither more nor less.

36. THE LIA FAIL OR CORONATION STONE OF TARA.

The third of Tara's wonders was the Lia Fail or Coronation Stone, on which the ancient kings were crowned; and the wonder of this was that it uttered a shout whenever a king of the true Scotie or Irish race stood or sat on it.* And it was from this stone that Ireland received the old poetical name of Inisfail, that is, the Island of the (Lia) Fail.

According to the old legend, the Dedannans brought the Lia Fail, along with certain other precious and marvellous objects, from Lochlann or Scandinavia, where they had sojourned for some time before they came to Ireland. And they placed it in Tara where it was used as a coronation stone, not only by the Dedannans, but also by the Milesian colony who conquered them.

* Stones that uttered various sounds—even speech—are sometimes mentioned in old Irish tales, just as we read about the Vocal Memnon, the colossal statue in Egypt, which uttered musical sounds when it received the rays of the rising sun. See “Cloghlóirish,” the “Speaking Stone” in my “Irish Names of Places,” vol. ii., and “The Voyage of Bran,” by Dr. Kuno Meyer, vol. i., p. 10, verses 17, 18, and p. 39, note 17.

If we are to believe the testimony of certain Scottish writers, this famous stone, after having been removed from Ireland, made a great figure in later ages in Scotland and England. But the story of its removal has been examined by Dr. Petrie, who shows that it is flatly contradicted by native Irish authorities; that it is nothing better than a fabrication; and that the Lia Fail was never removed from Tara at all.

It is a historical fact accepted on all hands that in the year of our Lord 503 and the following years the western part of Scotland was conquered by a colony of Irishmen, or Scots as they were then called, from the territory of Dalriada in the north of Antrim, led by Fergus, Angus, and Lorne, the sons of a chief named Erc. So far we have true history. But the Scottish narrative tells us that Fergus caused the Lia Fail to be brought over to Alban (Scotland), with the consent of the king of Ireland, and had himself crowned on it. For there was—the story goes on to say—an ancient prophecy, that into whatsoever land the Lia Fail was brought, there a prince of the Scotie or Irish race should reign. This prophecy is given by the Scottish writer, Hector Boece, in a Latin couplet:—

*Ni fallat fatum, Scoti quocunque locatum
Invenient lapidem regnare tenenter ibidem;*

the sense of which is conveyed well enough in the following translation:—

*If fate tells truth, where'er this stone is found,
A prince of Scotie race shall there be crowned.*

And on account of this prophecy it is said to have

received the name of “*Lia Fail*,” which, according to these authorities, means the “*Stone of Destiny*”; but the word *Fal*, when examined critically, will bear no such interpretation.

Fergus’s reason, then, for having himself crowned on the stone, was, in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled, and that his claim to the new kingdom might be acknowledged without dispute. For the Scottish people were merely a branch of the Irish, and had the same superstitions and legends. It remained in Alban and was kept at Scone till the thirteenth century, when Edward I. took it by force and brought it away to England, where it now lies under the seat of the coronation chair in Westminster.

That the stone now in Westminster was brought by Edward from Scone, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Alban, where it had been used as a coronation stone by the Alban Scots—of all this there can be no question; and so far, Mr. Skene, the latest and best and most clear-headed writer on Scottish history, traces it, but no farther. But that the coronation stone of Scone is not the *Lia Fail* will appear quite plain from a short examination of authorities.

The story of the removal of the *Lia Fail* to Scotland rests entirely on the authority of the Scottish historians. The oldest Scottish document to which it can be traced is the *Rhythmical Chronicle*, written it is believed at the close of the thirteenth century, from which it was borrowed later on by the two Scottish writers, John of Fordun and Hector Boece, and incorporated by both in their

chronicles—those chronicles which are now universally rejected as fable. Our own countryman Geoffrey Keating, writing his history of Ireland in the seventeenth century, adopted the story after Boece (whom he gives as his authority for the prophecy); and it has been repeated by most other writers of Irish history since his time. But in no Irish authority before the time of Keating is there any mention either of the removal of the stone, or of the prophecy concerning it. If Keating had found either or both in any old Irish authority he would have been only too glad to mention so.

Why it was that this fable was invented, and why Keating adopted it, though he found it in none of his own native authorities—the motive of all this is plain enough. It was about the time when the Rhythmical Chronicle was put together that the dispute began touching the respective claims of the Scottish and English kings to the throne of Scotland, in which figure the great names of Wallace and Bruce; and the old Scottish writers invented the story about the removal of the Lia Fail and the prophecy concerning it, in order to strengthen the claim of the Scottish kings, all of whom had been crowned on the Scone stone, which according to this invented account was the Lia Fail itself.

For a like reason, Keating and other Irish writers eagerly caught up the same story, since according to their ideas it proved the right of their favourite monarchs, the Stuarts, to the throne—the Stuarts being descended from the Irish kings. Indeed Keating says what amounts to this when he affirms that “the prophecy of the stone has been fulfilled

in our present King Charles and in his father James who both descend from the race of the Scots, since they were crowned kings of England [at Westminster] on the aforesaid stone.”

But we have decisive evidence that the Lia Fail was in Tara four centuries after the time of its alleged removal by Fergus. Tara was abandoned as a royal residence in the sixth century; and after some time fell gradually into decay. In the tenth century and early in the eleventh, certain Irish antiquaries visited the place in its ruin, and having examined it very minutely—as antiquaries of the present day are wont to examine historic sites—wrote detailed descriptions of its several ancient monuments as they found them, which descriptions are preserved in some of our very old manuscripts to this day. Not a word have they about the removal of the Lia Fail; but on the contrary they distinctly affirm that it was then in Tara, and that they themselves saw it, among many other ancient monuments.

The distinguished poet and scholar, Kineth O’Hartigan, who died in the year 975, visited Tara with the object of describing it. After mentioning in detail the several monuments, he states that he was actually standing on the Lia Fail :—

The stone which is under my two feet,
From it is called Inis Fail;*
Between two strands of strong tide,
The Plain of Fal (as a name) for all Erin.

* *Fál* was the proper name of the stone of which the genitive form is *Fáil* as it appears in “Lia Fail.” The word *lia* means a stone, and *Lia Fáil* is literally the “stone of *Fál*.”

Cuan O'Lochan, another writer equally distinguished, who was Arch-Poet of Erin and died in 1024, has left a poem in which he describes with great minuteness the positions of the various objects of interest at Tara. It is worth mentioning here that O'Lochan's description is so detailed and correct, that Petrie and O'Donovan when they examined Tara sixty or seventy years ago, with the poem in their hands (aided by O'Hartigan's previous description) were readily able to recognise nearly all the monuments pointed out by the Arch-Poet.

In one passage he correctly states that the Rath of the Synods (one of the forts at Tara) lay to the north of the Lia Fail :—

The Rath of the Synods of great powers,
[Lies] to the north of the Fal of Tara.

And a prose account which follows the poem is even more circumstantial :—“Fal lies by the side of the Mound of Hostages* to the north, i.e. the stone that roared under the feet of each king that took possession of the throne of Ireland.”

So far we have mainly followed Dr. Petrie's reasoning and deductions (in his Essay on Tara) which are incontrovertible. But he goes farther. There is now a tall pillar-stone, 6 feet over ground, standing on the mound called the Forradh [forra] where it was placed by the people about 1821, to mark the grave of some rebels killed there in 1798 :

* The features mentioned here as well as all the others that have been identified may be seen on the map of Tara in my *Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*.

and Petrie asserts that this was brought from the Mound of Hostages (where the old writers place the Lia Fail) and that it is the Lia Fail itself. Here we cannot go with him.

For in the first place the identification of the real old Lia Fail with the present pillar-stone is quite unsatisfactory and unconvincing. Fifty years ago I had a talk with one of the men who helped in the removal, and I have good reason to believe that the pillar-stone now on the Forradh was brought by the people in 1821, not (as Petrie states, writing many years after 1821) from the Mound of Hostages which lies about 50 yards off, but from the bottom of the trench surrounding the Forradh itself, where it had been lying prostrate for generations.

In the second place the coronation stones used so generally by the Gaelic tribes all over Ireland and Scotland, were comparatively small and portable, like that now under the Coronation chair at Westminster which is a flag 25 inches by 15 inches by 9 inches thick. But the present pillar-stone at Tara is 12 feet long by nearly 2 feet in diameter. It would be very unsuitable for standing on during the ceremonies of installation and coronation; and seeing that the stone weighs considerably more than a ton, it would be impracticable to bring it about, as the legends say the Dedannans carried their Lia Fail in their overland journeys in Scandinavia, Scotland, and Ireland, and in their over-sea voyages in their hide-covered wicker boats. For even legends are consistent when dealing with ordinary everyday matters of common sense. No legend could be wild enough to tell us that the Dedannans brought with

them in their wanderings, lasting for generations, the massive stone now standing on the Forradh.

The following conclusions drawn from the preceding statement are I think indisputable :—

1. The stone now under the Coronation chair at Westminster is the very one brought from Scone in the thirteenth century, but it is not the Lia Fail.

2. The present massive pillar-stone on the Forradh in Tara is not the Lia Fail.

3. The Lia Fail was never brought away from Ireland, but remains still in Tara, buried and hidden somewhere in the soil; probably in the position where the old writers place it, on the north side of the Mound of Hostages.

Giraldus Cambrensis and the Kongs Skuggio relate some other Irish wonders; but I will pass them over as they are of no great consequence; and the reader will probably think with me that we have had enough of wonders for the present.

SPENSER'S IRISH RIVERS*

IN the year 1580, when Edmund Spenser was in the twenty-seventh year of his age, he came to Ireland as secretary to Baron Grey of Wilton, the newly-appointed Lord Deputy. On the recall of the Lord Deputy in 1582, Spenser returned with him to England, and soon afterwards he received a grant of three thousand acres of land in the County of Cork, a portion of the confiscated estates of the Earl of Desmond. He proceeded again to Ireland in 1586 to live on his estate, and selected for his residence the Castle of Kilcolman, one of Desmond's strongholds, whose ruins are still to be seen two miles from Buttevant and the same distance from Doneraile.

It was about the time of his first visit to Ireland that Spenser began his *Faerie Queene*; and several books of the poem were composed during his residence at Kilcolman. That he studied the topography and social history of his adopted country, is sufficiently proved by his essay, *A View of the State of Ireland*: while his poetry equally shows that his imagination had become deeply impressed with the quiet beauty of its scenery, and with its quaint and graceful local legends. Its sparkling rivers seem to have been his special delight; he recurs to them again and again with a pleasure as fresh and bright

* Reprinted from "Fraser's Magazine" of many years ago, by permission of Messrs. Longmans, Green, & Co., London.

as the streams themselves, and they form the bases of some of his most beautiful similes and allegories.

There are in his poems three passages of special interest, in which Irish rivers are prominently mentioned. The first is 'The Marriage of the Thames and Medway,' in the eleventh canto of the fourth book of the *Faerie Queene*; the second occurs in the first of *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie*; and the third in *Colin Clouts come home againe*.

The spousals of the Thames and Medway took place in the house of Proteus; and the poet relates that all the sea and river gods were invited to the bridal feast. First came the continental rivers of the whole world, famous either for size or for historical associations; next the English rivers; and lastly those of Ireland. The following is the passage in which the Irish rivers are recounted:—

Ne thence the Irishe Rivers absent were;
Sith no lesse famous then the rest they bee,
And ioyne in neighbourhood of kingdome nere,
Why should they not likewise in love agree,
And ioy likewise this solemne day to see?
They saw it all, and present were in place;
Though I them all, according their degree,
Cannot recount, nor tell their hidden race,
Nor read the salvage countries thorough which they pace.

There was the Liffy rolling downe the lea;
The sandy Slane; the stony Aubrian;
The spacious Shenan spreading like a sea;
The pleasant Boyne; the fishy fruitfull Ban;
Swift Awniduff which of the English man
Is cal'de Blacke-water; and the Liffar deep;
Sad Trowis that once his people over-ran;
Strong Allo tombling from Slewlogher steep;
And Mulla mine whose waves I whilom taught to weep.

And there the three renowned Brethren were
 Which that great gyant Blomius begot
 Of the faire nimph Rheüsa wandring there :
 One day, as she to shunne the season whot
 Under Slewbloome in shady grove was got,
 This gyant found her . . . : she in time forth brought
 These three faire sons which being thenceforth powrd,
 In three great rivers ran, and many countries scowrd.

The first the gentle Shure that, making way
 By sweet Clonmell, adornes rich Waterford ;
 The next the stubborne Newre whose waters gray
 By faire Kilkenny and Rossepoente boord ;
 The third the goodly Barow which doth hoord
 Great heaps of salmons in his deepe bosóme ;
 All which, long sundred, doe at last accord
 To ioyne in one ere to the sea they come ;
 So flowing all from one, all one at last become.

There also was the wide embayed Mayre ;
 The pleasant Bandon crownd with many a wood ;
 The spreading Lee that like an island fayre
 Encloseth Corke with his divided flood ;
 And balefull Oure late staind with English blood ;
 With many more whose names no tongue can tell.
 All which that day in order seemly good
 Did on the Thames attend and waited well
 To doe their dueful service, as to them befell.*

Of several of the rivers in this enumeration it is unnecessary to speak at any length, for there could be no mistake about their identification, and they are too well known to need description. Only it ought to be remarked how agreeably the poet relieves the dryness of a mere catalogue by his happy selection of short descriptive epithets, which exhibit such a variety that no two of them are alike, and

* *Faerie Queene*, b. iv. c. xi.

which describe the several streams with great force and truthfulness.

But as regards others of them, editors and readers who have considered the subject have been in uncertainty or error from Spenser's day to our own; and there are a few which none of the editors of Spenser's works have even attempted to identify.

The manner in which the Liffey is characterised—"rolling downe the lea"—is extremely just and natural; for this river, after bursting from the high lands of Wicklow through the haunted gorge of Pollaphuca, flows for more than half its course through the levellest lea land in all Ireland, the plains of Kildare, where its banks are a continued succession of verdant meadows and smiling pasture-lands. This was the old plain of Moy-Lifè, celebrated in ancient Irish writings, whose name is now remembered only in connection with the river—the Aven-Liffey or Anna-Liffey as it used to be called in times not very long past—that is, "the river (*aven*) of the plain of Life."

In "The sandy Slane" the poet touches off the most obvious feature of the river Slaney. Geologists tell us that the bed of the river was once a fiord, when the sea was higher than it is now—long before the Milesian Celt contended with Anglo-Norman, Dane, or magic-skilled Dedannan; and during this primeval period the tide deposited at the bottom of the long valley great beds of sand and gravel, through which, when the sea retired to its present level, the stream cut its channel. The river is characteristically sandy in its whole length: from Stratford-on-Slaney to Wexford town there is scarce

a rock sufficient to raise a ripple ; its fords are all along formed of sand and gravel ; and it flows into the sea below Wexford through a wide waste of sand.

Passing by for the present “ the stony Aubrian ”—farther on I shall have a word to say about it—we may just glance at the Shannon, the Boyne, and the Bann. Spenser’s way of designating the first—

The spacious Shenan spreading like a sea—

pictures this great river very vividly to the mind of the reader ; for during its passage from Lughnashinna, its source near Quilca Mountain in Cavan, to Limerick city, it expands into three great lakes, or inland seas as they may be called, besides several smaller ones ; and below Limerick it opens out into a noble estuary fifty miles long, and so broad that the farther shores often become lost on the horizon.

The banks of “ The pleasant Boyne,” from its source in Trinity Well at the ruined Castle of Carbury in Kildare, to Maiden Tower below Drogheda, present a succession of lovely quiet pastoral landscapes, not surpassed by any other river in Ireland.

He is equally correct in “ The fishy fruitfull Ban,” for this river has always been noted for the abundance and excellence of its trout and salmon. Toome where it issues from Lough Neagh, and Portna near the village of Kilrea, are to this day the delight of trout anglers ; and the great salmon fishery at the old waterfall of Eas-Creeva at Coleraine is one of the most productive anywhere to be found.

I shall defer for the present the consideration of two important rivers, the Awniduff and the Allo, and take up both together a little farther on (p. 80).

The "Liffar deep" is the Foyle at Lifford in Donegal. It is often called Liffar or Liffer by early Anglo-Irish writers, as by Gough and Camden, and by Spenser himself in his *View of the State of Ireland* :—"Another (garrison) would I put at Castle-Liffer or thereabouts, so as they should have all the passages upon the river to Logh Foyle" (p. 158, ed. 1809). The town of Lifford took its name from the river, a circumstance very usual in Ireland; for in this manner Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Sligo, and many other towns received their names. It may be remarked that this old Anglo-Irish name Liffer represents very correctly the pronunciation of the native name *Leithbhearr*; and that the insertion of the *d* at the end belongs to a class of verbal corruptions very common in anglicised Irish names.*

"Sad Trowis that once his people over-ran" is the short river Drowes flowing from Lough Melvin between the counties of Donegal and Leitrim into Donegal Bay, which was commonly called Trowis in Spenser's time. This stream is very often mentioned in old Irish records; for from the earliest period of history and legend to the present day, it has continued to be the boundary line between the two provinces of Ulster and Connaught; and it is no doubt its historical and legendary notoriety that procured for it a place in Spenser's catalogue; for otherwise it is an unimportant stream.

* Viz. the addition of *d* after words ending in *l*, *n*, and *r*. See this fully explained and illustrated in the author's *Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, vol. i, chap. iii.

In the words "that once his people over-ran" the poet alludes to an ancient legend accounting for the origin of Lough Melvin, that at a very remote period the river overflowed the land and turned the valley into a lake. This legend is recorded by several of our old Irish writers, among others by the Four Masters, who relate that a certain king of Ireland named Melga who reigned many centuries before the Christian era, was slain in battle; that when his soldiers were digging his grave the waters burst forth from it and overwhelmed both the land and the people; and that the lake formed by this fatal inundation was called by the name Lough Melga, in memory of the king.*

Legends like this are told in connexion with most of the large lakes of Ireland, and some of them have held their ground for a very long time indeed; they are mixed up with the earliest traditions of the country, and not a few of them are current among the peasantry to this day. Giraldus Cambrensis, writing in the twelfth century, records a legend of this kind regarding Lough Neagh; and this story is also found in some of the oldest of the native Irish writings, from which indeed Giraldus borrowed it, though he added a few characteristic touches of his own. He mentions, moreover, what the people will tell you to this day, that the fishermen sometimes see the lofty and slender *ecclesiasticæ turres* or "Christian round towers," remains of the ancient submerged city

* The old Irish form of the name is *Loch-Meilghe*, which has been corrupted to Lough Melvin by the English-speaking people. Lough Melvin lies four miles south of Ballyshannon in Donegal.

beneath its waters, a belief which Moore has embalmed in the well-known lines :—

On Lough Neagh's banks as the fisherman strays,
When the clear cold eve's declining,
He sees the round towers of other days
In the wave beneath him shining.

Before parting with this little stream I wish to make an observation on the word "sad," by which it is designated in the present passage. The reader cannot help observing that the poet's fancy is ever ready to seize on any correspondence—whether real or imaginary—between the names and the characteristic features of the several streams in his catalogue; and this conceit he often embodies in some happy descriptive epithet. I shall have occasion to notice this peculiarity farther on. But with respect to the name Trowis, it is clear that the poet thought it was an anglicised form of an *Irish* word of similar sound, which signifies sorrow or sadness;* and once his fancy

* Irish *truaghas* (pronounced trooas), sadness, wretchedness, from *truagh* (troo) sad. The poet's fancy is not correct, for the ancient name of the river is not *Truaghas* but *Drobhaois* (pronounced drowish) a very different word. Spenser was accustomed to get Irish words and phrases translated for him by those of his Irish acquaintances who could speak English. There is abundant evidence of this in various parts of his *View of the State of Ireland* in which he gives the equivalent of many Irish terms; and in one place he expressly says: "I have caused divers of them (Irish poems) to be translated unto me that I might understand them" It must have been some of his Irish friends that attempted to explain Trowis for the poet by identifying it with *truaghas*, sadness; for the peasantry, even to this day, as I know well, are very fond of this kind of speculative etymology.

had caught up this interpretation he connected the name with the event; so that supposing him right in his conjecture, his "*sad Trowis*," in the present passage would be quite as appropriate as "*false Bregoge*" in *Colin Clouts come home againe* (see below).

As for "Mulla mine whose waves I whilom taught to weep," it is enough for the present to point out that it is the little river properly called the Awbeg, flowing near Spenser's own residence of Kilcolman and falling into the Blackwater; but I shall have more to say of it in connexion with others of Spenser's rivers.

I will now consider the two rivers, "Swift Awniduff which of the English man is cal'de Blacke-water," and "Strong Allo tombling from Slewlogher steep." The former ("Swift Awniduff") has been wrongly set down as the Munster Blackwater, whereas it is really the northern Blackwater, flowing between the counties of Armagh and Derry, and falling into the southwest corner of Lough Neagh; and the latter ("Strong Allo") has been taken to mean the little stream now called the Allo or Allow, flowing into the Blackwater near Kanturk in the county of Cork, though Spenser really intended it for the great Blackwater itself. Dr. Smith, a very careful writer, who published his *History of Cork* about the year 1750, was the first, so far as I know, to discuss those rivers mentioned by Spenser; and he identifies "Strong Allo" with the present river Allo, and the Awniduff with the Munster Blackwater. He is followed by Crofton Croker in his *Researches in the South of Ireland*. In Todd's edition of Spenser the error is repeated; but Todd received his information from Joseph Cooper

Walker author of *The History of Irish Bards*, who merely copied Smith without adding anything of his own. And all other writers who have written on the subject from Smith's time to the present have followed him in his error, with the single exception of the Rev. C. B. Gibson, who at page 300, vol. i. of his *History of Cork*, places the Awniduff correctly, though without giving any proof of the correctness of his identification.

The Munster Blackwater was never called by the name of Awniduff or Avonduff, or Avondhu as some of our present-day writers put it (all meaning "black-river"). Its Irish name is Avonmore (great river) as we find it in all native authorities ancient and modern; and this is the name in universal use in the spoken Irish language of the present day. The modern English name Blackwater therefore is not a translation, but a new name given by English-speaking people; and it is an appropriate one, for the river is very dark in the early part of its course, partly from the peat bogs of Slieve Lougher, and partly on account of the Duhallow coal district through which it flows.

But it will be of consequence to remark that the English name in general use in Spenser's time was Broadwater, which is a sufficiently correct translation of "Avonmore." For example Gerard Boate who wrote his *Natural History of Ireland* about the middle of the 17th century, has: "The two chief rivers of Munster are Sure and Broadwater, the city of Waterford being situated on the first . . . the other (Broadwater) passeth by Lismore and

falleth into the sea by Youghal.”* It is also called Broad-water in Norden’s map of Ireland, compiled about 1610; and in a charter of James I. the two English names are used—“the river Blackwater called otherwise Broadwater.”

The poet tells us that “strong Allo” flows from Slewlogher, or Slieve Lougher, a wild moorland district lying east of Castle Island in Kerry, which was very much celebrated in ancient Irish writings. This circumstance alone is sufficient to prove that he is speaking of the Blackwater under the name of Allo; for the Blackwater flows directly from Slieve Lougher, rising about five miles above King Williamstown, and running first southward and then eastward towards Mallow. On the other hand the little river now known by the name of Allo is not more than seventeen miles in its whole length; and to say nothing of the inappropriateness of the term “strong” for such an insignificant stream, it does not flow from or near Slieve Lougher, but on the contrary it is in every part of its course more than twelve miles distant from the nearest part of that mountain.

Dr. Smith was so puzzled at Spenser’s “strong Allo tombling from Slewlogher steep” that he was forced to conclude that the poet confounded the rivers Allo and Blackwater. It would be strange indeed if Spenser who knew so well and designated with such precision the features of the other chief streams of Ireland, should confound two rivers in the immediate neighbourhood of his own residence; one

* Page 37, ed. 1726.

of them moreover being a mere rivulet, and the other a stream of the first magnitude—for Ireland.

Spenser did not however as he has done elsewhere, borrow or invent this name for the river; for it will appear that the Blackwater, or at least a part of it, was at one time known by the name of Allo; and Dr. John O'Donovan came to this conclusion on testimony altogether independent of Spenser; for he does not appear to have been aware of Spenser's designation, or indeed to have considered the subject of Spenser's rivers at all. What led O'Donovan to this opinion was his examination of the name of Mallow, now a well-known town on the Blackwater, which is called in Irish Moy-Allo—that is, the plain or field of the (river) Allo. Now this place could not possibly have got its name from the present river Allo, for it is situated at a point which is fully eleven miles below the junction of this river with the Blackwater. Accordingly O'Donovan writes: "From this name (Moy-Allo or Mallow) it is evident that the name Allo was anciently applied to that part of the Blackwater lying between Kanturk, where the modern Allo ends, and the town of Mallow."* Had this passage of Spenser come under his observation, he would no doubt have quoted it in further proof of his opinion. Whether the name Allo was anciently applied to that part only of the Blackwater lying between Kanturk and Mallow (or rather Bridgetown, where the Mulla joins), or to a longer portion, or to the whole, I have met with no evidence to show.

But to put the matter beyond all dispute, we shall

* *Annals of the Four Masters*, vol. vi., p. 2080.

bring up Spenser himself as a witness to tell us what he means. In *Colin Clouts come home againe* he relates how old Father Mole* did not wish his daughter (the river) Mulla to wed (the river) Bregog, but,

Meaning her much better to preferre,
Did think to match her with the neighbour flood
Which Allo hight, Broadwater callèd farre ;

by which the poet means that the river which was locally known by the name Allo was that called Broadwater by people living at a distance ; which decides without any manner of doubt that by “ strong Allo ” he meant the Broadwater or Blackwater.

If anyone should inquire how it came to pass that the little river Allo, and the Blackwater into which it falls, were called by the same name, I will observe that a river sometimes gives its name to a tributary, the principal river often losing the name, which becomes perpetuated in the minor stream. For instance, the river Foyle, flowing by the city of Derry, was in old times called the Mourne, a name which is now applied to one of its branches, viz. that flowing by Lifford ; while the present name Foyle was borrowed from Lough Foyle, the arm of the sea into which the river flows.

There is another example near Dublin which has hitherto escaped notice. The Dodder is a small mountain river flowing through the valley of Glennasmole south of Dublin and falling into the Liffey at Ringsend. Its usual Irish name was *Dothar*,†

* See p. 95 farther on.

† The most ancient form was *Dothra* ; but in later Irish, and among the people, the river was always called *Dothar*.

which is pronounced Döher; for the *t* is aspirated, as Irish grammarians say, the aspiration being indicated by the letter *h*; and an aspirated *t* (i.e. *th*) sounds in Irish like *h* alone, so that if the name had been correctly anglicised according to pronunciation, the river would now be called Dohér. But in the neighbourhood of Dublin the people had a curious fashion when anglicising Irish names, of restoring the primitive sounds of aspirated letters,* and in this manner the river came to be called Dodder instead of Dohér. Yet for all that the old name is still preserved; but it is now applied to a small stream coming down from the adjacent hills, which, after turning a number of mills in a pretty valley, joins the Dodder at Rathfarnham, and is well known by the name of Dohér or Owen-Dohér. Other instances of this sort of transfer might be cited if it were necessary, and I might point to some examples among English rivers also.

After what has been said it will not be necessary to dwell farther on Spenser's "Awniduff," for the reader will only have to attend to the order in which the rivers are named to be convinced that the Awniduff is intended for the Ulster Blackwater. Beginning at the Liffey, the poet proceeds south and west till he reaches the Shannon; starting next from the Boyne, he goes north and west, naming the rivers in the exact order of position—Boyne, Ban,

* So *bothar* (pronounced boher) a road, came to be called *botter*, *booter*, or *batter*, as in Stonybatter in Dublin (stony road); and in Booterstown near Kingstown, i.e. road-town. See the author's *Origin and History of Irish Names of Places*, vol. i., p. 46.

Awniduff (or Blackwater), Liffar (or Foyle), and Trowis,—curiously enough omitting the Erne : he then returns southwards, and finishes off the stanza with his own two rivers—

Strong Allo tomling from Slewlogher steep,
And Mulla mine whose waves I whilom taught to weep.

“The three renowned brethren” are the Suir, the Nore, and the Barrow, which the poet describes with more detail in next stanza. It is curious that he personifies them as three *brethren*, and calls them farther on “three faire sons”; whereas by other early English writers, as by Cambrensis, Camden, &c., they are called “the Three Sisters.”

The poet makes them all rise in the Slieve Bloom Mountains, which is not correct. The Barrow flows from Slieve Bloom, but the Nore and the Suir take their rise among the Devil’s Bit range south-west of Roscrea, their sources being within two miles of each other, and about twenty-four miles south-west from the source of the Barrow. This error was committed by Giraldus Cambrensis long before him, and is very excusable; for the Devil’s Bit mountains may be considered as a continuation southward of the Slieve Bloom range, and were very probably so considered by both Giraldus and Spenser.

The three rivers, after being “long sundred, do at last accord to ioyne in one,” in the long valley extending from New Ross to Waterford harbour, which was in old times called *Cumar-na-dtri-nuisce* (pronounced Cummer-na-dree-nish-ka), the valley of the three waters.

The Barrow is, as he truly states, one of the great

salmon rivers of Ireland. The Nore *boards* or flows “by faire Kilkenny and Rosseponte,” this last place being New Ross in Wexford, which is situated not exactly on the Nore but at a point nearly two miles below the junction of the Nore with the Barrow. This town was of much more account in old times than it is now; and to distinguish it from Old Ross four miles east of it, and from Ross Ibercan or Rosbercon at the Kilkenny side of the river, it was called Rosseponte or Ross of the Bridge, from a wooden bridge across the Barrow, which in those times was considered a very remarkable structure. All this will be made plain by the following words from Richard Stanilhurst:

This towne was no more famoused for these wals than for a notable wooden bridge that stretched from the towne unto the other side of the water. Diverse of the poales, logs, and stakes, with which the bridge was underpropt, sticke to this day in the water. . . . This Rosse is called Rosse Nova (New Ross), or Rosse Ponti, by reason of their bridge.*

Spenser makes these three rivers the offspring of the great giant Blomius and the nymph Rheüsa; the former being the impersonation of Slieve Bloom, and the latter of the rain falling on the mountains; for Rheüsa means “flowing water,” being nothing more than *rheousa*, the feminine participle of the Greek verb *rheo*, to flow.

In Ireland the historical or legendary personages connected with hills or other features are often magnified through the mists of centuries into giants or supernatural beings; and in this manner it has

* *Description of Ireland*, chap. iii.

come to pass that a great many of the hills in every part of the country have special guardian fairies. Most of these were the chiefs of the half-mythical magic-skilled Dedannans ; but several were the deified heroes or heroines of the Milesian and other early Irish races, and they lived in splendid palaces in the interior of green mounds, great cairns, or isolated rocks, which often crown the tops of hills.

Legends of this kind are found in the most ancient Irish literary remains ; they are mentioned or alluded to in manuscripts written more than a thousand years ago, and they are still current among the peasantry. Several of those presiding spirits are as celebrated now as they were when the oldest manuscripts were written, and popular stories about them are as prevalent as ever ; among whom may be mentioned Finvarra of Knockma near Tuam in Galway ; Donn of Knockfierna near Croom in Limerick ; Macananty of Scrabo Hill near Newtownards ; and the two banshees of Munster, Cleena of Carrig-Cleena near Mallow in Cork, and Eevinn or Eevill of Craglea near Killaloe in Clare.

The old legend assigned Slieve Bloom to a Milesian chief named *Bladh* (pronounced Blaw) who reigned there as the guardian genius. *Bladh*, we are told, was slain during the Milesian invasion in a skirmish with the Dedannans near these mountains, which ever after retained his name ; for the Irish name of the range, as we find it written in the oldest manuscripts, is *Slieve Bladhma*, the mountain of *Bladh*, (*Bladh* making *Bladhma* in the genitive). As *Bladhma* is pronounced Blawma or Bloma, the

present name Slieve Bloom is not a great departure from the original pronunciation; and Spenser retained both the sound of the name and the spirit of the popular legend when he designated the deified Milesian chief as "that great gyant Blomius."

"The wide enbayed Mayre" is the Kenmare river and bay in the south-west of Kerry, which were often called Maire by English writers of that period; as for example by Norden, who writes in his map "Flu. Maire," and by Boate, who describes it in his *Natural History of Ireland* as "a huge bay called Maire." The name was applied to the bay by English writers only; and they borrowed it from Kenmare by a kind of reverse process, as if "Kenmare" meant the *ken* or head of the estuary of Maire, exactly as Spenser himself formed Mulla from Kilnamulla (see page 108). The river flowing by Kenmare into the bay is the Roughty; and the original name of the extreme head of the bay, on which the town stands, was *Ceann-Mara*, which was in the first instance applied to the highest point to which the tide ascended in the river, and which signifies "head of the sea."*

"The pleasant Bandon crownd with many a wood" flows altogether through the county of Cork by the towns of Dunmanway and Bandon into the sea at Kinsale. It has not quite lost the character given of it by the poet; for though the magnificent woods that clothed all that country in Spenser's time have disappeared, yet along nearly the whole course of the

* *Ceann*, a head; *mair*, genitive *mara*, the sea, corresponding with Latin *mare*.

river there are numerous castles, mansions, and villas, all surrounded with pleasant plantations which crown the banks on either side.

In "The spreading Lee," the poet alludes to the great expansion of the river Lee below Cork, which forms the noble harbour on which Queenstown is situated. At Cork the river divides into two branches a little above the city, near the Mardyke, which join again near the modern City Park at the east, forming an oval-shaped island two miles long. In Spenser's time the city was confined chiefly to the island; but in later years it has extended across the river at both sides far beyond the original boundaries.

"Balefull Oure late staind with English blood" is the Avonbeg in the county Wicklow, which flows through Glenmalure and joins the Avonmore at "The Meeting of the Waters." As this river has never before been identified, and as it is an excellent example of how the poet himself, even when he is using fictitious names, generally supplies, in his short descriptions, the means of discovering the exact places he is writing about, it will be worth while to unfold, one by one, the steps that have led to its identification.

The words "late staind with English blood" must refer to a battle of some consequence in which the English were defeated and suffered loss, and which was still fresh in recollection when this passage was written. Looking back from the year 1590, which we may assume was the year, or very near it, when the Fourth Book of the *Faerie Queene* was written, we find two battles, and only two, in which the English were defeated, that might then be called "late." The first

was fought in 1579 at a place called Gortnatubrid in the south of the county Limerick, where three hundred English soldiers and three officers were killed. Another was fought at Glenmalure in 1580—the very year of Lord Grey's arrival—which was far more serious in its consequences. It will not be necessary to examine the details of the first; for the second is the only action that answers Spenser's words; and it answers them in every particular. The Lord Deputy Grey, marching in that year against the Wicklow clans, including the great chief Fiach Mac Hugh O'Byrne and his men, pitched his camp on one of the hills over Glenmalure. On August 25 a strong force prepared for action and advanced incautiously into the recesses of this dangerous glen, while the Lord Deputy remained in his camp. They were allowed to proceed without interruption till they reached a narrow part of the defile, when they were suddenly attacked by the Irish on the banks of the little stream—the Avonbeg—and after a short and sharp struggle they were routed in great disorder, leaving behind them dead eight hundred men including four English officers, Sir Peter Carew and Colonels Moor, Cosby, and Audley.

So far the river bears out the description, "late stained with English blood"; and it is important to remark that this defeat was all the more disastrous in Spenser's eyes, and he would be the more likely to retain a vivid memory of it, as it was his own master Lord Grey that was concerned in it.

Let us now consider the name "balefull Oure." I have elsewhere observed that the poet often bestows fictitious names, generally borrowed from some

neighbouring features, of which several examples are given in the course of this paper: Arlo Hill from the Glen of Arlo; Mulla from Kilnemulla; and from this again Mole, Molanna, and Armulla. So here also: "Oure" is merely the last syllable of Glenmalure, or Glenmalour as he himself calls it in his *View of the State of Ireland*.

And as to the word "balefull," the origin of this is very clear. Spenser generally endeavoured to find meanings in his names, being always ready to imagine one when the appearance of the word was in his favour; and he often bestows an epithet that reflects this real or fancied signification. Here are some examples—all names of rivers—taken from Canto xi. of the Fourth Book:

Wylibourne with passage slye
That of his wylinesse his name doth take.
Mole that like a nousling mole doth make
His way still under ground till Thames he overtake.
Bounteous Trent, that in himself enseames
Both thirty [Fr. *trente*, thirty] sorts of fish and thirty sundry
streames.
And there came Stoure with terrible aspéct ["stour," battle,
tumult].
(False) Bregog hight [see p. 111, below],
So hight because of this deceitful traine.

So also "sad Trowis" (*supra*: p. 79), "Tigris fierce," and several others. He does the same in the case before us, using "balefull" as if it were an equivalent for "mal"; for the river "Mal-oure" was baleful, not only in the disastrous memory connected with it, but even in its very name.* The reader will observe

* The poet is of course not correct, and very likely he knew it. But the syllable "mal" was very tempting under the circum-

that here the same sort of fancy passed through the poet's mind as in the case of Mulla (p. 108 *infra*) ; in other words, he thought, or assumed, that the name of the river was Oure or Maloure, and that it gave name to Glenmalure.

The Glenmalure river or Avonbeg comes also into its natural place in the catalogue ; for starting from the Maire, and proceeding along the coast, east and north, the very next important river, not already named, after the Maire the Bandon and the Lee, is the one in question the Avonbeg or Ovoca.

Although I have made a very diligent search in every available direction, I have failed to discover the river Spenser meant by "The stony Aubrian," the only one in his whole catalogue that remains unidentified. The first syllable is probably the common Irish word *abh* (pronounced *aw* or *ow*), signifying river, as we find it in Awbeg, Ownageeragh, Finnow, and many other river names. From the place it occupies in the catalogue, joined with three well-known large rivers—the order in the text being Liffey, Slaney, *Aubrian*, Shannon—it may be inferred that it is somewhere in South Munster, and that it is itself a considerable river. But after eliminating from the inquiry all the Munster rivers named here by the poet, I cannot find that any one of those remaining will answer both name and description. The Feale in Kerry, flowing by Abbeyfeale into the Shannon, is

stances, for as an ordinary Latin-English prefix it was then, as it is now, well understood to mean something evil or baleful. The true original form of the name Glenmalure is *Gleann-Maoilughra* which means the glen of the tribe called Mailura.

a large river and stony enough in its bed ; but I have never heard that it has been called by any name like Aubrian. “The stony Aubrian” is a mystery, and so far as I am concerned will I fear remain so.

In the first of *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie* the poet relates, in a fine stream of poetry, how the goddess or “Titanesse” Mutabilitie laid claim to universal sovereignty ; that when Jove gave judgment against her, she appealed to the highest authority of all—“Father of gods by equal right, to weet, the god of nature” ; and that Jove, very much against his will, agreed to the appeal, bidding “Dan Phœbus, scribe, her appellation seale.”

Eftsoones the time and place appointed were,
Where all, both heavenly powers and earthly wights,
Before great Natures presence should appeare
For triall of their titles and best rights :
That was, to weet, upon the highest hights
Of Arlo-hill (who knows not Arlo-hill ?)
That is the highest head in all mens sights,
Of my old father Mole, whom shepherds quill
Renowned hath with hymnes fit for a rurall skill.

If there be any reader “who knows not Arlo-hill,” the scene of this solemn trial, the following examination will enable him to find it out.

In the neighbourhood of Buttevant and Charleville in the county of Cork, begins a range of mountains which runs in a direction nearly eastwards till it terminates near Caher in Tipperary, a distance of about thirty miles. The middle part is low, and interrupted by high plains, but the extremities rise boldly in two well-defined mountain groups ; the western portion being called the Ballyhoura Mountains, and the eastern the Galtys. This eastern portion is also the highest,

abounding in peaks precipices and gorges ; and one particular summit, Galtymore, the most elevated of the whole range, attains a height of 3,015 feet. This last peak rises immediately over the vale of Aherlow, or Arlo as it was commonly called by Anglo-Irish writers of Spenser's time, including Spenser himself ; a fine valley eight or ten miles long walled in by the dark steep slopes of the Galtys on the south-east side, with Galtymore towering over all, and by the long ridge of Slievenamuck on the north-west. The whole range from Buttevant to Caher is what Spenser calls "Mole" or "old father Mole," as will appear very plainly a little farther on.

The mountain mass that culminates in Galtymore is Arlo-hill, on which the meeting of the gods was held ; but the name Arlo was applied to the hill only by Spenser himself, who borrowed it from the adjacent valley, and who, after his usual fashion, selected it on account of its musical sound. That Arlo-hill is Galtymore and no other is shown by several expressions scattered through this part of the poem. Arlo, we are told, overlooks the plain through which the river Suir flows :

[Diana] quite forsooke

All those faire forrests about Arlo hid ;

And all that mountaine which doth overlooke

The richest champain that may else be rid ;

And the faire Shure in which are thousand salmons bred ;

which indicates that it is among the Galtys. For, standing on the summit of these mountains, you have the magnificent plain of Tipperary at your feet, a part of the "Golden Vale," truly designated by the poet as "the richest champain that may else be

rid''; while on the other hand this plain cannot be seen at all from the western part of the range. The name Arlo connects it with the vale of Aberlow; and that it is the same as Galtymore is placed beyond all doubt by the statement that Arlo-hill

Is the highest head, in all mens sights,
Of my old father Mole.

Spenser tells us, at the beginning of *Colin Clouts come home againe*, that he lived at the foot of Mole :

One day (quoth he) I sat (as was my trade)
Under the foote of Mole, that mountain hore,
Keeping my sheepe amongst the cooly shade
Of the greene alders by the Mullaes shore.

This, we know, was where Kilcolman Castle ruin now stands, under the Ballyhoura hills, at the western extremity of the range; and as Arlo-hill in the Galtys "is the highest head in all mens sights of my old father Mole," it is quite plain that by "old father Mole" the poet meant the whole range, including the Galtys and the Ballyhouras.

Moreover, he tells us in the same poem :

Mole hight that mountain gray
That walls the north side of Armulla dale ;

from which it appears that he gave the name of Armulla to that wide valley through which the Blackwater flows, walled on the north by Father Mole, and on the south by the Boggera hills and the Nagles Mountains near Fermoy. But these names, Mole, Mulla, Armulla, are all fictitious; and I shall presently have a word to say about their origin.

Before describing the meeting of the gods and the

trial of the claims of the Titanesse, the poet introduces a pretty episode about Arlo-hill. He relates that

Whylome when Ireland florished in fame
Of wealth and goodnesse far above the rest
Of all that beare the British Islands name,
The gods then us'd, for pleasure and for rest,
Oft to resort thereto when seem'd them best :
But none of all therein more pleasure found
Then Cynthia that is soveraine Queene profest
Of woods and forrest which therein abound,
Sprinkled with wholsom waters more then most on ground.

But mongst them all, as fittest for her game,

She chose this Arlo; where shee did resort
With all her nymphes enranged on a rowe,

Amongst the which there was a nymph that hight
Molanna; daughter of old Father Mole,
And sister unto Mulla faire and bright;
Unto whose bed false Bregog whylome stole,
That Shepheard Colin dearely did condole,
And made her lucklesse loves well knowne to be;*
But this Molanna, were she not so shole [shallow],
Were no lesse faire and beautifull then shee :

Yet as she is a fairer flood may no man see.

For first she springs out of two marble rocks
On which a grove of oakes high mounted growes,
That as a girland seemes to deck the locks
Of some faire bride brought forth with pompous showes
Out of her bowre, that many flowers strowes :
So through the flowry dales she tumbling downe
Through many woods and shady coverts flowes,
That on each side her silver channell crowne,
Till to the plaine she come whose valleyes she doth drowne.

* The story of the loves of the Bregoge and Mulla, alluded to here, will be found at pp. 107 to 112 farther on.

In her sweet streames Diana used oft,
After her sweatie chace and toilsome play,
To bathe herselfe ; and after on the soft
And downy grasse her dainty limbes to lay
In covert shade, where none behold her may.*

The poet goes on to tell how the foolish wood-god Faunus had long wished to catch a sight of the goddess but found no way to compass his design till at last he persuaded the nymph Molanna, by tempting her with bribes, "To tell what time he might her lady see."

Thereto hee promist, if she would him pleasure
With this small boone, to quit her with a better ;
To weet, that whereas shee had out of measure
Long lov'd the Fanchin who by nought did set her,
That he would undertake for this to get her
To be his love, and of him liked well.*

Faunus succeeded, by the help of the nymph, but was caught in the very act by the goddess and her attendants ; and being closely questioned as to who had led him there, he confessed in his fright that it was Molanna. Whereupon they punished him by dressing him in the skin of a deer and chasing him with their hounds ; but he managed to escape them all.

So they him follow'd till they weary were ;
When, back returning to Molann' againe,
They, by commaund'ment of Diana, there
Her whelm'd with stones : yet Faunus, for her paine,
Of her beloved Fanchin did obtaine,
That her he would receive unto his bed.
So now her waves passe through a pleasant plaine,
Till with the Fanchin she herselfe do wed,
And, both combin'd, themselves in one faire river spred.

Nath'lesse Diana, full of indignation,
 Thenceforth abandoned her delicious brooke ;
 In whose sweet streame, before that bad occasion,
 So much delight to bathe her limbes she tooke :
 Ne onely her, but also quite forsooke
 All those faire forrests about Arlo hid ;
 And all that mountaine which doth overlooke
 The richest champain that may else be rid ;
 And the faire Shure in which are thousand salmons bred.

The Fanchin, or as it is now called, the Funsheon, is a small river, rising in the Galty mountains, and flowing by Mitchelstown and Glanworth into the Blackwater two miles below Fermoy, after a course of about thirty miles.

But no one has yet pointed out the stream that Spenser designated by the name Molanna. Smith indeed in his *History of Cork* attempts to do so ; but this careful writer must have been misled in the present instance by some incorrect old map, or by some other erroneous evidence ; for in his description of the source of the Funsheon and in his identification of the Molanna, he is quite wrong, as I shall I think be able to show very plainly. After the time of Smith, the editors of Spenser and other writers who interested themselves in this matter followed his (Smith's) authority without question or examination.

Smith states that the Funsheon "rises in the county of Tipperary, in a bog a mile south of the mountains called Galtys. Not far from its source—(he says) it receives a brook called the Brackbawn, which divides the county of Limerick from Tipperary and rises in the Galty mountains."* And in a note

* *Hist. of Cork*, ii. 266.

at the foot of the page he states that the Brackbawn is Spenser's Molanna.

To anyone who has not examined the place all this appears satisfactory, and to fall in exactly with Spenser's description. But a walk of three or four miles along the river will at once dispel the illusion. The river that Smith describes as meeting the Brackbawn from a bog in Tipperary, and which he says is the Funsheon, has no existence at all. The Brackbawn, for the whole of its short course of four miles, forms the boundary line between the counties of Tipperary and Limerick; and it so happens that there is no stream joining it from the Tipperary side. On that side, the fall of ground lies the other way, and all the rivulets flow eastward towards the basin of the Suir. The Brackbawn is in fact the source or head-water of the Funsheon: it is the main stream—the Funsheon itself—though it is called the Brackbawn (and sometimes the Attycraan) for the first four miles of its course, and the Funsheon from that down. I have said that the Brackbawn is the main stream: I should have said, rather, that it is the only stream; for from the point high up in the mountains where the Brackbawn is formed by the junction of two streams, down to where it begins to be called the Funsheon, it receives no tributary at all, either from the Tipperary or from the Limerick side.

As the Brackbawn is the Funsheon it cannot be the Molanna, as Smith and his followers assert; for the context of the poem shows clearly that the Molanna and the Funsheon are two different streams, and that the Molanna is a tributary of the Funsheon.

It is evident that Spenser was well acquainted with all this neighbourhood. It forms part of "Armulla Dale," the valley he himself lived in ; it is only about sixteen miles from Kilcolman—within view in fact of the castle windows ; and he describes the rivers with such exactness and detail, and his descriptions are so correct, that it is impossible to avoid believing that he explored the place himself and wrote from personal knowledge.

Although I knew this locality many years ago very intimately, I visited it from Dublin on a pleasant day of last June (1877), to examine the rivers and to judge for myself. I walked along the streams up into the heart of the Galty mountains ; and anyone who performs the same pleasant pilgrimage, with the poet's description in his mind, and who looks about him with ordinary attention, will identify the Molanna without the least difficulty. There is in fact no choice. The whole context of the poem indicates that the Molanna flows from the slopes of Arlo-hill. There are only two streams of any consequence flowing into the Funsheon valley from the Galtys. One of these is the Funsheon itself, or the Brackbawn, which, as I have already observed, forms for some distance the boundary between Limerick and Tipperary. Its source is high up among the mountains, about a quarter of a mile east of the summit of Galtymore ; and it flows from several springs along the glen, one on the boundary line of the counties, others on the Limerick side, but none, as far as I could see, on the east or Tipperary side.

The other stream is the Behanna,* which rises in 'Arlo-hill,' a little to the west of the summit of Galtymore, and after a course of about four miles, joins the Funsheon at the hamlet of Kilbeheny. This is the Molanna. We have, as I have said, no choice in the matter; there is no stream but the Behanna flowing from the Galtys into the Funsheon, except mere tiny brooklets that could not claim a moment's consideration; and in every respect it answers the poet's description of the Molanna. It is formed by the junction of two streams far up in the mountains, each flowing through a deep glen, with a high hill (Knocknadarriff or the hill of the bulls) jutting out boldly between them. The eastern branch is named Carrigeen (little rock) from a rock extending along the side of the glen through which it flows, which is also often called Doocarrig or black rock. The other or western branch is called Coolatinny (the recess of the fox), or more commonly the Pigeon Rock stream. Rising over the side of the western glen is a great precipice called Carrignagloor, or the rock of the pigeons, which gives the name of Pigeon Rock to the stream.

Each stream has its own rock towering up on the side of its glen; and this is obviously what the poet had in his mind when he described the Molanna as "springing from two marble rocks." The "grove of oakes high mounted" over the double source is gone indeed; but so are the dense woods that once

* It is now called Beheena by the natives; but a generation ago it was called Behanna, and this is the name perpetuated on the Ordnance maps.

clothed the Galtys—"all those faire forrests about Arlo hid"—for which these mountains were noted in times not very remote. When you look from a point on the Behanna, a little below the junction of the two head streams, upwards into the two rocky glens winding into the heart of the mountains, you can hardly help believing that in Spenser's time the grove of oaks that so struck his fancy crowned the summit of Knocknadarriff, which rises abrupt and bare between the two streams to a height of 2,000 feet straight before you.

The "many woods and shady coverts" that crowned the silver channel of the Molanna three hundred years ago are also gone; but down to a very recent period a wood extended along both sides of the river for about a mile below the junction of the two tributary streams. This was called Coolattin wood, and was a modern plantation; but it was doubtless the successor of a forest of ancient growth. Coolattin wood was cut down seven or eight years ago, but abundant vestiges of it still remain—roots and stumps of trees, and an occasional undergrowth of oak, ash, hazel, and birch.

After tumbling down from its mountain channel, the Behanna emerges sharply on the plain, through which it winds gently for the last mile of its course, among level meadows and cornfields, till it joins the Funsheon near the bridge of Kilbeheny; thus corresponding exactly with the words of the poet:

So now her waves passe through a pleasant plaine,
Till with the Fanchin she herselfe do wed,
And, both combin'd, themselves in one faire river spred.

The stream is very steep in the first part of its

course; and the winter torrents have in the course of ages rolled down vast quantities of large stones and gravel and deposited them in the level part of its bed. The people indeed often come specially to the river during heavy floods to listen to the great noise made by the stones as they are rolled down by the torrent, tearing crashing and grinding against each other. The poet has figured this feature of the river bed under a thin veil, in the passage where he tells us that the nymphs at the command of Diana overwhelmed Molanna with stones. So that here as elsewhere his accurate delineation of local features helps us to identify the stream; and when we have succeeded in this, our knowledge of the place heightens our appreciation of his beautiful allegory. He is no less truthful when he writes:

But this Molanna, were she not so shole [shallow],
 Were no lesse faire and beautifull then shee [i.e. than the
 Mulla]:
 Yet as she is a fairer flood may no man see.

For the Behanna never becomes deep and slow in its movement like the Mulla, but flows brightly and quickly along, winding and dashing among the stones that everywhere strew its bed, and showing all along the clear gravel at the bottom. And as to beauty, I question whether the poet was not prejudiced in favour of his own beloved Mulla, when he pronounced it superior to Molanna; for even though "so shole," the Molanna is a very lovely stream.

In the early part of its course, the river forms

many crystal pools, each under a little rocky cascade;
and it was in these that

Diana used oft,
After her sweatie chace and toilsome play,
To bathe herselfe.

When I was walking along the stream on a sultry evening in June, I could not help thinking how delicious it would be to imitate the goddess.

As "Molanna" is a fictitious name, it may naturally be asked what was the circumstance that suggested it to the poet's mind; for the reader will have observed that all Spenser's fictitious names were adopted from some local features; and the origin of this name appears quite clear. The poet tells us that Molanna was "sister unto Mulla faire and bright;" for both were daughters of "old Father Mole," and according to the poet's fancy took their names from him. But the latter part of the name Molanna, I think it very obvious, was suggested to Spenser partly by the native name *Behanna*, and partly also perhaps by the fact that on the eastern bank of the stream there is a small lake giving name to a townland, called to this day *Lough-an-anna*.

I am persuaded that the idea of making Arlo-hill the scene of these gatherings of the gods was suggested to Spenser by the native legends. For in times of old, in the shadowy days of Irish romance, this hill was very famous; it was the resort of fairies and enchanters, of gods and goddesses, though these last were not the same as those recorded by Spenser; and many stories of their strange doings

are still preserved in our old manuscript books, especially in one called "The Book of Ballymote."

It was here, near the summit of the hill, that Cliach the youthful harper of Connaught sat for a whole year, pleading his love for the Princess Baina the daughter of the Dedannan fairy king Bove Derg. But although he played on two harps at the same time, he was not able by the spells of his fairy music to open the gates of the palace, for the magical power of the king was an overmatch for him: neither did he succeed in winning the love of the princess, whose heart remained hardened against him to the last. So that the earth at length taking pity on his sorrows, opened up under his feet and received him into her bosom. And the hollow was immediately filled up by a lake, which remains to this day near the top of the hill. The legend* adds that "Crotta Cliach," the old name of the Galty mountains, was derived from this love tragedy; for "Crotta Cliach" signifies, according to this account, the *crotta* or harps of Cliach, in allusion to the two *cruits* or harps on which he played.

It was here too that another fairy princess, the beautiful Keraber, and her train of seven score and ten damsels, who were bright-coloured birds one year and had their own shapes the next—here it was in this very lake, that they spent their time, swimming about year after year while they were birds, linked together in couples with chains of silver.

It is highly probable that Spenser was acquainted with these and other legends about Arlo-hill—why

* Which, as well as the next, is found in the Book of Ballymote.

should he not know them as well as he knew the legend of Lough Melvin at the other side of Ireland?—they were then quite common among the peasantry, as indeed some of them are at the present day; and we may very well suppose that he took from them the hint of the meeting of the gods, and of his beautiful episode of Diana and her nymphs.

The story of the loves of the two rivers Bregog and Mulla is related in *Colin Clouts come home againe*; and the poet introduces this little pastoral narrative with a particular account of his own melodious Mulla:

Old father Mole (Mole hight that mountain gray
That walls the north side of Armulla dale;)
He had a daughter fresh as floure of May
Which gave that name unto that pleasant vale;
Mulla the daughter of old Mole, so hight
The nimph, which of that water course has charge,
That, springing out of Mole, doth run downe right
To Buttevant, where spreading forth at large,
It giveth name unto that auncient Cittie,
Which Kilnemullah cleped [named] is of old.

The little river Mulla, which he elsewhere speaks of as “Mulla mine whose waves I whilom taught to weep,” flows by Buttevant and Doneraile, passing through the district once held by Spenser, within a short distance of Kilcolman Castle, and after a gentle winding course of about twenty-five miles it joins the Blackwater half-way between Mallow and Fermoy. The name Mulla, which Spenser took such delight in, is not, and never was, the name of the river; but the poet used it, as elsewhere he used Arlo, in preference to the true name, on account of its musical

sound. Its proper name is Awbeg, little river; and it was so called to distinguish it from the Avonmore (great river) or Blackwater.

The poet got the name Mulla much in the same way as he got "balefull Oure";* he borrowed it from Kilnemullah, which as he truly states was the old name of Buttevant. The river grows very wide, "spreading forth at large," at Buttevant, forming a kind of elongated lake; and he assumed that its own proper name was Mulla, and that it gave name to Kilnemullah—"it giveth name unto that auncient Cittie"†—it was enough for him that it looked plausible;—and having got the name Mulla, he used it ever after for the river, and loved it and multiplied it in every direction. Its first reproduction is in "Old Father Mole," the fanciful name of the range of hills already noticed, father of the nymph Mulla, who, following up, or rather reversing, the fiction, took her name from her grey old sire, as did also her sister nymph Molanna; and lastly, the name Armulla had a like origin, for Mulla "gave that name unto that pleasant vale."

[Mulla] lov'd and was beloved full faine
Of her owne brother river, Bregog hight,
So hight because of this deceitfull traine
Which he with Mulla wrought to win delight.

* See p. 91.

† As if it were the *kill* or church of Mulla. But this is not correct, for the old name is *Cill-na-mullach*, *ecclesia tumulorum*, as O'Sullivan Beare translates it, "the church of the summits or hillocks." The present name Buttevant is believed to be derived from *Boutez-en-avant*, a French phrase, meaning "push forward," the motto of the Barrymore family.

But her old sire more carefull of her good,
 And meaning her much better to preferre,
 Did thinke to match her with the neighbour flood,
 Which Allo hight, Broadwater [the Blackwater]
 called farre.

And in fact the day was fixed for the marriage; but Bregog was determined to have Mulla for himself, and the nymph secretly favoured his advances. The old father, "sitting still on hie," kept a close watch on the lovers; but Bregog was too clever for him and circumvented him in the end. For the rest we must let Colin Clout tell the story in his own delightful way.

Her father, sitting still on hie,
 Did warily still watch which way she went,
 And eke from far observ'd with iealous eie
 Which way his course the wanton Bregog bent;
 Him to deceive, for all his watchfull ward,
 Thy wily lover did devise this slight:
 First into many parts his stream he shar'd
 That, whilst the one was watcht the other might
 Passe unespide to meete her by the way;
 And then besides those little streames so broken
 He under ground so closely did convey,
 That of their passage doth appeare no token
 Till they into the Mullaes water slide.
 So secretly did he his love enioy:
 Yet not so secret but it was descride,
 And told her father by a shepheard's boy,
 Who, wondrous wroth for that so foule despight,
 In great revenge did roll down from his hill
 Huge mighty stones the which encomber might
 His passage, and his water courses spill.
 So of a River which he was of old,
 He none was made, but scattred all to nought;
 And lost emong those rocks into him rold,
 Did lose his name: so deare his love he bought.

The little river Bregoge is still well known by the same name. It rises in two deep glens on Corrinmore Hill, one of the Ballyhoura range, and flowing near Kilcolman Castle, it joins the Awbeg or Mulla at the town of Doneraile after a course of about five miles. This river is described by the poet in his fanciful sketch with great truthfulness. After leaving the hills it traverses the plain before its junction with the Awbeg; and for some distance after emerging from its mountain home its channel is often very wide, and filled with heaps of gravel and stones brought down by the floods, so that the stream, which is generally very small and often nearly dry, is much scattered and interrupted; and we may assume that it was still more so in Spenser's time, before the bed was shut in by cultivation. These are the stones rolled down by Old Father Mole in his "great revenge."

In the lower part of its course, the river traverses a limestone plain, winding along a lovely little glen among rich meadows interspersed with groves and shrubberies and grey limestone rocks, sometimes rising high up on either bank and sometimes just peeping out from among the foliage. Two or three times, from "Streamhill," where the two principal feeders meet, down to "Old Court"—a distance of about two miles—the river sinks out of sight and flows underground for a considerable distance through the caverns of the limestone rock under its bed, leaving its channel completely dry. It presents this appearance always except in wet weather or during a flood, when the underground caverns are not able to swallow all the water, and the stream then flows continuously.

With this peculiarity Spenser was thoroughly well acquainted, as he describes it with great correctness :

Those little streames so broken
He [Bregog] under ground so closely did convey,
That of their passage doth appeare no token
Till they into the Mullaes water slide.

The poet called this little river by its true name, which is not very musical, instead of inventing or borrowing one as he did in so many other cases ; for it so happened that he was able to turn its signification to account—if indeed, as is probable, the name did not suggest the treatment—in working out his pretty pastoral, “ Bregog,” meaning, as he rightly interprets it, a false one or a deceiver.

So hight because of this deceitfull traine,
Which he with Mulla wrought to win delight.

It may not be amiss to say a word here regarding this name and its signification, though in doing so we shall have to descend from the airy world of fancy to the solid level ground of sober reality. *Brég* is an Irish word meaning a falsehood, and in various forms it is applied to rivers that are subject to sudden and dangerous floods or which flow through deep quagmires ; signifying, in this application, deceitful or treacherous. There is for instance a stream called Breagagh near the city of Kilkenny, and another near Thurles in Tipperary. And Trawbreaga Bay at Malin in the north of Donegal is so called (Trawbreaga meaning the strand of falsehood or treachery) because the tide rises there so suddenly that it has often swept away people walking incautiously on the shore.

Spenser's Bregog is formed by the junction of four mountain rivulets all of about the same length, and meeting nearly at the same point, whence the united stream flows on to the Awbeg. These rivulets carry little water in dry weather, but whenever a heavy and continuous shower falls on the hills, four mountain floods rush down simultaneously and meet together nearly at the same instant, swelling the little river in a few moments to a furious and dangerous torrent. All this is quite well understood in the neighbourhood. An intelligent man living near the river told me that it was the most "roguish" river in the world; for when you least expected it, and when the stream looked perfectly quiet and gentle, the flood would rise in a quarter of an hour to a height of seven or eight feet, rushing down "all abreast," as he expressed it. I may add that the word "roguish" gives exactly the sense of the Irish name "Bregoge."

The following are the identifications established in the preceding paper. Many of them are of course obvious: but many others are not so, and have been brought forward and proved here for the first time:—

"Liffy"; the River Liffey in Wicklow, Kildare, and Dublin (p. 75).

"Sandy Slane"; the Slaney, flowing into the sea at Wexford (p. 75).

["Stony Aubrian"; the only one of all Spenser's Irish rivers not identified (p. 93).]

- “ Spacious Shenan ”; the Shannon (p. 76).
- “ Pleasant Boyne ”; the Boyne flowing into the sea at Drogheda (p. 76).
- “ Fishy fruitfull Ban ”; the Bann in Ulster (p. 76).
- “ Swift Awniduff which of the English man is cal'de Blacke-water ”; the Ulster Blackwater flowing into Lough Neagh: not the Munster Blackwater (pp. 80 to 86).
- “ Liffar deep ”; the Foyle at Lifford in Donegal (p. 77).
- “ Sad Trowis ”; the little river Drowes between the counties of Donegal and Leitrim (pp. 77 to 80).
- “ Strong Allo ”; the great Munster Blackwater: not the present little river Allo (pp. 80 to 85).
- “ Mulla mine ”; the Awbeg flowing by Buttevant and Doneraile in Cork (pp. 80 to 108).
- “ That great Gyant Blomius ”; the Slieve Bloom Mountains (pp. 74, 86, 87 to 89).
- “ Gentle Shure ”; the Suir in Munster (pp. 86, 87).
- “ Stubborne Newre ”; the Nore, joining the Suir (pp. 86, 87).
- “ Rosseponte ”; New Ross in Wexford (p. 87).
- “ Goodly Barow ”; the Barrow, joining the Suir (pp. 86, 87).
- “ Wide embayed Mayre ”; Kenmare river and bay in Kerry (p. 89).
- “ Pleasant Bandon ”; the river flowing by Bandon in Cork (p. 89).
- “ Spreading Lee ”; the Lee flowing through Cork (p. 90).
- “ Balefull Oure ”; the Avonbeg in the county Wicklow (pp. 90 to 93).

- “Arlo Hill”; Galtymore, the highest peak of the Galty Mountains (pp. 94 to 96).
- “Mole”—“My old father Mole”; the whole range of mountains beginning at Charleville and Buttevant in Cork, and ending at Caher in Tipperary, including the Ballyhoura and the Galty Mountains (pp. 94 to 96).
- “Armulla dale”; the valley through which the Munster Blackwater flows (p. 96).
- “Fanchin”; the river Funsheon flowing by Mitchelstown into the Blackwater near Fermoy (p. 99).
- “Molanna”; the little river Behanna or Beheena, a stream rising high up on Galtymore and joining the Funsheon at the hamlet of Kilbenny, 3 miles from Mitchelstown (pp. 98 to 105).
- Kilnemullah or Kilnamullagh; Buttevant in Cork (pp. 107, 108).
- Bregog; a little stream (the Bregoge) rising on Corrinmore hill and flowing near Kilcolman: joins the Awbeg or Mulla at Doneraile (pp. 108 to 112).

THE DESTRUCTION OF TIERNMAS AND HIS PEOPLE.

A TALE OF OLD DUSKY TIMES.

PREFATORY NOTE.

IN early youth I was a diligent student of English style; and in order to select or form a style for myself I read the best authors:—Addison, Steele, Swift, Johnson, Goldsmith, &c. I wrote the following little story at intervals while reading *Rasselas*; and now after a lapse of more than sixty years, I am greatly amused to observe in it a palpable reflection of Johnson's symmetrical style and balanced sentences. Johnson dazzled me for a time—especially in *Rasselas*; but I soon found out that he is not a desirable model to follow—so far as style is concerned—and I gave up imitating him. In the end indeed—though after much time and labour—which I think were not wasted—I ceased to imitate anyone, and struck out for myself.

For fifty years I have worked on this plan. My constant endeavour has been to write pure English—simple and direct and easy to understand; so that a person reading with ordinary attention picks up the sense with ease as he goes along.

When reading any book, if you have to turn back often in order to catch up the drift, be sure there is something faulty in the style. Let the young writer avoid big, or learned, or unusual words, and long sentences. Above all let him avoid—so far as

possible—these two hateful words *former* and *latter*, which are always irritating to a reader, as he has to cast his eyes back—sometimes even four or five lines or more—to see which is which. And even this often leaves him in doubt on account of the clumsy construction of the sentence: which is the breaking point of patience.

[We have in our old manuscript books a very ancient legend that King Tiernmas, who reigned many centuries before the Christian era, and a multitude of his people along with him, were destroyed in some mysterious way while worshipping the great pillar-stone idol Cromm Cru on the eve of *Samain* (*Samain* being the 1st November). This idol god stood on the plain of *Magh Slecht* in the present County Cavan; and of him and his worship an account will be found in my *Smaller Social Hist. of Anc. Irel.*, p. 118. The following short story is merely an expansion of the legend. I wrote it at a period of my life when I had more enthusiasm than knowledge; so that I will not answer for the accuracy of all the details given here of the pagan observances. That may be easily remedied however by a glance through the chapter on Paganism in the book mentioned above.]

A HUNDRED years had elapsed since the two sons of Milesius—Heber and Heremon—reigned over that green island which they had wrested from the magic-skilled De Dannans, when the monarch Tiernmas

ascended the throne. His ancestors had migrated from Scythia, their original home, and for several ages, under the guidance of many celebrated chieftains, they wandered restlessly from land to land. Egypt was their home for a hundred years; and during their residence there they received and adopted the Jewish faith from Moses and other patriarchs. In their subsequent wanderings in search of that green Island of Destiny lying far west, as their final resting place, to which they were directed by the prophetic visions of a seer, the purity of their adopted faith became in some degree sullied by the mixture of Pagan superstitions; and though they still preserved the most important parts of the Jewish belief, they frequently bestowed their intense and excessive admiration on those created things that best mirrored their conceptions of the Deity. Their reverence for the glorious sun and silent moon approached by imperceptible degrees dangerously near adoration, and the sublime though material form of Druidism was gradually developed. The form of the Jewish worship was still adhered to, and the main principles of the religion inculcated, for they had removed only a single step towards the adoption of those dark tenets of paganism promulgated by the Druids of later ages; yet many superstitious and cruel customs had begun to prevail among them. Their reverence for the great ruling Spirit was undiminished, and they worshipped in their sacred groves, with heaven for their canopy, conceiving it derogatory to Divine immensity to be confined to the walls of a temple; but their cromlechs of unhewn stone, erected after the model of the Jewish altars, occasionally smoked

with the blood of human sacrifices.* This was the aspect of their religious creed when under Heber and Heremon they conquered the De Dannans and took possession of Inisfail.

The venerable Connla the Sage held the honourable office of high priest for many years before the accession of Tiernmas. He was a man deeply versed in the historic and speculative learning of those primitive times; he not only zealously promulgated the precepts of religion, but exhibited the best example of their observance by a blameless life; and the influence which his stainless character and profound learning gave him he employed in checking with a fearless hand the growing corruption and idolatrous tendencies of the priests. Under his vigilant superintendence, a reformation was effected in the national faith, and it once more approached in purity and simplicity the doctrines delivered to his ancestors by the Hebrew legislator.

The nation had steadily advanced in prosperity since the establishment of the Milesian monarchy, and Tiernmas ascended the throne of his fathers, the most potent monarch that ever yet was acknowledged by the mysterious sounds of the stone of destiny. (See p. 64 above.) His power as a warrior was equal to his wisdom as a legislator: the one was not more zealously employed in repressing his enemies than the other in framing laws and advancing the social condition of his subjects. He was of the line of

*Now (1911) I do not believe that human beings were ever offered up to idols in Ireland: and as for cromlechs they are tombs, not altars. See this question examined in the *Smaller Social History*, pp. 119, 543.

Heremon, and the Heberians of the South struggled long and valiantly to wrest the sceptre from him ; but his prudence anticipated their designs, and his valour crushed their efforts. Yet it was not until he proved victorious in twenty-seven sanguinary engagements that he sat on the stone of destiny, the undisputed monarch of Inisfail. His attention was next directed to the internal regulation of his kingdom, and he repaired the damages of civil war by the wisdom and equity of his administration. He distributed the people into classes, distinguishing them by the number of colours in their garments ; and to each class he assigned peculiar laws and privileges. Learning was patronised and encouraged, and its professors were ranked with the royal family and wore the same number of colours. The advancement of the arts kept pace with the general progress of society, and the discovery of a gold mine—the first ever worked in the country—added still more to the wealth of the monarch. Many of those antique golden ornaments, on which we gaze with wonder and admiration, and whose origin is lost in the twilight of distant ages, were made by the cunning hand of Ucadan, the discoverer of the mine and the chief worker in metal : their number and purity attest the wealth of the country ; and the beauty of their workmanship bears witness to the skill of the artificer.

But Tiernmas with all his worldly wisdom and glory was a slave to the grossest superstition. During the early and more turbulent part of his reign, he seldom had either leisure or inclination to attend to the religious affairs of his kingdom ; but he openly expressed his contempt for the established religion,

and his determination to modify it to suit his own conceptions, or replace it by a totally new species of worship. Connla the Sage beheld this with silent sorrow and apprehension, and his prayers continually ascended that the curse of idolatry might be averted from the nation. But his prayers avail not for the king has issued a proclamation; and all his subjects must henceforth bend the knee to the great idol Cromm Cru. Many of his courtiers were willing to abandon a religion that repressed too severely the licentiousness of their lives; others more scrupulous were yet afraid to avow their convictions; and every vestige of the old worship was soon banished from the precincts of the royal residence.

The priests were forbidden to approach the palace unless they consented to sacrifice to the idol:—those whose attachment to their faith was sincere secretly retired with their beloved master to seek shelter and sympathy from those who were too virtuous to yield to the debasing influence of idolatry. The greater number however, tempted by the prospect of reward, threw themselves under the royal patronage, and consented to officiate at the altars of the idol. Many of them were impatient of the restraint which the watchful eye of Connla imposed on their conduct, and remembered with renewed irritation his unsparing censures of their vices; some envied his virtue and profound learning; and all, with the exception of those faithful few who followed him into exile, seized the opportunity of secretly indulging their malice against him, and openly testifying their loyalty to the sovereign.

At length the great festival of Samain approached

and a royal proclamation went forth commanding the people to assemble on the eve of the day, and celebrate the festival in honour of the idol. It was to be a day of universal rejoicing, and the preparations were vast and magnificent. Nothing was neglected by the king that could gratify the pride of his courtiers, stimulate the zeal and avarice of the priests, or fascinate the gaze of the multitude. The expectations of all were raised to the highest degree, and every one looked forward with impatience for the auspicious morning.

On the evening preceding the festival, the sounds of revelry rang loud and joyous through the palace; for the king was surrounded by his courtiers, and they abandoned themselves to unrestrained festivity. At the upper end of the hall sat the monarch on a magnificent throne, and extending far down on either side were placed the nobles according to the order of rank. Beside the throne sat the royal bard, who proceeded—by the king's command—to recount the actions of his great ancestor Milesius. And now every voice was hushed, and every ear fixed in eager attention. The fire of enthusiasm lighted the eye of the son of song; his countenance glowed with a wild unearthly expression; and in that language whose tones are music he poured forth a flood of eloquence that intoxicated his listeners like the spell of a wizard. He sang of the hero's travels to the land of his fathers, Scythia, and how his courtly manners and gallant actions won for him the favour of the great king; he dwelt on his arrival in Egypt, where the might of his arms enabled the proud Pharaoh to subdue the Ethiopic nations from the South, and

how the monarch's beautiful daughter *Scota* became his wife—the guerdon of his valour. He glanced from scene to scene of the hero's life, and enumerated and applauded his wanderings, his conquests, and his virtues; and when he ceased, the breathless silence continued for a space unbroken, and his entranced audience yet listened as though his voice still sounded in their ears. A faint murmur now broke through the stillness, the listeners started as if from a dream, the murmur rapidly rose, and the first wild burst of uncontrolled admiration had partially rung through the hall, when it was suddenly hushed; for every eye was fixed on a tall venerable figure that advanced towards the throne with slow and stately tread. The name of *Connla the Sage* involuntarily burst from the monarch's lips as the stranger confronted him. He bestowed not a single glance at the rich panoply that surrounded him; the magnificently attired courtiers were unnoticed; he stood unmoved and fearless before the king, and bent on him an indignant glance, before which the royal culprit for a moment quailed, as if those eyes pierced to the inmost depths of his soul. The stranger's voice at length broke the death-like silence. "Thou hast heard, O king, a tale that well suits thy royal ear. Nobly hast thou emulated the valour of thy great ancestor; why not also imitate his virtue? The mind of the noble *Milesius* spurned the debasing trammels of idolatry: a deformed idol is the object of thy senseless adoration. Thy wickedness has ascended to the throne of the Eternal, and prosperity hardens thee yet more in thy iniquity. But provoke not too far the wrath of the Almighty One. It is not yet too

late. Revoke, O Tiernmas, thy impious purpose, and fill not the measure of thy iniquity by persevering in to-morrow's sacrifice."

Then the king spoke; and as he half raised himself from his throne, a flush of anger lighted his countenance. "Foolish and presumptuous old man, how canst thou dare to oppose the will or dictate to the authority of thy king? Thou art old and despised, and the consciousness of this has given thee boldness. But the presumption of even thine imbecile old age may provoke the resentment and meet with the punishment it deserves. Seek again thy retirement, and there lament, as long as it gratifies thy spleen, the downfall of a despised creed, and call with all thy might on thy imaginary God to interpose; but risk not again thy safety by intruding thy reveries on our festivity."

The priest still calm and unmoved replied: "O king, thy threats fall idly on one who is weary of life, and would gladly seek an asylum from his toils. But thy wickedness—thy blasphemy of the name of the living God—shall not pass unpunished. Already I see the dark cloud of His wrath gathering over thee. Again I warn thee to desist from thy purpose; but if thou persevere, beware, O Tiernmas, beware of to-morrow!"

He spoke with slow and impressive solemnity and his eyes kindled with a lustre more than human as he uttered the shadowy denunciation. He turned round, and with the same stately tread left the hall.

The voice of revelry was resumed, but the uncontrolled gaiety of the revellers had vanished. The prophetic tones of the priest as he denounced divine

vengeance seemed still to echo in their hearts, and a vague, shadowy presentiment of coming evil flung a gloom over their festivity. The king too was occasionally silent and thoughtful, and the spiritless efforts of all to dispel the lurking sadness but rendered it more apparent.

The morning of Samain Eve rose bright and glorious; all nature smiled and all hearts were glad that the day of sacrifice came forth with such auspicious loveliness. On a low eminence situated in the midst of a plain (*Magh Slecht*) stood the future deity—the great idol Cromm Cru—a huge pillar-stone rudely fashioned into a hideous resemblance of the human form. Its head was covered with gold, and it exhibited a countenance of frightful deformity. Surrounding it in a circle stood twelve lesser attendant idols, all facing the gigantic Cromm, and each bearing on its own visage a distinct and peculiar ugliness. Within this circle and in front of the great idol stood the altar of sacrifice, a vast cromlech,* inclined, so as to allow the blood of the victim—a human victim on all important occasions—to flow in slender streams down its face, from which the sacrificing priests augured the future destiny of the nation. Into this sacred enclosure it was ordained that none should ever pass without undergoing the bloody ordeal of “sanctification.” The worshipper, having arrived within a certain distance of the circle, prostrated himself on his bared hands and knees, and in this humiliating position crawled towards the idol; as he moved over the rough stones, the red

* No: cromlechs were tombs, not altars. See note. page 118.

traces of his blood should mark his pathway, and after this terrible trial he was permitted to enter. This dreadful form of worship—the sufferings of the worshippers—and the horrid custom of offering human sacrifices, were commemorated in the name which the place retained for ages after—the Plain of Shrieking.* The whole system of worship wore the character of gloom, terror, and cruelty.

Never had the Plain of Shrieking been encumbered with such a mass of human beings as on this festival of Samain Eve. Thousands poured in from every side, all eager to exhibit their obedience to the royal commands. Innumerable votaries were seen on their knees, struggling to reach the inner circle, at the entrance of which stood two priests to admit such as had properly qualified themselves. Many, who from want of sufficient firmness or devotion failed in inflicting the requisite amount of self-torture, were rejected by the priests, and obliged to retrace their way and approach a second time with more decided marks of devotion. Scores sank exhausted under the trial; the whole plain was reddened with their blood; but the agonising groans and shrieks of the wretches were drowned in the shouts of the multitude as they encouraged those who wavered or congratulated those who succeeded.

A low murmur now ran through the crowd—all eyes were turned expectant in a particular direction,—and at length the chariot of the king burst on their view, followed by a long train of white-robed priests slowly wending their way towards the idol.

* No : *Magh Slecht* means the “Plain of Prostrations.”

The king was seated high above the rest ; the magnificence of his attire and the majestic gravity of his countenance dazzled the gaze and awed the imaginations of the multitude. In front of the priests was borne the victim, a beautiful infant, forced according to the savage law instituted by the king from the arms of its mother, because it was the first-born of those children whom it was imagined her prayers had obtained from the god. The children thus dedicated were generally bred as priests or priestesses ; but the importance of this day's ceremony required an offering more than usually acceptable ; and accordingly the condemned criminals from among whom the victim was on ordinary occasions chosen were spared, and the little innocent was doomed to propitiate the favour of the god. The priests were clad in long flowing robes, and their white beards descended on their breasts.

The procession advanced towards the circle amidst the acclamations of the multitude ; the priests entered ; and the king, descending from his chariot, placed himself with the high priest in front of the idol. The victim was placed on the altar, and on each side stood the two officiating priests, each holding a knife, and ready at a given signal to complete the dreadful ceremony. The child, too young to be conscious of its situation, played with the vestments of the priests, or gazed laughingly at the splendour that surrounded her.

And now the high priest advanced to the front of the altar, and placing himself on an elevated position, prepared to proclaim to the people the universal adoption of Cromm Cru as the god of the Milesian

nation. After this proclamation, all—both priests and people—were to prostrate themselves in adoration before the idol, and the ceremony was to conclude with the immolation of the victim, and the divination of the soothsayers.

With a loud voice the priest repeated the proclamation, and then in the name of the king commanded all to adore the great god Cromm Cru. The king, followed by the priests, knelt in adoration, and the vast multitude swayed to and fro in the act of prostrating themselves, when all was suddenly and fearfully interrupted. A bright flash burst from the bosom of a dark cloud that overhung the plain, and leaped among the prostrate group that surrounded the idol. A long intense cry of agony now rose wild and fearful on the ear, but was instantly lost in a crash that seemed to rend the firmament. Heaven was up and in arms, and a fearful retribution followed the dark deed of idolatry. Flash after flash darted down, and sprang fiercely, as eager for prey, among the multitude, but their wild shrieks of terror, and the groans of the dying, were only heard in the intervals of the thunder's roar. Hundreds, urged by the impulse of self-preservation, and maddened with the energy of despair, rushed blindly in all directions, overturning those that lay in their path and trampling on the bodies of their dead and dying friends. Still the lightning continued to rage with unabated fury, and numbers fell withered and blasted to the earth at each merciless explosion. The mad struggles of the crowd became at last more faint, and the despairing cries more scattered and broken; the roar of the thunder gradually subsided; and at length all was hushed in silence. The work of ven-

geance was accomplished, and the plain of shrieking, on which an hour before so many thousands had exulted in the pride of their strength, now lay one wide extent of unbroken stillness.

Within the circle not one escaped the arm of vengeance; the body of the king lay at the foot of the image, his hands still clasped as if in supplication; around him were strewn promiscuously the priests, many of them retaining the wild despairing gestures in which they died; and the hideous idol reared its gigantic form over the plain, and looked like a malignant demon glaring with horrid satisfaction at the carnage by which he was surrounded. Those among the people who had escaped the rage of the lightning fled in terror, and now no symptom of life disturbed the reign of silence.

A grove of trees stood at a short distance from the idol. From amongst these a woman suddenly emerged, and rushed with eager haste towards the circle. Her hair streamed wildly behind her as she fled; her countenance was haggard with anxious breathless expectation; and her straining gaze was riveted on the altar. Regardless of the scene of horror that surrounded her, she flew with frantic speed towards the idol; she entered the circle with trembling anxiety; and the next moment uttered a wild cry of delight as she clasped her living bane in her arms.

The Plain of Shrieking* is still shown, where for many ages the idol Cromm Cru was worshipped; and the fate of Tiernmas, the first idolater king of Inisfail, is still remembered in the shadowy traditions of the people.

* The "Plain of Prostrations."

FERGUS O'MARA AND THE DEMONS.*

OF all the different kinds of goblins that haunted the lonely places of Ireland in days of old, air-demons were most dreaded by the people. They lived among clouds and mists and rocks, and they hated the human race with the utmost malignity. In those times lived in the north of Desmond (the present county of Cork) a man named Fergus O'Mara. His farm lay on the southern slope of the Ballyhoura Mountains, along which ran the open road that led to his house. This road was not shut in by walls or fences; but on both sides there were scattered trees and bushes that sheltered it in winter, and made it dark and gloomy when you approached the house at night. Beside the road, a little way off from the house, there was a spot that had an evil name all over the country, a little hill covered closely with copsewood, with a great craggy rock on top, from which, on stormy nights, strange and fearful sounds had often been heard—shrill voices and screams mingled with loud fiendish laughter; and the people believed that it was the haunt of air-demons. In some way it had become known that these demons had an eye on Fergus, and watched for every opportunity to get him into their power. He had himself been warned of this many years before, by an old monk from the neighbouring monastery of

* Reprinted from "Good and Pleasant Reading": Dublin, M. H. Gill & Son: 1886. This is an expansion by me of a very pretty legend current in Limerick seventy or eighty years ago.

Buttevant, who told him moreover that so long as he led a blameless upright life he need have no fear of the demons ; but that if ever he yielded to temptation or fell into any great sin, then would come the opportunity for which they were watching day and night. He never forgot this warning, and he was very careful to keep himself straight, both because he was naturally a good man, and for fear of the air-demons.

Some time before the occurrence about to be related, one of Fergus's children, a sweet little girl about seven years of age, fell ill and died. The little thing gradually wasted away, but suffered no pain ; and as she grew weaker she became more loving and gentle than ever, and talked in a wonderful way, quite beyond her years, of the bright land she was going to. One thing she was particularly anxious about, that when she was dying they should let her hold a blessed candle in her hand.* They thought it very strange that she should be so continually thinking and talking of this ; and over and over again she made her father and mother promise that it should be done. And with the blessed candle in her hand she died so calmly and sweetly that those round her bed could not tell the exact moment.

About a year after this, on a bright Sunday morning in October, Fergus set out for Mass. The place was about three miles away, and it was not a chapel, but a lonely old fort, called to this day Lissanaffrin, the

* It was a usual practice to place a candle that had been blessed by the priest in the right hand of a dying person, and to help the poor hand to hold it when the grasp was relaxing in death. When I was a boy I saw a near relation of mine dying in this manner, which awed and frightened me beyond measure.

fort of the Mass. A rude stone altar stood at one side near the mound of the fort, under a little shed that sheltered the priest also; and the congregation worshipped in the open air on the green plot in the centre. For in those days there were many places that had no chapels, as the Penal Laws prohibited the celebration of Mass; and the people flocked to those open-air Masses as faithfully as we do now to our comfortable stately chapels. The family had gone on before, the men walking and the women and children riding; and Fergus set out to walk alone.

Just as he approached the Demons' Rock, he was greatly surprised to hear the eager yelping of dogs; and in a moment a great deer bounded from the covert beside the rock, with three hounds after her in full chase. No man in the whole country round loved a good chase better than Fergus, or had a swifter foot to follow, and without a moment's hesitation he started in pursuit. But in a few minutes he stopped up short; for he bethought him of the Mass, and he knew there was little time for delay. While he stood wavering, the deer seemed to slacken her pace, and the hounds gained on her, and in a moment Fergus dashed off at full speed, forgetting Mass and everything else in his eagerness for the sport. But it turned out a long and weary chase. Sometimes they slackened, and he was almost at the hounds' tails, but the next moment both deer and hounds started forward and left him far behind. Sometimes they were full in view, and again they were out of sight in thickets and deep glens, so that he could guide himself only by the cry of the hounds. In this way he was decoyed across hills and glens, but instead

of gaining ground he found himself rather falling behind.

Mass was all over and the people dispersed to their homes, and all wondered that they did not see Fergus; for no one could remember that he was ever absent before. His wife returned, expecting to find him at home; but when she arrived there was trouble in her heart, for there were no tidings of him, and no one had seen him since he had set out for Mass in the morning.

Meantime Fergus followed up the chase till he was wearied out; and at last, just on the edge of a wild moor, both deer and hounds disappeared behind a shoulder of rock, and he lost them altogether. At the same moment the cry of the hounds became changed to frightful shrieks and laughter, such as he had heard more than once from the Demons' Rock. And now, sitting down on a bank to rest, he had full time to reflect on what he had done, and he was overwhelmed with remorse and shame. Moreover, his heart sank within him, thinking of the last sounds he had heard; for he believed that he had been allured from Mass by the cunning wiles of the demons, and he feared that the dangerous time had come, foretold by the monk. He started up and set out for his home, hoping to reach it before night. But before he had got half-way, night fell, and a storm came on, great wind and rain, and bursts of thunder and lightning. Fergus was strong and active however and knew every turn of the mountain, and he made his way through the storm till he approached the Demons' Rock.

Suddenly there burst on his ears the very same

sounds that he had heard on losing sight of the chase—shouts and shrieks and laughter. A great black ragged cloud, whirling round and round with furious gusts of wind, burst from the rock and came sweeping and tearing towards him. Crossing himself in terror and uttering a short prayer, he rushed for home. But the whirlwind swept nearer and nearer, till at last, in a sort of faint shadowy light, he saw the black cloud full of dimly defined frightful faces, all glaring straight at him, and coming closer and closer.

At this moment a small bright light dropped down from the sky and rested in front of the cloud; and when he looked closely he saw his little child floating in the air between him and the demons, holding a lighted candle in her hand. And although the storm was raging and roaring all round, she was quite calm—not a breath of air stirred her long yellow hair—and the candle burned quietly. Even in the midst of all his terror he could observe her pale gentle face and blue eyes just as when she was alive, not showing traces of sickness or sadness now, but lighted up with joy. The demons seemed to start back from the light, and with great uproar rushed round to the other side of Fergus, the black cloud still moving with them and wrapping them up in its ragged folds; but the little angel floated softly round with the light in her hand, still keeping between them and her father. Fergus ran on for home, and the cloud of demons still kept furiously whirling round and round him, bringing with them a whirlwind that roared among the trees and bushes and tore them from the roots; but still the child, always holding the candle

towards them, kept floating calmly round and shielded him.

At length he arrived at his house ; the door lay half-open, for the family were inside expecting him home, listening with wonder and affright to the approaching noises ; and he bounded in through the doorway and fell flat on his face. That instant the door—though no one was near—was shut violently, and the bolts were shot home. They hurried anxiously round him to lift him up, but found him in a death-like swoon. Meantime the uproar outside became greater than ever ; round and round the house it tore, a roaring whirlwind with shouts and yells of rage, and great trampling, as if there was a whole company of horsemen. At length however the noises seemed to move away farther and farther off from the house, and gradually died out in the distance. At the same time the storm ceased, and the night became calm and beautiful.

The daylight was shining in through the windows when Fergus recovered from his swoon, and then he told his fearful story ; but many days passed over before he had quite recovered from the horrors of that night. When the family came forth in the morning there was fearful waste all round and near the house, trees and bushes torn from the roots, and the ground all trampled and torn up. After this the revelry of the demons was never again heard from the rock ; and it was believed that they had left it and betaken themselves to some other haunt.

But if Fergus no longer feared the demons of the rock he thought to himself that there were other demons, noiseless indeed, but quite as dangerous,

who were quietly watching their opportunity to tempt him from his duty and get him into their power. And from that time forth he was more watchful than ever to keep himself on the straight path. Above all, he was so fearful of losing Mass that he never could be persuaded to wait for his family, but was always seen striding vigorously along the mountain path that led to Lissanaffrin, even before the rest of the congregation had started from their homes.

OUR THREE PATRON SAINTS.*

PART I.—ST. PATRICK.

It is commonly understood that the religion of the pagan Irish was druidism. But we are very much in the dark as to the doctrines and ceremonials of this druidic religion; for as it was practised in Ireland it differed very much from the druidism of Gaul and Britain, which has been described in detail by Cæsar and other Latin writers. Indeed so far as our knowledge of Irish druidism goes it could hardly be called a connected religion at all. It was taught by druids, who figure conspicuously in the oldest Irish traditions. They were the learned men of the time and were commonly employed to teach the children of kings and chiefs.

Many worshipped idols of some kind. Some worshipped water; and we read of one druid, of the time of St. Patrick, who considered water as a god of goodness and fire an evil genius, so that he got himself buried deep under his favourite well called *slaun* to keep his bones cool from the fire that he dreaded. *Slaun* means *healing*; and we are told that the people offered gifts to this well as to a god. Both druids and people also worshipped the *shee* or fairies who were believed to live in bright palaces under

* We Irish people commonly speak in one breath of our Three Patron Saints; and in accordance with this custom I bring together here the following three short Memoirs to form one little company by themselves. They are reprinted with some additions and alterations from others of my books; for I wish to spread as widely as possible the knowledge of Patrick, Brigit, and Columkille.

elf-mounds or fairy hills (see my "Smaller Soc. Hist. of Anc. Ireland," p. 105).

The druids could scarcely be called priests: but they were skilled in magic—indeed they figure more conspicuously as magicians than in any other capacity; so that by some writers the Irish word *druí* (druid) is translated "wizard"; and they were believed to be possessed of tremendous preternatural powers. They wore a white magic tunic, and when working their spells they chanted an incantation. In some of the old historical romances we find the issues of battles sometimes determined not so much by the valour of the combatants as by the magical power of the druids attached to the armies. They could—as the legends tell—raise druidical clouds and mists and bring down showers of snow, of fire, of blood; they could drive a man insane or into idiocy by flinging in his face a wisp of straw into which some hellish incantations had been breathed; and many other instances of this necromantic power could be cited. In the hymn that St. Patrick chanted on his way to Tara on Easter Sunday morning (see p. 147, below) he asks God to protect him against the spells of smiths, of druids, and of druidesses. They were skilful in divination and foretold future events from dreams and visions, from sneezing and casting lots, from the croaking of ravens and the chirping of wrens. King Dathi's druids forecasted the issue of his military expeditions by observations of the stars and clouds from the summit of a hill. In their divination they used a rod of yew with Ogham* words cut on it. The druids

* For Ogham writing see my "Smaller Soc. Hist. of Anc. Ireland," p. 169.

were a powerful and influential class, and were bitterly opposed to Christianity; so that they gave great trouble to St. Patrick and to his successors for more than a century, till they finally died out, and with them their paganism.*

Readers of our early history know that there were Christians in Ireland before the time of St. Patrick; and they must have grown to be pretty numerous by the beginning of the fifth century: for in the year 431, as we are told by a writer—St. Prosper of Aquitaine, who lived at the time—Pope Celestine sent Palladius “to the Scots believing in Christ to be their first bishop.” They probably got their Christianity from intercourse with the people of Britain.* Nevertheless the great body of the Irish were at this time pagans; but Palladius was not the man destined for their conversion. He landed on the coast of Wicklow; but after a short sojourn, during which he visited some Christians scattered through that district, and founded three little churches, he was expelled by Nathi the chief of the place, and died soon afterwards in Scotland.

The next mission had a very different result. No nation in the world was converted to Christianity in so short a time as the Irish; and no missionary, after the age of the Apostles, preached the Gospel with more success than St. Patrick. He was a man

* For a detailed description of Irish paganism and of the druids the reader may consult my two Social Histories of Anc. Ireland.

of strong will, and wherever he went the people he addressed were all the more willing to hearken to his preaching on account of the noble simplicity and purity of his life. He cared nothing for riches and honours and accepted no rewards or presents: but he loved the people of Ireland, and his whole anxiety was to make them good Christians. We do not know for certain his birthplace; but the best authorities believe he was born near Dumbarton in Alban or Scotland, though others think in the west of Gaul. At that time both Gaul and Britain were under the Romans, and there is evidence that his family, whichever of the two places they belonged to, were Christians, and that they were in a respectable station of life: for his father Calpurn was a magistrate in the Roman service.

When Patrick was a boy of sixteen, he was, as we are told by himself in his "Confession," taken captive with thousands of others and brought to Ireland. This was about the year 403; and it occurred probably in one of those formidable predatory excursions, led by king Niall of the Nine Hostages, of which Irish historians make mention. He was sold as a slave to a certain rich man named Milcho, who employed him to herd sheep and swine on the slopes of Slemish mountain in the present county Antrim. Here he spent six years of his life. If he felt at first heartbroken and miserably lonely, as no doubt he did, he soon recovered himself and made nothing of the hardships he endured on the bleak hillside; for in his solitude his mind was turned to God, and every spare moment was given up to devotions. He tells us in his own earnest

and beautiful words (in the "Confession")—"I was daily employed tending flocks; and I prayed frequently during the day, and the love of God was more and more enkindled in my heart, my fear and faith were increased, and my spirit was stirred; so much so that in a single day I poured out my prayers a hundred times, and nearly as often in the night. Nay even in the woods and mountains I remained, and rose before the dawn to my prayer, in frost and snow and rain; neither did I suffer any injury from it, nor did I yield to any slothfulness, such as I now experience; for the spirit of the Lord was fervent within me."* But he stood alone in his own little world of light and holiness; for his master was a pagan; and though the people he mixed with were bright and lovable, they too were all pagans, grossly superstitious; but beyond that, with little idea of religion of any kind.

At the end of six years of slavery Patrick escaped and made his way through many hardships and dangers to his native home and family. During his residence in Ireland he had become familiar with the language of the people; and the memory of the pagan darkness in which they lived haunted him night and day, so that he formed the resolution to devote his life to their conversion. His steadfast will was shown even at this early period by the manner in which he set about preparing himself for his noble work. He first studied with great diligence for

* This "Confession"—a sort of review of his life and work—was written by him when he was an old man, worn out with his labours.

about four years in the great monastic school of St. Martin of Tours; and subsequently under St. Germain of Auxerre for about the same length of time; after which he continued his preparation in an island near the Italian coast on the west side, and elsewhere, till he was ready to begin his mission. During all this time his thoughts were ever turned lovingly to Ireland; and he had dreams and visions about it. Once he dreamed, as he tells us, that a man from Ireland, named Victor, came to him and gave him a letter which began with the words "The Voice of the Irish." "While I was reading the letter"—he goes on to say—"I imagined at the moment that I heard the voices of many who were near the wood of Fochluth, which is [in Ireland] beside the Western Ocean: crying out as if with one voice 'we entreat thee O holy youth to come and still walk amongst us.' And I was exceedingly afflicted in my heart and could read no more, but quickly awoke." (See p. 17 above.)

Having received authority and benediction from Pope Celestine,* he set out for Ireland. On his way through Gaul news came of the death of Palladius; and as this left Ireland without a bishop, Patrick was consecrated bishop in Gaul by a certain holy

* So we find it stated by several ancient authorities, one of whom is an Irish saint who lived a century and a half after the time of St. Patrick. Celestine was the same pope who had commissioned Palladius about a year before Patrick's arrival. But although there is unquestionable contemporary evidence (page 138 above) that this pope sent Palladius to Ireland, some writers dispute the statement that Patrick received his commission from him.

prelate named Amator. Embarking for Ireland, he landed in the year 432 on the Wicklow coast at the mouth of the Vartry river, the spot where the town of Wicklow now stands. He was then in the full vigour of manhood—about forty-five years of age. The good Pope Celestine did not live to see the glorious result of the mission: he was dead before the arrival of his missionary in Ireland. Soon after landing, Patrick, like his predecessor, was expelled from Wicklow; and coasting northwards, and resting for a little time at the island of Holmpatrick on the Dublin coast near Skerries, he finally disembarked with his companions at Lecale in the present county Down.

Dicho, the chief of the district, thinking, from what one of his shepherds told him, that they were pirates, hastily armed his followers and sallied forth to expel them; but when they appeared in view, he was so struck by their calm and dignified demeanour, that instead of attacking, he saluted them respectfully and invited them to his house. Here Patrick announced his mission and explained his doctrine; and Dicho and his whole family became Christians and were baptised: the first of the Irish converted by St. Patrick. As there was no church the chief presented him with a *sabhall* [saul] or barn for divine service, in which he celebrated Mass, and on the site of which a monastery was subsequently erected in honour of the saint, which for many ages was held in great veneration. And the memory of the happy event is preserved to this day in the name of the little village of Saul near Downpatrick. He remained in this neighbourhood for some time; and the people,

following the example of their chief, listened to his preaching and were baptised in great numbers. While here he set out to visit the district where he had spent so many solitary years of his youth, for he was anxious to convert his old master Milcho; but that chief—now an old man—refused to see him and died as he lived, a pagan.

Saint Patrick was a man of great resolution and undaunted courage, with much tact and good sense. No danger could turn him aside from his purpose: and there was plenty of danger to face during his long career in Ireland. He had great strength of character; so that—with God lending a helping hand—he bore down opposition by his own overpowering personality. From the time of his captivity down to his latest breath he had an intense love for the people of Ireland. There are many old narratives of his life, some historical, some mixed up with legend; and in all, whether historical or legendary, these features of his character constantly come to the front.*

* The beautiful legendary account of Patrick's interview with the angel on Croagh Patrick (the "Reek"), given in the Tripartite Life of the saint, brings out in strong relief his strength of will and his love for the Irish people: and it may be added—his belief in the efficacy of persistent prayer.

After his sufferings from the demons on the mountain (p. 9 above), when the angel came and comforted him, Patrick reminded him of all he had endured, and said that—as compensation—he had a number of blessings to ask for—all to benefit the Irish people—and he told the angel plainly: "Unless all these are granted to me, I will never leave the Reek, but will remain here till I die."

The angel told him that in consideration of his great

St. Patrick adopted, from the very beginning, a bold and courageous plan of preaching the Gospel in Ireland:—He always made straight for the palaces and other great houses, and began by attempting to convert the kings and chiefs. He was well aware of the veneration of the clansmen for their ruling families; and he knew that once the king had become a Christian the people would soon follow. He had experienced the success of this plan in Saul; and now he came to the bold resolution to go to Tara and present himself before the supreme king of Ireland—Laeghaire [Laery]—and his court. This was a very dangerous undertaking, as he well knew; for Tara was the chief seat, not only of the monarchy, but also of the paganism and druidism of

sufferings, God was disposed to grant his requests, so far as they were within reason. Then followed request after request, blessing after blessing, for the Irish people: and on each occasion when Patrick had put forward his claim, the angel's answer came:—"That request is granted: now get thee away from the mountain," on which followed the saint's reply:—"No, I will not go from the mountain yet: I want another blessing for my people."

And so the angel went on yielding point after point, till at last he gave him a plain reminder that he was excessive and altogether too obstinate. But the saint did not mind that a bit: he went on pressing his demands; each as usual followed by: "That is granted thee; now get thee gone from the mountain."—"No, I will not go yet, I want another thing."

Once the angel proposed to grant him a certain blessing for his people. "No, I will not take it"—replied the saint: "it is no great compliment: any of our saints could get that or as good for the asking; I want more."

His last request was, that on the day of judgment;—"Let myself be the judge over the people of Ireland on that day."

This appeared to the angel such an astounding demand that he

all Ireland; and Laeghaire had the reputation of being a fierce and obdurate king, who would tolerate no interference with his authority. Yet Patrick never hesitated. Bidding farewell to his friend Dicho, he sailed southward to the mouth of the Boyne; whence he set out on foot for Tara with his companions. Soon after leaving the boat, night fell on them; and they were hospitably entertained at the house of a chief, whom the saint converted, with his whole family. One of the children, a youth to whom Patrick gave the name of Benen or Benignus from his gentle disposition, became so attached to him that he insisted on going along with him next morning. Thenceforward Benen was Patrick's constant companion and beloved disciple; and

refused point blank to grant it without authority. He flew up to heaven to consult; and during his absence Patrick went and celebrated Mass, to strengthen his case, no doubt, for he felt that he had gone pretty far.

When the angel returned he told Patrick that it was with the greatest difficulty, and only after the Twelve Apostles and many other saints had interceded, that the request was granted.

“And now at last strike thy bell and get thee gone from the mountain.”

“Blessed be the All bountiful King”—cried Patrick in his joy—“Praise be to my Lord who has given me all these great blessings for my people. Now I am satisfied, and I will depart from the mountain.” (Tripartite Life of St. Patrick, pp. 113-121. See also the Most Rev. Dr. Healy's Life of St. Patrick, pp. 229-233).

Although this is all popular legend, nothing could present a truer or a more vivid picture of the character of our great Apostle. With stories like this, and with much of the true history of the saint, told among our people for centuries, can we wonder at the intense love and veneration they have for St. Patrick?

after the death of his master he succeeded him as Archbishop of Armagh.

The saint and his little company arrived at the hill of Slane on the north bank of the Boyne on Easter Eve, A.D. 433. Here he prepared to celebrate the festival; and towards nightfall, as was then the custom, he lighted the Paschal fire on the top of the hill. It so happened that at this very time the king and his nobles were celebrating a festival of some kind at Tara; and the attendants were about to light a great fire on the hill, which was part of the ceremonial. Now there was a law that while this fire was burning no other should be kindled in the country all round on pain of death; and accordingly when the king and his courtiers saw the fire ablaze on the hill of Slane, nine miles off, they were much astonished at such an open violation of the law.

The monarch instantly called his druids and questioned them about it; and they said:—"If that fire which we now see be not extinguished to-night, it will never be extinguished, but will over-top all our fires: and he that has kindled it will overturn thy kingdom."* Whereupon the king, in great wrath, instantly set out in his chariot with a small retinue, nine chariots in all; and having arrived near Slane, he summoned the strangers to his presence. He had commanded that none should rise up to show them respect; but when they presented themselves, one of the courtiers, Ere the son of Dego, struck with the

* This prophecy came to pass in a spiritual sense; for Patrick overturned the kingdom of paganism. But Laeghaire understood it in a temporal sense.

saint's commanding appearance, rose from his seat and saluted him. This Erc was converted and became afterwards bishop of Slane; and to this day there is, on the bank of the Boyne near Slane, a little ruined oratory called from him St. Erc's Hermitage. The result of this interview was what St. Patrick most earnestly desired: he was directed to appear next day at Tara and give an account of his proceedings before the assembled court. On the summit of the hill of Slane, at the spot where Patrick lighted his Paschal fire, there are still the ruins of a monastery erected in commemoration of the event.

The next day was Easter Sunday. Early in the morning Patrick and his companions set out for the palace, and on their way they chanted a hymn in the native tongue—an invocation for protection against the dangers and treachery by which they were beset; for they had heard that persons were lying in wait to slay them. This noble and beautiful hymn which is called in Irish *Faél Fiada* or the "Deer's Cry," from the legend that Patrick and his companions appeared in the shape of deer to the intended assassins, was long held in great veneration by the people of this country; and we still possess copies of it in a very old dialect of the Irish language. There are also many translations of it. In the history of the spread of Christianity, it would be difficult to find a more singular and impressive scene than was presented at the court of king Laeghaire on that memorable Easter morning. Patrick was robed in white, as were also his companions; he wore his mitre and carried his crosier—called *Bachall Isa* or

the Staff of Jesus—in his hand ; and when he presented himself before the assembly, Dubthach [Duffa], Laeghaire's chief poet, rose to welcome him, contrary to the express commands of the king. The saint, all aflame with zeal and unawed by the presence of the king and court, explained to the assembly the leading points of the Christian doctrine, and silenced the king's druids in argument. Dubthach became a convert and thenceforward devoted his poetical talents to the service of God ; and Laeghaire gave permission to the strange missionaries to preach their doctrines throughout his dominions. The king himself however was not converted ; and for the remaining thirty years of his life he remained an unbeliever, while the paganism of the whole country was rapidly going down before the fiery energy of the great missionary.

Patrick next proceeded to *Tailltenn** where, during the celebration of the national games, he preached for a week to the assembled multitudes, making many converts, among whom was Conall Gulban (brother to king Laeghaire) the ancestor of the O'Donnells of *Tirconnell*.

We find him soon after, with that intrepidity and decision of character for which he was so remarkably distinguished, making straight for Moy Slecht where stood the great national idol Cromm Cruach surrounded by twelve lesser idols (p. 124 above). These he destroyed, and thus terminated for ever the abominations enacted for so many ages at that ancient haunt of gloomy superstition.

* For *Tailltenn* and its great fairs and athletic games see my *Smaller Soc. Hist. of Anc. Ireland*, p. 499 ; and p. 30 above.

About the year 438, with the concurrence of King Laeghaire, he undertook the task of revising the Brehon Law. He was aided by eight others, among them King Laeghaire himself—Patrick working at it whenever he could withdraw himself from his missionary duties—and at the end of three years, this Committee of Nine produced a new code free from all pagan customs and ordinances, which was ever after known as “Cain Patrick” or Patrick’s Law. This Law Book, which is also called the *Senchus Mór* [Shan’ahus More], has been lately translated and published.

In his journey through Connaught he met the two daughters of King Laeghaire—Ethnea the fair and Fedelma the ruddy—near the palace of Croghan, where they lived at that time in fosterage with their two druid tutors. They had come out one morning at sunrise to wash their hands in a certain spring well named Clebach, as was their custom, and were greatly astonished to find Patrick and his companions at the well with books in their hands, chanting a hymn. Having never seen persons in that garb before, the princesses thought at first that they were beings from the *shee* or fairy hills (page 136 above); but when the first surprise was over they fell into conversation with them and inquired whence they had come. And Patrick gently replied :—“It were better for you to confess to our true God than to inquire concerning our race.” They eagerly asked many questions about God, His dwelling-place—whether in the sea, in rivers, in mountainous places, or in valleys—how knowledge of Him was to be obtained, how He was to be found, seen, and loved; with other

inquiries of a like nature. The saint answered all their questions and explained the leading points of the faith; and the virgins were immediately baptised and consecrated to the service of religion.

On the approach of Lent he retired to the mountain which has ever since borne his name—Croagh Patrick or Patrick's hill—where he spent some time in fasting and prayer (page 9 above). About this time, A.D. 449, the seven sons of Amalgaidh [Awley] king of Connaught were holding a meeting in Tirawley to which Patrick repaired. He expounded his doctrines to the wondering assembly; and the seven princes with twelve thousand persons were baptised. After spending seven years in Connaught, he visited successively Ulster, Leinster, and Munster, in each of which he preached for several years. Soon after entering Leinster, he converted, at the palace beside Naas where the Leinster kings then resided, the two princes Illann and Olioll, sons of King Dunlang, who both afterwards succeeded to the throne of their father: and at Cashel, the seat of the kings of Munster, he was met by the king, Aengus the son of Natfree, who conducted him into the palace on the rock with the greatest reverence and was at once baptised.

Wherever St. Patrick went he founded churches, and left them in charge of his disciples. In his various journeys, he encountered many dangers and met with numerous temporary repulses; but his courage and resolution never wavered, and success attended his efforts in almost every part of his wonderful career. He founded the see of Armagh about the year 455 and made it the head see of all Ireland. The greater part of the country was now

filled with Christians and with churches ; and the mission of the venerable apostle was drawing to a close. He was seized with his death illness in Saul, the scene of his first triumph ; and he breathed his last on the seventeenth of March, in or about the year 465, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.*

The news of his death was the signal for universal mourning. From the remotest districts of the island, clergy and laity turned their steps towards the little village of Saul, to pay the last tribute of love and respect to their great master. They celebrated the obsequies for twelve days and nights without interruption, joining in the ceremonies as they arrived in succession ; and in the language of one of his biographers, the blaze of myriads of torches made the whole time appear like one continuous day.

A contention arose between the chiefs of Oriel, the district in which Armagh was situated, and those of Ulidia or the eastern part of Ulster, concerning the place where he should be interred ; but it happily terminated without bloodshed. He was buried with great solemnity at Dun-da-leth-glas, the old residence of the princes of Ulidia ; and the name in the altered form of Downpatrick commemorates to all time the saint's place of interment.

It must not be supposed that Ireland was completely Christianised by St. Patrick. There still remained large districts never visited by him or his companions : and in many others the Christianity of

* There is much uncertainty both as to St. Patrick's age and as to the year of his death. I have given the age and the year that seem to me most probable.

the people was merely on the surface. Much pagan superstition remained, even among the professing Christians, and the druids still and for long after retained great influence ; so that there was ample room for the missionary labours of St. Patrick's successors.

OUR THREE PATRON SAINTS.

PART II. : ST. BRIGIT.*

OF all the Irish saints, Brigit and Columkille are, next after St. Patrick, the most loved and revered by the people of Ireland.

Like many others of our early saints, Brigit came of a noble family. Her father Dubthach [Duffa] was a distinguished Leinster chief descended from the kings of Ireland. For some reason which we do not know he and his wife lived for a time at Faughart near Dundalk, which was then a part of Ulster: and at Faughart Brigit was born about the year 455. The family must have soon returned however to their own district, for we know that Brigit passed her childhood with her parents in the neighbourhood of Kildare. She was baptised and carefully instructed and trained both in general education and in religion: for her father and mother were Christians. As she grew up, her quiet gentle modest ways pleased all that knew her. At the time of her birth, St. Patrick was in the midst of his glorious career; and some say that while she was still a child she met him, and that when he died she made with her own hands a winding sheet in which his body was laid in the grave; which may have happened, as she was ten or twelve years of age at the time of his death.

* This and the four pieces that follow are reprinted from another book of mine written many years ago.

When Brigit came of an age to choose her way of life, she resolved to be a nun, to which her parents made no objection. After due preparation she went to a holy bishop of the neighbourhood, who at her request received her and placed a white robe on her shoulders and a white veil over her head. Here she remained for some time in companionship with eight other maidens who had been received with her, and who placed themselves under her guidance. As time went on she became so beloved for her piety and sweetness of disposition that many young women asked to be admitted; so that though she by no means desired that people should be speaking in her praise, the fame of her community began to spread through the country.

This first establishment was conducted strictly under a set of Rules drawn up by Brigit herself: and now, bishops in various parts of Ireland began to apply to her to establish convents in their several districts under the same rules. She was glad of this, and she did what she could to meet their wishes. She visited Longford, Tipperary, Limerick, South Leinster, and Roscommon, one after another; and in all these places she founded convents.

At last the people of her own province of Leinster, considering that they had the best right to her services, sent a number of leading persons to request that she would fix her permanent residence among them. She was probably pleased to go back to live in the place where she had spent her childhood; and she returned to Leinster where she was welcomed with great joy. The Leinster people gave her a piece of land chosen by herself on the edge of a

beautiful level grassy plain well known as the Curragh of Kildare. Here, on a low ridge overlooking the plain, she built a little church under the shade of a wide-spreading oak tree, whence it got the name of Kill-dara, the Church of the Oak, or as we now call it, Kildare. This tree continued to flourish long after Brigit's death, and it was regarded with great veneration by the people of the place. A writer of the tenth century—four hundred years after the foundation of the church—tells us that in his time it was a mere branchless withered trunk; but the people had such reverence for it that no one dared to cut or chip it.

We are not quite sure of the exact year of Brigit's settlement here; but it probably occurred about 485, when she was thirty years of age. Hard by the church she also built a dwelling for herself and her community. We are told in the *Irish Life of St. Brigit* that this first house was built of wood like the houses of the people in general: and the little church under the oak was probably of wood also, like most churches of the time. As the number of applicants for admission continued to increase, both church and dwelling had to be enlarged from time to time; and the wood was replaced by stone and mortar. Such was the respect in which the good abbess was held, that visitors came from all parts of the country to see her and ask her advice and blessing: and many of them settled down in the place, so that a town gradually grew up near the convent, which was the beginning of the town of Kildare,

Brigit, although now at the head of a great community, and very strict in carrying out her Rules, still retained all her humility and gentleness of disposition. With such a large family there was plenty of work to do; and it was all done by the nuns, as they kept no servants and called in no outsiders. The abbess herself, so far as she was able to withdraw from the cares of governing the establishment, took her part like the rest in most of the domestic occupations. In some of the old accounts of her Life we are told that she often, with some companions, herded and tended her flocks of sheep that grazed on the level sward round the convent. And sometimes she was caught by the heavy rain-squalls that occasionally sweep across that shelterless plain, so that her clothes were wet through by the time she returned to the convent: showing that she took her own share of the rough work.

Not far from the convent, another establishment was founded later on for men, which afterwards became one of the great Colleges of Ireland. As the two communities and the population of the town continued to grow, it was Brigit's earnest desire that a bishop should be there to take spiritual charge of the whole place. A holy man named Conleth, who had hitherto spent his life as a hermit in the neighbourhood, was appointed bishop by the heads of the Church. He was the first bishop of Kildare and he took up his residence in the monastery. The name of that good bishop is to this day held in affectionate remembrance, with that of St. Brigit, by the people of Kildare and of the country all round.

While the parent convent at Kildare continued to grow, branch houses under Brigit's Rule and subject to her authority were established all over Ireland; and many establishments for monks were also founded in honour of her.

Brigit had such a reputation for wisdom and prudence, that the most eminent of the saints and many kings and chiefs of her day visited Kildare or corresponded with her, to obtain her advice in doubtful or difficult matters. Visitors were constantly coming and going, all of whom she received kindly and treated hospitably. All this, with daily alms to the needy, and the support of a large community, kept her poor: for the produce of her land was not nearly sufficient to supply her wants. For a long time in the beginning she and her community suffered from downright poverty, so that she had often to call on the charity of her friends and neighbours to assist her. But as time went on, and as the reputation of the place spread abroad, she received many presents from rich people, which generally came in the right time and enabled her to carry on her establishment without any danger of want.

Among Brigit's virtues none is more marked than her charity and kindness of heart towards poor, needy, and helpless people. She never could look on distress of any kind without trying to relieve it at whatever cost. Even when a mere girl living with her parents, her father was often displeased with her for giving away necessary things belonging to the house to poor people who came in their misery to beg from her. It happened on one occasion that her

father drove her in his chariot to Naas (in Kildare) where then lived Dunlang king of Leinster; and dismounting, he entered the palace, leaving his sword behind—a beautiful and valuable one—while Brigit remained in charge of horse and chariot. A wretched looking poor man with sickness and want in his face came up and begged for some relief. Overcome with pity she looked about for something to give him, and finding nothing but the sword, she handed it to him. On her father's return he fell into a passion at the loss of his sword: and when King Dunlang questioned her reproachfully she replied:—"If I had all thy wealth I would give it to the poor; for giving to the poor is giving to the Lord of the universe." And the king turning to the father said:—"It is not meet that either you or I should chide this maiden, for her merit is greater before God than before men": on which the matter ended: and Brigit returned home with her father.

Her overflowing kindness of heart was not confined to human beings: it extended even to the lower animals. Once while she lived in her father's house, a party of guests were invited, and she was given some pieces of meat to cook for dinner. And a poor miserable half-starved hound limped into the house and looked longingly at the meat: whereupon the girl, quite unable to overcome her feeling of pity, threw him one of the pieces. And when the poor animal, in his hungry greediness, had devoured that in a moment, she gave him another, which satisfied him. And to the last day of her life she retained her tenderness of heart and her kindness and charity towards the poor.

Late in life Brigit's influence over young people was unbounded : for her very gentleness gave tenfold power to her words. Once, seeing a young man, a student of the neighbouring college, running very violently and in an unbecoming manner in presence of some of her nuns, she sent for him on the spot and asked him why he was running in such haste. He replied thoughtlessly and half in jest that he was running to heaven : on which she said quietly : " I wish to God, my dear son, that I was worthy to run with you to-day to the same place : I beg you will pray for me to help me to arrive there." And when he heard these words, and looked on her grave kind face, he was greatly moved ; and telling her with tears in his eyes that he would surely pray for her and for many others besides, he besought her to offer up her prayers for him that he might continue his journey steadily towards heaven and arrive there in the end. That young man, whose name was Ninnius, became in after-life one of the most revered of the Irish saints.

But with all her gentle unassuming ways, St. Brigit was a woman of strong mind and great talents. She not only governed her various establishments in strict accordance with her own Rules and forms of discipline, but she was a powerful aid in forwarding the mighty religious movement that had been commenced by St. Patrick half a century before. She set an illustrious example to those Irish women who, during and after her time, entered on a religious life ; and though many of them became distinguished saints she stands far above them all. No writer has left us a detailed account of her last

hours, as Adamnan has done for St. Columkille. (See farther on.) We only know that she died at Kildare on the first of February, in or about the year 523, and that she received the last consolations of religion from the grateful hand of that same Ninnius whom she had turned to a religious life many years before.

She was buried in Kildare where her body was entombed in a magnificent shrine ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones. We may be sure it was a very beautiful work of art, for we know that there was a noted school of metal workers in Kildare under the direction of St. Conleth, who was himself a most skilful artist; but this tomb was plundered by the Danes three hundred years afterwards, and not a trace of it now remains.

According to some accounts the bones of St. Brigit and St. Columkille were brought to Downpatrick many centuries after the death of both, and buried in the same tomb with the remains of St. Patrick. Whether this was so or not, the matter has been commemorated in a Latin verse of which the following is a translation :—

Interred beneath one tomb in Down, a single vault doth hold
Patrick and Brigit and Columkille, three holy saints of old.

A well known Welshman, Gerald Barry (*Giraldus Cambrensis*), who was in Ireland in 1185, and who wrote an account of it, says that he found “at Kildare in Leinster, celebrated for the glorious Brigit, the ‘Fire of St. Brigit’ which is reported never to go out.” This fire was kept up day and night by the nuns in his time, and for centuries before—how long no one can tell—probably from the time of the saint

herself—and was continued for centuries after : but it was finally extinguished when the monasteries were closed by Henry VIII. in the year 1536. Thomas Moore, in one of his songs, refers to it in the following words :—

Like the bright lamp that shone in Kildare's holy fane,
And burned through long ages of darkness and storm.

St. Brigit is venerated in England and Scotland as well as in Ireland : for in both these countries churches were built in her honour, and many convents were established under her name and rule. She was also well known and honoured on the Continent. We need not wonder that her life has been written by many Irishmen : but English, Scotch, French, Italian, and German writers have also written about her and have commemorated her as one of the most eminent saints of the West.

Convents and monasteries were maintained in Kildare for hundreds of years after the time of St. Brigit ; and “ Kildare's holy fane ” is still venerated as much as ever. On the very ridge where the humble little church was erected fourteen hundred years ago, there is a group of fine old church buildings, with a tall round tower that overlooks the splendid plain of Kildare.

OUR THREE PATRON SAINTS.

PART III.—ST. COLUMKILLE.*

SAINT COLUMKILLE† was born in the year 521 in Gartan a wild district in the county Donegal not far from Letterkenny. He was a near relation of the kings of Ireland of his time ; for his father was great-grandson of the mighty King Niall of the Nine Hostages : and his mother was related to the kings of Leinster. He spent his boyhood in a little village near Gartan ; and when he was old enough he was sent away from his home to a school kept by a distinguished bishop and teacher, St. Finnen, at Movilla near the present Newtownards in Down. Though

* An exhaustive account of St. Columkille will be found in the Rev. William Reeves's edition of "Adamnan's Life of Saint Columba."

† In books he is often called Columba ; but in Ireland he is best known by the name Columkille. This is derived from *colum* [pron. *collum*] a dove, and *cill* or *kill*, a church : the "Dove of the church." This name was given him when a boy from his gentle affectionate disposition, and because he was so fond of praying in the little church of Tullydoughlas near where he was born : so that the little boys who were accustomed to play with him used often to ask : "Has our little *Colum* yet come from the church ?"

The sketch given here is taken chiefly, but not altogether, from "Adamnan's Life of St. Columba." Adamnan was a native of Tirconnell or Donegal, like Columba himself. He died in the year 703. He was the ninth abbot of Iona of which Columba was the first. His "Life of St. Columba" is a very beautiful piece of Latin composition.

he belonged to a princely family and might easily have become rich and great, he gave up these worldly advantages for religion, and resolved to become a priest.

Having spent some time at Movilla, the youthful Columkille went to several other Irish Colleges, including that of St. Movi at Glasnevin near Dublin ; and as he was a diligent student he made great progress in all. The most celebrated of these was at Clonard in Meath, in which there were many hundreds of students under the instruction of another St. Finnen, a great and holy man who is styled in old Irish writings “ a doctor of wisdom and the tutor of the saints of Ireland in his time.” Here Columkille met many young Irishmen who afterwards became distinguished saints and missionaries.

As soon as he was ordained priest he set about the work of his life—spreading the Gospel. At that time the high ridge over the river Foyle where now stands the old city of Derry, was an uninhabited spot clothed with a splendid wood of oaks from which it got the name of Derry, meaning an oak grove : this spot was presented to Columkille by his cousin prince Aed, afterwards king of Ireland. Here when he was twenty-five years of age (in 546) he built his first church round which grew up a monastery that continued to flourish for many hundred years, so that in memory of the saint the place was long afterwards known by the name of Derry-Columkille. At this period of his life he was a man of noble presence, a worthy member of a kingly race, as one of the old Irish writers describes him :—tall broad-shouldered and powerful, with long curling hair, luminous grey

eyes, and a countenance bright and pleasing : and he was always lively and agreeable in conversation.

For fifteen years after the establishment of Derry, Columkille continued to found churches all over the country, among many others those of Kells in Meath, Tory Island, Swords near Dublin, Drumeliff in Sligo, and Durrow in King's County, the last of which was his chief establishment in Ireland. It is recorded that during these fifteen years he founded altogether three hundred churches and monasteries. These establishments, like all the other Irish monasteries, were the means of spreading not only religion but general enlightenment : for in most of them there were schools ; and the priests and monks converted and taught and civilised, to the best of their power, the people in their neighbourhood.

Many years before this, St. Patrick and the missionaries who worked under his guidance had converted the greatest part of the Irish people to Christianity. But the time was too short and the missionaries too few to instruct the newly-converted people fully in their faith : so that although they were Christians, many of them had only a poor knowledge of the Christian doctrine. In those times there were certain persons in Ireland called druids (for whom see pp. 136-138 above). They hated the Christian faith, and gave St. Patrick and his companions great trouble by trying to persuade the pagan Irish not to become Christians. They continued in the country till the time of St. Columkille, as active as ever though much fewer ; and St. Columkille and the other missionaries of his time had often hard work to win over the people from the false

teaching of these druids, and make good Christians of them.

A great part of the north of Scotland was then inhabited by a people called the Picts. Those of them who lived south of the Grampian mountains had been converted some time before by St. Ninian of Glastonbury:* but the northern Picts were still pagans; and Columkille made up his mind to leave Ireland and devote the rest of his life to their conversion. In 563, in the forty-second year of his age, he bade a sorrowful farewell to his native country, and crossing the sea with twelve companions, he settled in the island of Iona in the Hebrides, which had been presented to him by his relative the king of that part of Scotland. Here he built his little church and monastery, all of wood, and began to prepare for his glorious work. This little island afterwards became the greatest religious centre in Scotland: and grand churches and other buildings were erected on and around the site of Columkille's humble structures. For many centuries Iona was held in such honour that most of the kings and chiefs and other great people of Scotland were buried in it; and to this day it is full of venerable and beautiful ruins, which are every year visited by people from all parts of the British Islands.

The most laborious part of St. Columkille's active life began after his settlement in Iona. He traversed the Highlands of Scotland and the Islands of the

* Glastonbury, a town in Somersetshire in England, where in old times there was a celebrated monastery much resorted to by Irish students.

Hebrides, sometimes in a rude chariot, sometimes on foot, visiting the kings and chiefs of the Picts, and preaching to them in their homes; and he founded churches and monasteries all over that part of Scotland, just as he had done in Ireland. After many years of incessant labour he succeeded in converting the whole of the northern Picts.

When Columkille was at home in his monastery resting from his missionary labours, his favourite occupation was copying the Holy Scriptures. We are told that he wrote with his own hand, in the course of years, three hundred copies of the sacred books, which he presented to the various churches he had founded; and this good work he continued to the very last day of his life. Besides mere copying, he composed many hymns and other poems, both in Latin and Irish. He was always employed at something. Adamnan says that not an hour of the day passed by without some work for himself and his monks—praying, reading, writing, arranging the affairs of the monastery, or manual work: for he took his own share in cooking, grinding corn, overseeing the men who were working in the fields, and so forth; like many others of the eminent saints of the early Irish Church.

During St. Columkille's residence in Iona he visited Ireland more than once on important business: and we may be sure that he was delighted when the opportunity came to see again the land he loved so well. The most important of these occasions was when he came over to take part in a great meeting—a sort of Parliament for all Ireland—which was held at a place called Drum-Ketta in Derry. The

proceedings at this meeting will be found described in the "Child's History of Ireland," or in the "Concise History of Ireland."

Amidst all the earnest and laborious efforts of St. Columkille in the cause of religion, he never forgot his native country. He looked upon himself as an exile, though a voluntary exile in a great and glorious cause; and a tender regret was always mingled with his recollections of Ireland. We have in our old books a very ancient poem in the Irish language, believed to have been composed by him, in which he expresses himself in this manner:—

"How delightful to be on Ben-Edar* before embarking on the foam-white sea: how pleasant to row one's little curragh† all round it, to look upward at its bare steep border, and to hear the waves dashing against its rocky cliffs.

"A grey eye looks back towards Erin: a grey eye full of tears.

"While I traverse Alban‡ of the ravens, I think on my little oak grove in Derry. If the tributes and the riches of Alban were mine from the centre to the utmost borders, I would prefer to them all one little house in Derry. The reason I love Derry is for its quietness, for its purity, for its crowds of white angels.

"How sweet it is to think of Durrow: how delightful would it be to hear the music of the breeze rustling through its groves.

"Plentiful is the fruit in the Western Island—beloved Erin of many waterfalls: plentiful her noble groves of oak.

* Ben-Edar, the rocky headland now called Howth near Dublin.

† Curragh, a hide-covered wicker boat.

‡ Alban, Scotland.

Many are her kings and princes ; sweet-voiced her clerics ; her birds warble joyously in the woods ; gentle are her youths ; wise her seniors ; comely and graceful her women, of spotless virtue ; illustrious her men, of noble aspect.

“There is a grey eye that fills with tears when it looks back towards Erin. While I stand on the oaken deck of my bark I stretch my vision westwards over the briny sea towards Erin.”

During his whole life Columkille retained his affection for his native land and for everything connected with it. One breezy day, when he was now in his old age in Iona, a crane appeared flying from the west towards the island : it was beaten about by the wind, and with much difficulty it reached the beach, where it fell down quite spent with hunger and fatigue. And the good old man said to one of his monks :—

“That crane has come from our dear fatherland, and I earnestly commend it to thee : nurse and cherish it tenderly till it is strong enough to return again to its sweet home in Scotia.”

Accordingly the monk took the bird up in his arms and brought it to the hospice and fed and tended it for three days till it had quite recovered. The third day was calm, and the bird rose from the earth till it had come to a great height, when resting for a moment to look forward, it stretched out its neck and directed its course towards Ireland.

On the day before the saint's death he went to a little hill hard by the monastery that overlooked the whole place ; and gazing lovingly round him for the last time, he lifted up his hands and blessed the monastery. And as he was returning with his

attendant he grew tired and sat down half way to rest; for he was now very weak. While he was sitting here an old white horse that was employed for many years to carry the pails between the milking place and the monastery, first looked at him intently, and then coming up slowly step by step, he laid his head gently on the saint's bosom. And he began to moan pitifully, and big tears rolled from his eyes and fell into the saint's lap: which, when the attendant saw, he came up to drive him away. But the old man said:—"Let him alone: he loves me. May be God has given him some dim knowledge that his master is going from him and from you all: so let him alone." At last, standing up, he blessed the poor old animal and returned to the monastery.

The death call came to him when he was seventy-six years of age. Though his death was not a sudden one, he had no sickness before it: he simply sank, wearied out with his life-long labours. Although he knew his end was near, he kept writing one of the Psalms till he could write no longer; while his companion Baithen sat beside him. At last, laying down the pen, he said, "Let Baithen write the rest."

On the night of that same day, at the toll of the midnight bell for prayer, he rose, feeble as he was, from his bed, which was nothing but a bare flagstone, and went to the church hard by, followed immediately after by his attendant Dermot. He arrived there before the others had time to bring in the lights; and Dermot, losing sight of him in the darkness, called out several times "Where are you, father?" Receiving no reply, he felt his way, till he found his

master before the altar kneeling and leaning forward on the steps : and raising him up a little, supported his head on his breast. The monks now came up with the lights ; and seeing their beloved old master dying, they began to weep. He looked at them with his face lighted up with joy, and tried to utter a blessing ; but being unable to speak, he raised his hand a little to bless them, and in the very act of doing so he died in Dermot's arms."*

* This simple and beautiful narrative of the last days of St. Columkille, including the two pleasing little stories about the crane and the old white horse, with the affecting account of the saint's death, is taken altogether from Adamnan's Life. The circumstances of Columkille's death are in some respects very like those attending the death of the Venerable Bede, as recorded in the tender and loving letter of his pupil, the monk Cuthbert. But Adamnan's narrative was written more than forty years before that of Cuthbert.

Baithen was Columkille's first cousin and his most beloved disciple, and succeeded him as abbot of Iona.

CAHAL O'CONOR OF THE RED HAND :
KING OF CONNAUGHT.

RODERICK O'CONNOR the last native king of Ireland retired from the throne towards the end of the twelfth century, to end his days in the monastery of Cong.* After his time there was no longer a king over the whole country. But for hundreds of years afterwards, kings continued to reign over the five provinces.† Roderick had been king of Connaught before he became king of all Ireland; and after his retirement there were several claimants for the Connaught throne who contended with one another, so that the province was for a long time disturbed with wars and battles.

Roderick had a young brother named Cahal,‡ who was called Cahal of the Red Hand from a great blood-red mark on his right hand. He would naturally have a claim to the Connaught throne when old enough; and as he was a noble young fellow even when a boy, and showed great ability, the queen of Connaught, jealous of him, feared that when he grew up he would give trouble to her own sons, and she sought him out determined to kill him: so that Cahal and his mother had to flee from one hiding place to another:

Finding at last that he could no longer remain in

* Cong in Mayo, between Lough Corrib and Lough Mask; the remains of an abbey are there still.

† The five ancient provinces were Leinster, Munster, Connaught, Ulster, Meath. In later times Meath fell out as a province.

‡ For whom, and for the legends about him, see O'Donovan's *Four Masters*, A.D. 1224.

the province with safety, he and his mother crossed the Shannon into Leinster where no one knew him, and there for several years they remained, while he made a poor living for both by working in the fields as a common labourer. And as the fame of the brave young Cahal with the red mark on his hand had gone abroad, he always wore a loose mitten on his right hand for fear of discovery; for he well knew that the queen had spies everywhere searching for him.

At this time the people had no newspapers: but there were news-carriers* who made it their business to travel continually about the country, picking up information wherever they could, and relating all that occurred whenever they came to a village or to any group of people who desired to hear the news. They generally received some small payment and perhaps food; and in this manner they made their living.

One day while Cahal was employed with several others reaping in a field of rye, they saw one of these men approaching; and they stopped their work for a few moments to hear what he had to say. After relating several unimportant matters he came at last to the principal news:—that the king of Connaught was dead, and that the leading people of the province, having met in counsel to choose a king, declared that they would have no one but young Cahal of the Red Hand. “And now” continued the newsman “I and many others have been searching for him for several weeks. He is easily known, for

* Irish *bol'scaire* [pron. boll'scäřă] a news-carrier.

his right hand is blood-red from the wrist out: but up to this we have been unsuccessful. We fear indeed that he is living in poverty in some remote place where he will never be found: or it may be that he is dead."

When Cahal heard this his heart gave a great bound, and he stood musing for a few moments. Then flinging his sickle on the ridge he exclaimed:—"Farewell reaping-hook: now for the sword!" And pulling off the mitten, he showed his red hand and made himself known. The newsman, instantly recognising him, threw himself prostrate before him to acknowledge him as his king. And ever since that time "*Cahal's farewell to the rye*" has been a proverb in Connaught, to denote a farewell for ever. He returned immediately with his mother to Connaught where he was joyfully received, and was proclaimed king in 1190.

At this time the Anglo-Norman barons who had come over at the time of Henry II.'s Invasion nearly twenty years before, had settled down in various parts of Ireland: and they were constantly encroaching on the lands of the Irish and erecting strong castles everywhere; while the Irish chiefs resisted as far as they were able, so that there was much disturbance all over the country. Cahal was a brave and active king and took a leading part in fighting against the barons.

After he had reigned over Connaught in peace for eight or nine years, trouble came again. There was at this time, settled in Limerick, a powerful Anglo-Norman baron, William de Burgo (or Burke) to whom a large part of Connaught had been granted by King Henry II. This man stirred up another of

the O'Conors to lay claim to the throne in opposition to Cahal, promising to help him: and now Connaught was again all ablaze with civil war. Cahal was defeated in battle and fled to Ulster to Hugh O'Neill prince of Tyrone, who took up his cause. Marching south with his own and O'Neill's men he attacked his rival, but was defeated, and again fled north. He soon made a second attempt, aided this time by Sir John de Courcy (for whom see below): but he and De Courcy were caught in an ambush in Galway by the rival king, who routed their army. In this fight De Courcy very nearly lost his life, being felled senseless from his horse by a stone. Recovering in good time however, he and Cahal escaped from the battlefield and fled northwards.

Cahal of the Red Hand, in no way cowed by these terrible reverses, again took the field after some time, aided now by De Burgo who had changed sides. A battle was fought near Roscommon in which the rival king was slain; and Cahal once more took possession of the throne. From this period forward he ruled without a native rival; though a few years later he was forced to surrender a large part of his kingdom to King John, in order that he might secure possession of the remainder.

But he was as vigilant as ever in repelling all attempts of the barons to encroach on his diminished territory. Thus when in 1220 the De Lacys of Meath, a most powerful Anglo-Norman family, went to Athleague on the Shannon at the head of Lough Ree, where there was a ford, and began to build a castle at the eastern or Leinster side, in order that they might have a garrison in it always ready to use the ford and attack Connaught, Cahal promptly

crossed the river into Longford, and so frightened them that they were glad to conclude a truce with him. And he broke down the castle which they had almost finished.

Cahal of the Red Hand was an upright and powerful king and governed with firmness and justice. The Irish Annals tell us that he relieved the poor as long as he lived, and that he destroyed more robbers and rebels and evil-doers of every kind than any other king of his time. In early life he had founded the abbey of Knockmoy* into which he retired in the last year of his life : and in this retreat he died in 1224.

A VISION OF CONNAUGHT IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.

THE ancient Irish people—like those of Greece and Rome and several other countries—believed that when a just and good king reigned, the country was blessed with fine weather and abundant crops, the trees bended with fruit, the rivers teemed with fish, and the whole kingdom prospered. This was the state of Connaught while Cahal of the Red Hand reigned in peace. And it is recorded that when he died, fearful portents appeared, and there was gloom and terror everywhere. James Clarence Mangan, a Dublin poet who died in 1849, pictures all this in the following fine poem. He supposes himself to be living on the river Maine in Germany, and he is brought to Connaught in a vision (“entranced”), where he witnesses the prosperity that attended

* Knockmoy in Galway, six miles from Tuam: the ruins of the abbey still remain.

Cahal's reign. This he sets forth in the first part of the poem: but a sudden mysterious change for the worse comes, which he describes in the last two verses. The whole poem forms a wild misty sort of picture such as one might see in a dream.*

I walked entranced†
 Through a land of Morn;
 The sun with wondrous excess of light
 Shone down and glanced
 Over seas of corn
 And lustrous gardens aleft and right.
 Even in the clime
 Of resplendent Spain
 Beams no such sun upon such a land;
 But it was the time,
 It was in the reign,
 Of Cahal More of the Wine-red Hand.

Anon stood nigh
 By my side a man
 Of princely aspect and port sublime.
 Him queried I—
 “Oh, my Lord and Khan,‡
 What clime is this, and what golden time?”
 When he—“The clime
 Is a clime to praise,
 The clime is Erin's the green and bland;
 And it is the time,
 These be the days
 Of Cahal More of the Wine-red Hand!”

* Mangan wrote many poetical translations from the Irish, as well as from the German and other languages. This “Vision of Connaught” is however an original poem, not a translation.

† Observe the rhymes:—entranced, glanced—morn, corn—light, right: and so all through the poem: occurring every third line—which is unusual. Mangan was particularly skilled in rhyme and metre.

‡ Irish, *Ceann* [can], meaning ‘head,’ one of the Gaelic titles for a chief.

Then saw I thrones
And circling fires,
And a dome rose near me as by a spell,
Whence flowed the tones
Of silver lyres,
And many voices in wreathèd swell;
And their thrilling chime
Fell on mine ears
As the heavenly hymn of an angel-band—
“It is now the time,
These be the years,
Of Cahal More of the Wine-red Hand!”

I sought the hall,
And behold! . . . a change
From light to darkness, from joy to woe!
King, nobles, all,
Looked aghast and strange;
The minstrel-group sate in dumbest show!
Had some great crime
Wrought this dread amaze,
This terror? None seemed to understand!
It was then the time,
We were in the days,
Of Cahal More of the Wine-red Hand.

I again walked forth;
But lo! the sky
Showed fleckt with blood, and an alien sun
Glared from the *north*,
And there stood on high,
Amid his shorn beams, A SKELETON.
It was by the stream
Of the castled Maine,
One Autumn eve, in the Teuton's land,
That I dreamed this dream
Of the time and reign
Of Cahal More of the Wine-red Hand!

SIR JOHN DE COURCY.

AMONG the many Anglo-Norman lords and knights who came to settle in Ireland in the time of Henry II., one of the most renowned was John de Courcy. The Welsh writer, Gerald Barry, already mentioned (pp. 2, 160), who lived at that time and knew him personally, thus describes him :—

“ He was of huge size, tall and powerfully built, with bony and muscular limbs, wonderfully active and daring, full of courage, and a bold and venturous soldier from his youth. He was so eager for fighting that though commanding as general he always mingled with the foremost ranks in charging the enemy, which might have lost the battle ; for if he chanced to be killed or badly wounded, there was no general able to take his place. But though so fierce in war, he was gentle and modest in time of peace and very exact in attending to his religious devotions ; and when he had gained a victory he gave all the glory to God and took none to himself.”

When King Henry II. divided the country among his lords in 1172, he gave Ulster to De Courcy. But it was one thing to be granted the province and another thing to take possession of it ; for the Ulster chiefs and people were warlike and strong : and for five years De Courcy remained in Dublin without making any attempt to conquer it.

At length he made up his mind to try his fortune ; and gathering his followers to the number of about a thousand, every man well armed and trained to battle, he set out for the north. Through

rugged and difficult ways the party rode on, and early in the morning of the fourth day—the 2nd February 1177—they arrived at Downpatrick, then the capital of that part of the country. The Irish of those times never surrounded their towns with walls ; and the astonished Downpatrick people, who knew nothing of the expedition, were startled from their beds at daybreak by a mighty uproar in the streets—shouts and the clatter of horses' hoofs and the martial notes of bugles. Whatever little stock of provisions the party had brought with them was gone soon after they left Dublin ; and by the time they arrived at Downpatrick they were half-starved. They scattered themselves everywhere, and breaking away for the time from the control of their leader, they fell ravenously on all the food they could lay their hands on : they smashed in doors and set fire to houses, and ate and drank and slew as if they were mad, till the town was half destroyed. And the people were taken so completely by surprise that there was hardly any resistance.

When this terrible onslaught at last came to an end, De Courcy, having succeeded in bringing his men together, made an encampment which he carefully fortified ; and there the little army rested from their toils. At the end of a week the chief of the district came with a great army to expel the invaders ; while De Courcy arranged his men in ranks with great skill to withstand the attack. The Ulstermen, who were without armour, wearing a loose saffron-coloured tunic over the ordinary dress according to the Irish fashion, rushed on with fearless bravery ; but by no effort could they break the solid ranks of

the armour-clad Anglo-Normans, who after a long struggle put them to flight, and pursued them for miles along the seashore.

After this victory De Courcy settled in Downpatrick with his followers, and built a strong castle there for his better security. Nevertheless the Ulstermen in no way discouraged continued their fierce attacks: and though he was victorious in several battles he was defeated in others, so that for a long time he had quite enough to do to hold his ground.

But through all his difficulties the valiant De Courcy kept up his heart and battled bravely on, continually enlarging his territory, founding churches and building strong castles all over the province. King Henry was so pleased with his bravery and with his success in extending the English dominions, that he made him earl of Ulster and lord of Connaught; and in 1185 he appointed him Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. This obliged him to live in Dublin; but he left captains and governors in Ulster to hold his castles and protect his territory till he should return, which he did in 1189.

By the death of Henry II. in 1189, Sir John de Courcy lost his best friend: and things began to go ill with him when King John came to the throne in 1199. For another Anglo-Norman lord, Hugh de Lacy, grew jealous of his great deeds and hated him with his whole heart, so that he took every means to poison the king's mind against him. In a very old volume written by some Anglo-Irish writer, there are several entertaining stories of all that befell

De Courcy after his return to Ulster from Dublin in 1189. Two of these somewhat shortened and re-arranged are given here combined in one, and much of the fine old language in which they are told is retained, as it is easily understood.

The first story relates that whereas Sir Hugh de Lacy, who was now appointed general ruler of Ireland by the king, did much disdain and envy Sir John de Courcy, and being marvellous grieved at the worthy service he did, he sought all means that he could possible to damage and hinder him and to bring him to confusion, and promised much rewards in secret to those who would invent any matter against him ; for which De Lacy had no cause but that Sir John's actions and commendations were held in greater account than his own. He feigned also false charges against him and wrote them over to the king, and sore complained of him.

Amongst other his grievous complaints, he said De Courcy refused to do homage to King John, and he charged him also with saying to many that the king had somewhat to do with the death of Prince Arthur, lawful heir to the crown of England ;* and many other such like things. All these were nothing but matters feigned by De Lacy to bring to a better end his purpose of utterly ruining De Courcy. On this De Courcy challenged him, after the custom of those times, to try the matter by single combat : but De Lacy fearing to meet him, made excuses and refused.

* Prince Arthur the rightful heir to the English throne was cast into prison by John ; he was soon after murdered, which it was believed was done by John's orders.

By reason of such evil and envious tales, though untrue they were, Sir Hugh de Lacy was at last commanded by King John to do what he might to apprehend and take Sir John de Courcy. Whereupon he devised and conferred with certain of Sir John's own men how this might be done; and they said it was not possible to do so the while he was in his battle-harness. But they told him that it might be done on Good Friday; for on that day it was his accustomed usage to wear no shield, harness, or weapon, but that he would be found kneeling at his prayers after he had gone about the church five times barefooted. And having so devised, they lay in wait for him in his church at Downpatrick; and when they saw him barefooted and unarmed they rushed on him suddenly. But he, snatching up a heavy wooden cross that stood nigh the church, defended him till it was broken, and slew thirteen of them before he was taken. And so he was sent to England and was put into the Tower of London to remain there in perpetual, and there miserably was kept a long time without as much meat or apparel as any account could be made of.

Now these men had agreed to betray their master to Sir Hugh de Lacy for a certain reward of gold and silver; and when they came to Sir Hugh for their reward, he gave them the gold and silver as he had promised. They then craved of him a passport into England to tell all about the good service they had done; which he gave them, with the following words written in it:—

“ This writing witnesseth that those whose names are herein subscribed, that did betray so good a

master for reward, will be false to me and to all the earth besides. And inasmuch as I put no trust in them, I do banish them out of this land of Ireland for ever; and I do let Englishmen know that none of them may enjoy any part of this our king's land, or be employed as servitors from this forward for ever."

And so he wrote all their names, and put them in a ship with victuals and furniture, but without mariners or seamen, and put them to sea, and gave them strict charge never to return to Ireland on pain of death. And after this they were not heard of for a long time; but by chance of weather and lack of skilful men, they arrived at Cork, and being taken, were brought to Sir Hugh de Lacy; and first taking all their treasure from them, he hung them in chains and so left them till their bodies wasted away.

This deed that Sir Hugh de Lacy did was for an ensample that none should use himself the like, and not for love of Sir John de Courcy: since it appeareth from certain ancient authors that he would have it so that De Courcy's name should not be so much as mentioned, and that no report or commendation of him should ever be made.

And now Sir John de Courcy, being in the Tower in evil plight, cried often to God why He suffered him to be thus so miserably used, who did build so many good abbeys and did so many good deeds to God: and thus often lamenting with himself he asked God his latter end to finish.

It fortun'd after this that much variance and debate did grow between King John of England and

King Philip of France* about a certain castle which the king of France won from King John. And when King Philip had often been asked to restore it he refused, saying it was his by right. But at last he offered to try the matter by battle. For he had a champion, a mighty man who had never been beaten ; and he challenged the king of England to find on his side, a champion to fight him, and let the title to the castle depend on the issue thereof ; to which King John, more hasty than well advised, did agree.

And when the day of battle was appointed, the king of England called together his Council to find out where a champion might be found that would take upon him this honour and weighty enterprise. Many places they sought and inquired of, but no one was found that was willing to engage in so perilous a matter. And the king was in a great agony, fearing more the dishonour of the thing than the loss of the castle.

At length a member of the Council came to the king and told him that there was a man in the Tower of London—one De Courcy—that in all the earth was not his peer, if he would only fight. The king was much rejoiced thereat, and sent unto him to require and command him to take the matter in hand : but Sir John refused. The king sent again and offered him great gifts ; but again he refused, saying he would never serve the king in field any more ; for he thought himself evil rewarded for such service as he did him before. The king sent to him

* At this time the kings of England had a large territory in France, so that quarrels often arose between them and the French kings.

a third time and bade him ask whatever he would for himself and for his friends, and all should be granted to him : and he said furthermore that upon his stalworth and knightly doings the honour of the realm of England did rest and depend.

He answered that for himself the thing he would wish to ask for, King John was not able to give, namely, the lightness and freedom of heart that he once had, but which the king's unkind dealing had taken from him. As for his friends, he said that saving a few they were all slain in the king's service ; " and for these reasons " said he " I mean never to serve the king more. But "—he went on to say—" the honour of the realm of England, that is another matter : and I would defend it so far as lies in my power provided I might have such things as I shall ask for."

This was promised to him, and the king sent messengers to set him at liberty ; who, when they had entered into his prison, found him in great misery. His hair was all matted and overgrew his shoulders to his waist ; he had scarce any apparel, and the little he had fell in rags over his great body ; and his face was hollow from close confinement and for lack of food.

After all things that he required had been granted to him, he asked for one thing more, namely, that his sword should be sent for all the way to Downpatrick in Ireland, where it would be found within the altar of the church ; for with that weapon he said he would fight and with no other. After much delay it was brought to him ; and when they saw it and felt its weight, they marvelled that any

man could wield it. And good food was given to him, and seemly raiment, and he had due exercise, and in all things he was cherished and made much of; so that his strength of body and stoutness of heart returned to him.

The lists were enclosed and all things were prepared against the day of battle. The two kings were there outside the lists with most of their nobility and thousands of great people to look on, all sitting on seats placed high up for good view. Within the lists were two tents for the champions where they might rest till the time appointed. And men were chosen to see that all things were carried on fairly and in good order.

When the time drew nigh, the French champion came forth on the field and did his duty of obeisance, and bowed with reverence and courtesy to all around, and went back to his tent where he waited for half an hour. The king of England sent for Sir John to come forth, for that the French champion rested a long time waiting his coming; to which he answered roughly that he would come forth when he thought it was time. And when he still delayed, the king sent one of his Council to desire him to make haste, to which he made answer:—"If thou or those kings were invited to such a banquet, you would make no great haste coming forth to partake of it."

On this the king, deeming that he was not going to fight at all, was about to depart in a great rage, thinking much evil of Sir John de Courey. While he was thus musing, Sir John came forth in surly mood for memory of all the ill usage that had been

wrought on him ; and he stalked straight on looking neither to the right nor to the left and doing no reverence to anyone : and so back to his tent.

Then the trumpets sounded the first charge for the champions to approach. Forth they came and passing by slowly, viewed each other intently without a word. And when the foreign champion noted De Courcy's fierce look, and measured with his eyes his great stature and mighty limbs, he was filled with dread and fell all a-trembling. At length the trumpets sounded the last charge for the fight to begin ; on which De Courcy quickly drew his sword and advanced ; but the Frenchman, turning right round " ranne awaie off the fiede and betooke him to Spaine."

Whereupon the English trumpets sounded victory ; and there was such shouting and cheering, such a-clapping of hands and such a-throwing of caps in the air as the like was never seen before.

When the multitude became quiet, King Philip desired of King John that De Courcy might be called before them to give a trial of his strength by a blow upon a helmet : to which De Courcy agreed. They fixed a great stake of timber in the ground, standing up the height of a man, over which they put a shirt of mail with a helmet on top. And when all was ready, De Courcy drawing his sword looked at the kings with a grim and terrible look that fearful it was to behold ; after which he struck such a blow as cut clean through the helmet and through the shirt of mail, and down deep in the piece of timber. And so fast was the sword fixed that no man in the assembly using his two hands with the utmost effort, could

pluck it out; but Sir John taking it in one hand drew it forth easily.

The princes, marvelling at so huge a stroke, desired to understand why he looked so terrible at them before he struck the blow: on which he answered:—

“I call St. Patrick of Down to witness that if I had missed the mark I would have cut the heads off both of you kings on the score of all the ill usage I received aforetime at your hands.”

King John being satisfied with all matters as they turned out took his answer in good part: and he gave him back all the dominions that before he had in Ireland as Earl of Ulster and lord of Connaught and of Kinsale in Cork; and licensed him to return, with many great gifts besides. And to this day the people of Ireland hold in memory Sir John de Courcy and his mighty deeds; and the ruins of many great castles builded by him are to be seen all over Ulster.*

* When I was a boy John de Courcy was well known in tradition and legend among the Limerick peasantry; and stories about him were common. Paddy MacGrath, of Glenosheen, a noted *shanachie*—of whom I retain a genial and pleasant memory—often told this very story of De Courcy and the foreign champion, and told it with spirit, as he did all his stories; while we boys listened entranced and breathless. I have not the least notion of how the people got these stories.

The usual name by which John de Courcy was known among the people was *Seán a bhuille mhóir*, “John of the mighty stroke.”

ST. DONATUS, BISHOP OF FIESOLE.*

IN every good History of Ireland we are told how missionaries and learned men went in great numbers from Ireland to the Continent in the early ages of Christianity to preach the Gospel and to teach in colleges. A full account of the lives and labours of these earnest and holy men would fill several volumes: but the following short sketch of one of them will give the reader a good idea of all.

Donatus was born in Ireland of noble parents towards the end of the eighth century. There is good reason to believe that he was educated in the monastic school of Inishcaltra, a little island in Lough Derg, near the Galway shore, now better known as Holy Island†: so that he was probably a native of that part of the country. Here he studied with great industry and success. He became a priest, and in course of time a bishop: and he was greatly distinguished as a professor.

Having spent a number of years teaching, he resolved to make a pilgrimage to Rome and visit the holy places on the way. He had a favourite pupil named Andrew belonging to a noble Irish family, a handsome, high-spirited youth, but of a deeply religious turn: and these two, master and scholar, were much attached. And when Donatus made known his intention to go as a pilgrim to foreign lands, Andrew, who could not bear to be separated

* Fiesole in Tuscany, Italy; pronounced in four syllables: Fee-ess'-o-lě.

† In the "Child's History of Ireland" there is a picture of the round tower and church ruins on this little island.

from him, begged to be permitted to go with him : to which Donatus consented. When they had made the few simple preparations necessary, they went down to the shore, accompanied by friends and relatives ; and bidding farewell to all—home, friends, and country—amid tears and regrets, they set sail and landed on the coast of France.

And now, here were these two men, with stout hearts, determined will, and full trust in God, exhibiting an excellent example of what numberless Irish exiles of those days gave up, and of what trials and dangers they exposed themselves to, for the sake of religion. One was a successful teacher and a bishop ; the other a young chief ; and both might have lived in their own country a life of peace and plenty. But they relinquished all that for a higher and holier purpose ; and they brought with them neither luxury nor comfort. They had, on landing, just as much money and food as started them on their journey ; and with a small satchel strapped on shoulder, containing a book or two, some relics, and other necessary articles, and with stout staff in hand, they travelled the whole way on foot. Whenever a monastery lay near their road, there they called, sure of a kind reception, and rested for a day or two. When no monastery was within reach, they simply begged for food and night-shelter as they fared along, making themselves understood by the peasantry as best they could, for they knew little or nothing of their language. Much hardship they endured from hunger and thirst, bad weather, rough paths that often led them astray, and constant fatigue. They were sometimes in danger too from rude and wicked

peasants, some of whom thought no more of killing a stranger than of killing a sparrow. But before setting out, the two pilgrims knew well the hardships and dangers in store for them on the way: so that they were quite prepared for all this: and on they trudged contented and cheerful, never swerving an instant from their purpose.

They travelled in a sort of zigzag way, continually turning aside to visit churches, shrines, hermitages, and all places consecrated by memory of old-time saints, or of past events of importance in the history of Christianity. And whenever they heard, as they went slowly along, of a man eminent for holiness and learning, they made it a point to visit him so as to have the benefit of his conversation and advice; using the Latin language, which all learned men spoke in those times.

In this manner the pilgrims made their way right through France and on through north Italy till they arrived at Rome. This was the main object of their pilgrimage, and here they sojourned for a considerable time. Having obtained the Pope's blessing, they set out once more, directing their steps now towards Tuscany, till at length they reached the beautiful mountain of Fiesole near Florence, where stood many churches and other memorials of Christian saints and martyrs. They entered the hospice of the monastery, intending to rest there for a week or two, and then to resume their journey. At this time Irish pilgrims and missionaries were respected everywhere on the Continent; and as soon as the arrival of those two became known, they were received with honour by both clergy and people, who became

greatly attached to them for their gentle quiet ways and their holiness of life.

It happened about the time of their arrival here that the pastor of Fiesole, who was a bishop, died; and the clergy and people resolved to have Donatus for their pastor. But when they went to him and told him what they wanted, he became frightened; and trembling greatly he said to them in his gentle humble way:—

“We are only poor pilgrims from Scotia, and I do not wish to be your bishop; for I am not at all fit for it, hardly even knowing your language or your customs.”

But the more he entreated the more vehemently did they insist: so that at last he consented to take the bishop's chair. This was in or about the year 824.

We need not follow the life of St. Donatus further here. It is enough to say that notwithstanding all his fears and his deep humility, he became a great and successful pastor and missionary. For about thirty-seven years he laboured among the people of Fiesole by whom he was greatly loved and revered. Down to the day of his death, which happened about 861 when he was a very old man, he was attended by his affectionate friend Andrew. He is to this day honoured in and around Fiesole as an illustrious saint of those times. His tomb is still shown and regarded with much veneration: and in the old town there are several other memorials of him.*

* A detailed and reverent and very interesting account of Donatus's work in Fiesole, of the legends told about him, and of the memorials of him still preserved there will be found in Miss Margaret Stokes's book “Six Months in the Apennines.”

Like St. Columkille, Donatus always cherished a tender regretful love for Ireland ; and like him also he wrote a short poem in praise of it which is still preserved. It is in Latin, and the following is a translation of part of it made by a Dublin poet (the Rev. William Dunkin) a century and a half ago :—

Far westward lies an isle of ancient fame,
 By nature bless'd ; and Scotia is her name
 Enroll'd in books* : exhaustless is her store
 Of veiny silver and of golden ore.†
 Her fruitful soil for ever teems with wealth,
 With gems‡ her waters, and her air with health ;
 Her verdant fields with milk and honey flow§ ;
 Her woolly fleeces|| vie with virgin snow ;
 Her waving furrows float with bearded corn ;
 And arms and arts her envied sons adorn !¶
 No savage bear with lawless fury roves,
 Nor fiercer lion through her peaceful groves ;
 No poison there infects, no scaly snake
 Creeps through the grass, nor frog annoys the lake ;**
 An island worthy of its pious race,
 In war triumphant, and unmatch'd in peace !

* I.e., Scotia is the name by which it is known in books. Scotia was one of the names of Ireland ; but at home the natives always called it Erin.

† Ireland had mines of gold in old times ; and silver was also found. Great numbers of Irish gold ornaments, found from time to time in the earth, are now preserved in museums.

‡ Pearls were then found in many Irish rivers ; as they are sometimes to this day.

§ The Venerable Bede, a great English historian writing in the eighth century, calls Ireland “ a land flowing with milk and honey.”

|| Ireland was noted for the plenty and goodness of its wool.

¶ Ireland had great warriors and many learned men and skilful artists.

** See page 5, above.

SOME PUZZLES AND CAUTIONS IN INTERPRETING IRISH LOCAL NAMES.

IN no country in the world is there so large a proportion of the names of places intelligible as in Ireland. This may be accounted for partly by the fact that the names are nearly all Gaelic, which has been the language of the country without a break from the time of the first colonies till the introduction of English, and is still the spoken language over a large area, so that the names never lost their significance; and partly that a very large number of the names are recorded in their correct original forms in our old Gaelic books. But, even with these helps, we have still a considerable number of local names whose meanings we cannot discover. In my two volumes on "Irish Names of Places," I have confined myself to those names of whose meanings I had unquestionable evidence of one kind or another; but it may be interesting to pass in review here a few of those names that came across me whose meanings I was unable to determine.

Where names do not bear their interpretation plainly on their face in their present printed anglicised forms, there are two chief modes of determining their meanings;—either to hear them pronounced as living words, or to find out their oldest forms in ancient Gaelic documents: in either case you can generally determine the meaning. But still there *are* names—and not a few—about which we are in the dark, though we can hear them pronounced, or find them written in old books.

And here it is necessary to observe that once you hear a name distinctly pronounced by several intelligent old people who all agree, or find it plainly written in manuscripts of authority, if in either case it is not intelligible, you are not at liberty to alter it so as to give it a meaning, unless in rare exceptional cases, and with some sound reason to justify the change. It is by indulging in this sort of license that etymologists are most prone to error, not only in Gaelic, but in all other languages.

Let us look at an example of this vicious procedure. There are many places in Ireland called *Templenoe* or *Templenua*, a name quite plain and simple, meaning "new-church," so called in each case to distinguish the building from some older church in the neighbourhood; exactly like *Kilnoe* or *Kilnue* ("New Church"), which is also a common townland name. There is a parish called *Templenoe* near Kenmare in Kerry, taking its name from an old church still existing. Ask the old people of the place to pronounce the name, and they always say "*Templenoe*," never anything else (except perhaps a few who have been recently perverted by the new and spurious book learning detailed here). Or look through written Irish documents in which the place is mentioned—especially songs—and you always find it written *Templenua*. But a name which means nothing more than "New Church" was too prosy and commonplace a designation in the eyes of certain local antiquarians—some of them good Irish scholars too; and in order to connect the old Church—for its greater honour—with the Blessed Virgin, they *invented* a form of the name which never had any

existence at all anywhere outside themselves—*Temple-na-hOighe* (pronounced Temple-na-hoe), which would mean the “Temple or Church of the Virgin.” The discussion was carried on in print some twenty-five or thirty years ago with mighty learning, drowned in a whole deluge of conjecture and guesswork, which had no more limit or law than the flood of Noah. I think the disputants in the end settled down to *Temple-na-hOighe*, blissfully oblivious of the fact that there are many other places called Templenoe, which, like this one, were—and are—called correctly, by the peasantry, who had the name from their grandfathers, as well as in writing.

This is the sort of spurious etymology, which, a century ago or more, made the treatment of our antiquities the laughing stock, not only of England, but of all Europe. But the sky is clearer now; though we come across still—now and then—some wild freaks of etymology, dancing before our eyes *like a daddy-long-legs on a window-pane*.

We are not able to tell, with any degree of certainty, the meaning of the name of Ireland itself, or of any one of the four provinces. Our old writers have legends to account for all; but these legends are quite worthless as etymological authorities, except perhaps the legend of the origin of the name of Leinster, which has a historical look about it.* The oldest native form of the name of Ireland is *Eriu* or *Heriu*. But in the ancient Greek, Latin, Breton and Welsh forms of the name, the first syllable *Er*, is represented by two syllables, with a *b*, *r*, or *w*

* See my *Irish Names of Places*, vol. i., page 93.

sound:—Gr. and Lat., *Iberio* or *Hiberio*, *Hibernia* *Jouernia* (Ivernia); Welsh and Breton, *Ywerddon*, *Iwerdon*, *Iverdon*. From this it may be inferred, with every appearance of certainty, that the native name was originally *Ibheriu*, *Eberiu*, *Iveriu*, *Hiberiu*, *Hiveriu*, or some such form; but for this there is no native manuscript authority, even in the very oldest of our writings. Beyond this, all is uncertainty. Dr. Whitley Stokes suggests that this old form may be connected with Sanscrit *avara*, western; but this, though possibly right, is still conjecture.

The name *Erin* has been explained *iarin*, western land; or *iar-inis*, western island. Zeuss conjectures *iar-rend*, or *iar-renn*, modern *iar-reann*, western island or country; and Pictet regards the first syllable of the form Ivernia as being the Celtic word *ibh*, land, tribe. Pictet took the word *ibh* from O'Reilly, whereas there is no nominative singular word *ibh* in the Irish language: *ibh* or *uibh* is merely the dative plural of *ua* or *o*, a grandson. Max Müller (Lectures on the Science of Language, I. 245) thinks he sees in *Erin* or *Erin* a trace of the name of the primitive Aryan people. But all these latter conjectures are almost certainly wrong.

The name of Navan, in Meath, has long exercised Irish etymologists—including even O'Donovan. This greatest of all Irish topographers identified it at the time he was employed on the Ordnance Survey with *Nuachongbhail*, which is often mentioned by the Annalists; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that he showed beyond doubt that *Nuachongbhail* stood where Navan now stands. *Nuachongbhail* signifies new habitation, from *nua*,

new ; and *congbhail*, a habitation. This long name would be sounded *Noo-hong-val* ; and elsewhere in Ireland it has been softened down to Noughaval and Nohoval. *L* is often changed to *n* in Irish names, and if we admit that this has taken place here, and that the middle *h* sound has been omitted (which it often is, as we see in Drogheda for Droghed-aha, Drumlane for Drumlahan, &c.), we shall have the form *Noran* ; and we know that in some old documents, written in English, the place is called *Norane*.

But another very different, and indeed a far more interesting origin for the name suggests itself. We are told in several of our most ancient legendary records, that Heremon son of Miled or Milesius, while still living in Spain, before the Milesian expedition to Ireland, married a lady named *Odhbha* [Ova] who became the mother of three of his children. After a time he put her away and married *Tea*, from whom in after time, according to the legendary etymology, *Tea-mur* or Tara derived its name. When Heremon came to Ireland, *Odhbha* followed him and her children, and soon after her arrival died of grief on account of her repudiation by her husband. Her three children raised a mound to her memory, which was called *Odhbha* after her ; and from this again was named the territory of *Odhbha* which lay round Navan, and which in after ages was known as the territory of the O'Heas.

This mound we know was (and is still) near the place on which Navan now stands ; and like all sepulchral mounds, it must have contained an artificial cave in which the remains were deposited. We know that the present colloquial *Irish* name of Navan is *an*

uaimh, "the cave" : this name is still remembered by the old people, and we find it also in some of our more modern Irish annals. We may fairly conclude that the cave here meant is that in which Queen *Odhbha* has rested from her sorrows for three thousand years ; and it may be suspected that *uaimh*, though a natural name under the circumstances, is a corruption from *Odhbha*, as both have nearly the same sound ; in fact the modern pronunciation varies between *an Uaimh* and *an Odhbha*.

Another element of difficulty is the fact that in the Annals of Lough Key the place is called *An Umamá*—"The *Umamá*"—which seems to show that the old writer was as much puzzled about the name as we are, and wrote it down honestly as best he could, without attempting to twist it into an intelligible word, as many modern writers would do without hesitation. This form *Umamá* is probably evolved from the old form *Odhbha*—at least I shall regard it so.

Now, from which of these three words, *Nuachongbhail*, *Odhbha*, or *An Uaimh*, is the name of Navan derived ; for it is certainly derived from one or another of the three ? The first *n* of Navan (as representing *an uaimh*) is the Irish article *an*, contracted to *n*, as it usually is ; and this is still remembered, even by the English-speaking people, for Navan has been and is still often called *The Navan*. But this fact might apply to any one of the three derivations. In the case of Navan coming from *Nuachongbhail*, the first *n* of this Irish name was mistaken for the article ; just as in the case of *Oughaval* in Sligo, Mayo, and Queen's County, in which the initial *n*

has been dropped by the people, who mistook it for the article, the proper name being *Noughaval*, i.e. *Nuachongbhail*; and as to *Odhbha* and *Uaimh*, the article is there to the present day annexed to both. The presence of the last *n* of Navan is quite compatible with the derivation from either *Odhbha* or *An Uaimh*, for it is the termination of an oblique form, and as a matter of fact *uaimh* is often written and pronounced *uamhainn*, as in the case of the name of the village of Ovens, west of Cork city, which is really *Uamhainn*, i.e., caves, from the great limestone caves near the village, and either *'n-Odhubhan* or *'n-Uamhainn* would sound almost exactly the same as the old English name, Novane.

The change from *Nuachongbhail* to Novane looks too violent, though possible, and I am disposed to believe that Queen *Odhbha's* name still lives in the name "Navan." The people having lost all tradition of Heremon's repudiated queen, and not understanding what *Odhbha* meant, mistook it for *Uaimh*, which has nearly the same sound, and which was quite applicable, as the cave was there before their eyes, so they prefixed the article and used *Uamhainn* (as elsewhere) for *Uaimh*, the whole Irish name, *n-Uamhainn* (pronounced Noovan), being Anglicized to Novane, which ultimately settled down to Navan. But this is by no means certain, and until we discover more decided authorities the name will continue doubtful and tantalizing.

Granard, in the county Longford, is mentioned in the *Tain-bo-Chuailgne* in *Leabhar-na-hUidhre* (p. 57, col. a, line 30), a book written A.D. 1100. In the text it is written *Gránairud*, which is the oldest form

of the name accessible to us, and a gloss immediately over the word—"i. Gránárd indiu" ("namely Granard to-day")—identifies *Gránairud* with the present Granard. Moreover, the gloss was written at the same time as the text, so that the name had taken the form *Granard* 800 years ago, *Gránairud* being a still older form. If we were profane enough to take liberties with this grand old text, we could easily, by a very slight twist, change *Gránairud* to an intelligible word; but there it stands, and no one can tell what it means.

But a name may be plain enough as to its meaning—may carry its interpretation on its face—and still we may not be able to tell what gave rise to it—why the place was so called. There are innumerable names all over the country subject to this doubt; but in these cases a little more liberty of conjecture is allowable. Moreover, local inquiry among the most intelligent of the old inhabitants often clears up the doubt. Still there are hundreds of names that remain, and will always remain, obscure in this respect.

The name of the village of Sneem, in Co. Kerry, to the west of Kenmare, is a perfectly plain Gaelic word, and universally understood in the neighbourhood—*Snaidhm* [snime], a knot. The intelligent old people of the place say that the place got its name from a roundish grass-covered rock, rising over a beautiful cascade in the river just below the bridge, where the fresh water and the salt water meet. When the tide is in, this rock presents the appearance of a *snaidhm* or knot over the stream. This is not unlikely. But there is another name formed

from the same word—just one other in all Ireland, so far as I am aware—the origin of which it is not so easy to discover. This is Sninnagorta, near the village of Ballymore in Westmeath, which is a real puzzle, though its meaning is plain enough, *gort* or *gorta*, hunger or famine: *Sninnagorta*, the “knot of hunger.” So also, there are places called “Frossa,” which is an anglicized form of the Irish *Frasa*, “showers.” But why are these places called in Irish “Showers”? Perhaps the name of the “Caha Mountains” (i.e. “showery mountains”), between Kenmare and Bantry, may give some help (Names of Places, n. 153). “Frosses” in Antrim is the same name, only with the English plural termination. I will leave these names and others like them to exercise the judgment of the readers.

Sometimes a single glance at the place clears up the matter. A few years ago I saw for the first time, from the railway carriage, Ballydehob (“The Ford of the two mouths”) in Cork, which enlightened my ignorance (See my Names of Places, i, 253). Just at the bridge, where the ford stood in old times, the river divides in two, forming a little *delta*, and enters the sea by *two mouths*. See also Lough Avaul in Names of Places, i. 4.

As giving examples of the doubts and difficulties attending the investigation of local etymologies, and of the extreme caution with which the investigator must proceed, this short sketch may be of some use to the younger and less experienced students who are labouring to master the language, the local names, and the antiquities of Ireland.

In addition to my two volumes on "Irish Names of Places" (in which are explained the names of 20,000 or 30,000 different places) there is room for at least one more volume. Whoever undertakes the very serious task of writing this will have aids that I had not: especially the Rev. Dr. Hogan's great work "Onomasticon Goedelicum"; "Early Irish Population-Groups" (Proc. R. I. Acad.) by Professor John MacNeill; and "The Place-Names of Decies," by the Rev. P. Power.

GARRET MAC ENIRY.

A TALE OF THE MUNSTER PEASANTRY.

[I WROTE this little story when I was very young, and put it aside for some years. It was published in the year 1857, in a local newspaper, "The Tipperary Leader"—over the pen-name "Carnferay": my first appearance in print. It represents faithfully the dialect of the Limerick peasantry of seventy years ago, which I think is still much the same as it was then. Most or all of the scenes and incidents are depicted from real life, as I witnessed them in my boyhood and youth. As the Palatines figure in this story a few words about them will not come amiss.

The Palatines were German Protestants from the *Palatinate* of the Upper Rhine. In the beginning of the eighteenth century, great numbers of them were brought to England, where they were settled on farms at low rents. From England a number were brought to Ireland by Sir Thomas Southwell (or "Lord Southwell," as I heard him called) of Limerick, who settled them about Rathkeale. From this place again many families were transferred to Glenosheen, Ballyorgan, and Garranleash near Kilfinane, where the landlord, the Right Hon. Silver Oliver, gave them small plots at trifling rents, with help to build their houses.

In my time there was a popular rhyme:—

“ In the year seventeen hundred and nine
In came the brass-colored Palatine
From the ancient banks of the Swabian Rhine.”

In Glenosheen the land given them was unoccu-

pied, so that there were no evictions—Oliver took care of that ; and as the place was mostly wooded they had to clear the bush before tilling their little farms. At the time of their arrival and for many years subsequently, they had several customs that seemed very strange to the natives :—their dress was made of canvas, even to the shoes—except the soles ; they ate “sour krout” (a preparation of cabbage) ; and slept between two feather beds. This is the account that I had in my early days, as handed down by the old people ; but these peculiarities had all disappeared long before my time. They were dark yellow and rather swarthy in complexion, as are most of their descendants to this day.

As to religion, they were all Methodists : but they attended the little Protestant church, as they were too few to be able to afford a church and pastor of their own. But they often engaged the services of a Methodist preacher for a short time. He was entertained in the houses of the well-to-do by turns, and they treated him hospitably : in fact, he lived on the fat of the land while he was among them.

As I remember them, they were steady, sober, and industrious : good farmers : understood gardening ; kept bees ; and were fond of making pastry.*

In my early time Glenosheen had a mixture of Catholics and Protestants (chiefly Palatines) about half and half, and we got on very well together : in recalling the kindly memories of my boyhood companions, Palatines come up as well as Catholics.

* Gerald Griffin, who knew the Palatines well, depicts their character truly in his story, “*Suil dhuv the Coiner.*”

The following were some of the prevailing Palatine family names in my neighbourhood seventy years ago :—Bovenizer, Alltimes or Alton, Stuffe (Stoffel), Young, Glaizier, Ruttle, Ligier (Ligonier), Heck, Barkman (Berchmans), Strough (with a strong guttural at the end), Fizzell, Shoultiss, Delmege. But of these not more than four or five are extant now : all the rest have been cleared out by death or emigration.]

The Ballyhoura Mountains extend for several miles on the borders of the counties of Cork and Limerick. Commencing near Charleville, they stretch away towards the east, consisting of a succession of single peaks with lone and desolate valleys lying between, covered with heath or coarse grass, where for ages the silence has been broken only by the cry of the heath-cock or the yelp of the fox echoing among the rocks that are strewn in wild confusion over the sides of the mountains. They increase gradually in height towards the eastern extremity of the range, where they are abruptly terminated by the majestic Seefin, which projecting forwards—its back to the west and its face to the rising sun—seems placed there to guard the desolate solitudes behind it. Towards the east it overlooks a beautiful and fertile valley, through which a little river winds its peaceful course to join the Funsheon ; on the west “Blackrock of the eagle” rears its front—a sheer precipice—over Lyre-na-Freaghawn, a black heath-covered glen that divides the mountains. On the south it is separated by Lyre-na-Grena the “valley of the sun,” from “the Long Mountain,”

which stretches far away towards Glenanaar; and immediately in front, on the opposite side of the valley, rises Barna Geelha, up whose sides cultivation has crept almost to its summit. Just under the eastern face of Seefin, at its very base, and extending even a little way up the mountain steep, reposes the peaceful little village of Glenosheen.*

Gentle reader, go if you can on some sunny morning in summer or autumn—let it be Sunday morning if possible—to the bottom of the valley near the bank of the little stream, and when you cast your eyes up to the village and the great green hill over it, you will admit that not many places even in our own green island can produce a prettier or more cheerful prospect. There is the little hamlet, with its white-washed cottages gleaming in the morning beams, and from each a column of curling smoke rises slowly straight up towards the blue expanse. The base of the mountain is covered with wood, and several clumps of great trees are scattered here and there through the village, so that it appears imbedded in a mass of vegetation, its pretty cottages peeping out from among the foliage. The land on each side rises gently towards the mountain, its verdure interspersed by fields of blossomed potatoes laughing with joy, or of bright yellow corn, or more beautiful still, little patches of flax clothed in their Sunday dress of light blue.† Seefin rises directly over the village, a perfect

* See "Sir Donall" and "The White Ladye" in Robert Dwyer Joyce's "Ballads of Irish Chivalry" for all these places commemorated in verse.

† Flax was grown there then (1845); but there is no flax now (1911).

cone ; white patches of sheep are scattered here and there over its bright sunny face ; and see, far up towards the summit, that long line of cattle, just *after leaving* Lyre-na-Grena, where they were driven to be milked, and grazing quietly along towards Lyre-na-Freaghawn. The only sounds that catch your ear are, the occasional crow of a cock, or the exulting cackle of a flock of geese, or the softened low of a cow may reach you, floating down the hill side ; or the cry of the herdsman, as with earnest gestures he endeavours to direct the movements of the cattle. But hear that merry laugh. See, it comes from the brow of the hill where the women of the village are just coming into view, returning from Lyre-na-Grena after milking their cows. Each carries a pail in one hand and a spancel in the other, and as they approach the village, descending the steep pathway—the “ Dray-road,” as it is called—that leads from “ The Lyre,” a gabble of voices mingled with laughter floats over the village, as merry and as happy as ever rung on human ear. Observe now they arrive at the village, the group becomes thinner as they proceed down the street, and at length all again is quietness.

Happy village ! Pleasant scenes of my childhood ! How vividly at this moment do I behold that green hill-side, as I travel back in imagination to the days of my boyhood, when I and my little brother Robert, and our companions—all now scattered over this wide world—ranged joyful among the glens in search of birds’ nests, or climbed the rocks at its summit, eager to plant ourselves on its dizzy elevation. Why did ambition tempt me to leave my peaceful home ?

Why did I abandon that sunny valley, where I might have travelled gently down the vale of life, free from those ambitious aspirations, those struggles with fortune that only destroy my peace? But though exiled far from my home, my heart shall never cease to point to its loved retirement; and ever, as release from business grants me the opportunity, I shall return to wander over the scenes of my infancy, to hold communion once again with the few companions of my boyhood that remain, and to think with feelings of kindly regret on those that are gone. And when weary from the incessant struggles of life, I seek an asylum from its turmoil, grant me, oh, kind Providence, to spend my declining years in that beloved valley, and to rest at length my aged head in the grave of my fathers on the green hill of Ardpatrik.*

About a century and a-half ago, that part of the valley where the village now stands was almost uninhabited. It was covered with a vast forest of oaks, which not only clothed the valley, but extended more than half way up to the summits of the surrounding hills; and to this day the inhabitants will tell you, in the words of their fathers, that "a person could travel from Ardpatrik to Darra (about five miles) along the branches of the trees." No human habitation relieved the loneliness, save only one small cottage that stood near the base of the hill. It was inhabited, from times too remote for even the memory of tradition to reach, by a family named

* All this sentiment was natural enough for a young man, homesick, after leaving his native place; but sixty years or more will bring changes of feeling (April, 1911).

Mac Eniry, descendants of that princely sept that once possessed the Ballyhoura Mountains with many miles of the surrounding country. About three acres of land just in front of the house, and a small garden in the rear, had been rescued by some of the early dwellers from the grasp of the forest; the produce of these, with the assistance of a cow or two, and a few sheep and goats that browsed on the mountain side, afforded each succeeding family a means of subsistence; and they lived as happy as the days are long in the quiet of their mountain solitude.

Garret Mac Eniry was the occupant of the little tenement at the period of which we speak. His locks were whitened by the frost of seventy winters, but age had not deprived him of the firm tread and the erect gait of his youth. Although of humble position and accustomed to daily labour on his little farm, there was a certain dignity stamped on his countenance that spoke descent from a distinguished race, and gained for him the respect of all who knew him. He had married young the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, and had seen a family spring up around him; but he had scarcely begun to enjoy his happiness when it vanished from his grasp. His children died one after another; and now, with the exception of his aged partner, all that his heart had ever prized slept in the lonely churchyard of Ardpatrick. His disposition was once buoyant and cheerful; but the death of his children and the consciousness that he was the last of an expiring race had long marked his face with a settled expression of pensiveness. Mary his wife was old and feeble, for grief had done its work; she was devotedly

attached to Garret, and this alone prevented her from wishing to sleep with her children in Ardpatrick; and so they lived on from year to year. Garret still rose with the lark and worked on his little farm; and Mary was still able to manage all their domestic affairs. Their attachment to each other had become, if possible, more deep as time advanced—Mary's increasing helplessness calling forth from Garret all those latent affections that lie sleeping in the depths of every human heart till wakened into life and strength by the sufferings of some beloved object.

The solitude of their mountain home was at length broken. The Right Hon. Silver Oliver brought twelve Palatine families from Rathkeale to reside in Glenosheen, giving each, at some trifling rent, a house and a small farm of land. The houses were built just under Seefin, six on each side of the road, forming a little street which ran straight up against the hill—the germ from which gradually arose the pleasant little village of Glenosheen. On each side of the village the trees were cut down, and the cleared land was parcelled out in small lots of about three acres each, one of which was appropriated to each Palatine family. In a few months from the commencement of the work the strangers were settled down in their new abode, and the valley exhibited the cheerful signs of industry. Garret's cottage lay a few perches to the west of the village, and he was left in undisturbed possession.

His prying Palatine neighbours were not long in winning his acquaintance, and in discovering from the other inhabitants of the valley, his whole history.

He neither courted nor repelled their advances, but was uniformly quiet and obliging, and he soon gained their esteem and confidence. Only on very rare occasions did he enter any of their cottages, but when he did they were really rejoiced to welcome him, and he was sure to be offered a plate of plum pudding or some of those other delicacies for the manufacture of which some of the Palatine women are to this day famed. The children too though they were silent in his presence, yet loved to steal near him in hopes that he would rub their heads, for he was gentle and kind to them. Mary was equally a favourite among the women, and when Garret was out at work during the day she was hardly ever alone, for they came and sat with her while they knitted. Though Garret had at first regretted to see the quiet of his home disturbed by these strangers, and though there were many peculiarities in their manners that appeared to him harsh and rude, yet on the whole he was not displeased with his altered circumstances, and two or three years passed away agreeably enough.

One evening when Garret returned from work somewhat earlier than usual, intending to look after a few sheep which he had on the mountain, he found Mary alone: she was more silent than usual, and he thought she looked ill.

"Mary acushla," said he, "is there anything amiss with you?—I think you don't look well this evenin'."

"Why thin indeed Garret," she replied, "to tell the thruth, I didn't feel too well these couple o' days, but I didn't like to tell you afore, for fear you might be throubled. I don't know how it is, but there's

something quare comin' over me that I never felt afore, an' there's a weight here on my heart I can't get rid of. The Lord sind, Garret avourneen," said she doubtingly, "that it wouldn't be anything bad."

"Mary agragal you're takin' id too much to heart," said he, "you wor never used to sickness, and a little thing frightens you; but you'll see there's no danger. Wait till to-morrow, an' I'll engage with the help of God you'll be as well as ever you wor."

"Well, God is good, glory be to His holy name. I hope it may turn out as you're sayin'. But sure Garret avourneen, 'tis afore us all, praise be to God, an' His will must be done anyway."

This delicate allusion to the possibility of real danger caused a thrill of anguish to shoot through his breast. Suppressing his emotion however he again assumed his former cheerful encouraging tone, and replied—

"Mary, a sullish machree, you're too much down-hearted; indeed I can't bear to hear you spakin' in that way, for id goes through my heart, so id does. I'll stay wid you all this evenin', an' I'll engage you'll see, please God 'tis only a little fit of cowl'd or some other thriflin' thing."

Her presentiments proved to be too true. That evening she was obliged to take to bed, and next morning her illness had increased to an alarming extent: symptoms of fever set in, and her mind occasionally wandered. All this soon became known to their neighbours, who heard it with real concern, and the cottage was never without visitors. For several days she lingered, but her strength gradually

sank, and now all hopes of her recovery were relinquished. She requested that Father Quinlan might be sent for ; he came, and she received the last rites of the church. Garret was in a state of utter despondency ; he neglected everything, and was with difficulty prevailed upon to taste a morsel of food ; but he never wept, and he spoke but little. He spent his whole time either in sitting by the bed-side or in walking silently about his little farm. He wandered from place to place, stopping with clasped hands and gazing at every object with which the memory of Mary was in any way associated.

There was a little green at a short distance behind the house, with a seat made of sods at the upper end of it ; it was a pretty nook, cut as it were out of the forest. The trees completely overshadowed it, and except when the morning sun peeped in beneath the branches it was screened from his beams. Long ago, Garret and Mary loved to sit together on this little bank and listen to the song of the birds in the trees over them ; and when their children grew up, the whole family often left the house on a Sunday morning to enjoy themselves in this spot, the hearts of the parents overflowing with happiness, as under the laughing beams of the morning sun their little ones gambolled on the green before them. Garret now haunted this spot continually ; he ended every walk by seating himself for a short time on that little bank, where he had spent so many happy hours.

On the evening of the fourth day several persons sat in the cottage, some of Garret's old acquaintances, and several Palatines ; he himself sat by the bedside. They were all silent, or only talked occasionally in

hushed whispers, for they sat by a death bed. Mary had nearly lost all consciousness of those around her, and her mind wandered in a bewildered and perplexed chaos. She spoke at intervals in a low voice; her words wandered wildly without connection, over the events of her past life; and she spoke of each as if it were of recent or present occurrence. Quick as lightning her mind darted after every new flash of thought, until she uttered a word, or perhaps her eye accidentally caught some external object that awoke some long slumbering association, and turned her thoughts into a new channel. The aged man bent silently over her, catching every word and watching anxiously for a gleam of returning consciousness. Occasionally she paused, looking perplexed, and seemed as if she endeavoured to recollect herself; then uttered a few words, or asked a question, that seemed to indicate the momentary return of sanity. Here he would speak to her, reminding her of his presence and asking in a low voice if she knew him, in a most gentle and affectionate manner; but again her eyes assumed their meaningless vacancy, and her scattered replies showed that the faint gleam of returning reason was again lost in the gloom of disordered imagination. In the intervals of her speaking she occasionally moved her right hand lightly over the bed-clothes, as if feeling for something; then she would catch them in her fingers, lifting and arranging them, in that childish way that throws such a sickening chill on the heart of anyone who witnesses a death bed.

“Yes Garret, there it is comin’ home—there is the little lamb you was lookin’ for; the poor little crathur

is almost dead with the hunger. And look, Garret—oh, look ! little Jimmy is dhrivin' her. Sure I knew it was Jimmy. Come here, Jimmy *alanna* an' kiss your poor mother that's a long time lookin' for you and cryin' afther you. But—no ! this isn't my darlin' boy wid the two blue eyes—no, this isn't Jimmy—(a pause) * * * But och ; sure I'm ravin'—this burnin', this burnin' (putting her hand to her forehead) is sindin' me mad. Jimmy *alanna bawn*, sure you're sleepin' undher the whitethorn bush near the ould wall in Ardpatrick. I heard the clay soundin' on your little coffin, an' I saw your father cryin' afther you unknown to everyone. But I saw him when he purtended to turn his head to look for the cow ;—poor *Bawneen* ! I reared her wid my own two hands. Garret, *Bawneen* isn't milked yet—dhrive the crathur in an' cut some—* * * Oh ! this burnin'. God above gi' me a little relief * * * Garret, *arourneen*, Garret ?” “ What do you want, Mary darlin' ; don't you know me ; sure here I am at the bed near you.” “ Garret, I'm sick, very sick, but I didn't like to tell you afore, for I knew you'd be throubled. But I can't keep it any longer. I'm sick—I'm going to die—to go to heaven to see our poor little Jimmy an' Mary, and all our poor little crathurs and to see my poor father an' mother too. * * * Don't be cryin' so much, mother dear, sure I'll come to see you often, an' Garret will come wid me, whin we'll be livin' in our own nice cottage. An' father, little Eileen will comb your white hair instead o' me. * * * Look, Garret, look ! how nice they look in their new dresses, the blessed little darlins. Garret, I'm very

—— I'd be very happy—only for this—this—terrible burnin'."

Here she paused—her face contracted, and her body writhed, as if she suffered intensely. For a considerable time after this she remained apparently insensible; at length she began to speak again, but her words were more detached, and her voice was scarcely audible, tho' Garret bent his face close to hers.

"Garret, the night is comin' on. I see it growin' dark—I'm going to see—to sleep with little Jimmy—poor little fellow—I'd like to sleep wid him under the old whitethorn bush * * * I'm goin'—Garret—I'm lavin' you—for ever. An' I know—you'll be lonesome—when I'm gone * * * I'm goin' to see—our little crathurs—but—Garret—Garret *arourneen*—I'd like—to stay wid you—a little—a little longer."

She ceased—closed her eyes—breathed one long sigh—and her spirit winged its way to heaven.

Among the peasantry, as soon as the last struggle of the sufferer is over, the men retire, and the women "lay out" the corpse and arrange the room. When this is done, the female friends and relatives of the deceased gather round the bed and commence the usual wild and musical lament, in which all the women present, and—if the person be a favourite among the people—many of the men too, usually join, all swaying slowly backwards and forwards over the bed. It is I believe generally considered by those not intimately acquainted with the peasantry, that this is merely a kind of mechanical habit, and that all, with the exception of the immediate relatives of the deceased, join in the external manifestation

of sorrow, while they are in reality utterly indifferent. But this assertion, if not totally unfounded, needs much qualification. It is my belief—and I have had extensive opportunity of judging—that in general persons join in the lament because they cannot help it, and that they really feel what they express. To every human heart, however sluggishly proof against the influence of emotion, sorrow is more or less contagious; it is one of those kind dispensations of Providence that helps to smooth the rugged ills of life; for it teaches or rather forces us to sympathize with our neighbour in his sufferings. Look on a wretched mother, crushed and broken-hearted, bending over the body of her son, cut down in the prime of manhood—her face a picture of hopeless misery—her whole soul one rayless blank of despair, and see if your heart will not bleed for the anguish of the poor mourner. The heart of an Irish peasant at least will. That heart, so impulsive, so keenly alive to emotion, ever gushes with sympathetic sorrow at the sight of another's grief; and the peasant women, and oftentimes the men, too, raise the wild *keen*, not to comply merely with a cold custom, but to give vent to the uncontrolled impulses of their own kindly hearts. The fact of their joining in the laugh, or song, or sport, of their companions immediately after, is no proof of their want of feeling; it is only an illustration of the facility with which their changeable temperaments can pass from one extreme of passion to another, according to the influences with which they are surrounded.

Garret was led mechanically from the bedside to the little kitchen, where he walked backwards and

forwards; his hands clasped, his eyes fixed on vacancy, and seeming totally unconscious of what passed around him. When the necessary arrangements were completed, the women collected around the bed and began to cry, and the sudden burst of lamentation appeared to arouse him to a sense of the reality. Among the peasantry, there are many men who, no matter how near and dear the deceased relative may be, will not yield to their feelings so far as to join in this cry; for they consider that it is, or should be, beneath the firmness of a man. Garret was one of these—he did not join the mourners.

Among the children of the village there was one that had always been a special favourite with him, because he fancied that its little broken accents, and fair hair, resembled these of his lost child Mary. This child happened to be in the room with its mother at the time, and Garret took her in his arms, and sat on the corner of the table. When bending over her, and rocking himself backward and forward as if in the act of soothing her to sleep, he commenced in a voice low and softened by sorrow, to sing his favourite nurse song. It was one of these beautifully poetic effusions that gush from the parental feeling of the Irish heart; with air wild and breathing throughout a tone of touching sadness. How powerfully old memories are awakened by unexpectedly hearing some long-forgotten old tune “we used to love in days of boyhood,” those only can tell whose hearts the world has not steeled against those softer feelings of our nature. No sooner had Garret commenced to sing than all the vanished happiness of his former life presented itself

vividly before his mind in quick succession ; then he passed on to his present condition ; he saw himself utterly desolate, the sole survivor, the last wreck of his race ; the full sense of his misery rushed across his mind like the blast of the desert. His words became indistinct ; the whole gradually lost the character of a song ; his voice trembled, failed, and at length the old man's firmness gave way before the tide of feeling, and he burst out into a loud and long fit of weeping. The other men in the room did not attempt to stop or soothe him ; for they—including even the rough Palatines who were unaccustomed to indulge their feelings so openly—were themselves deeply affected at this outbreak of sorrow.*

The Palatines had resided sufficiently long among the Irish to adopt many of their habits ; they attended wakes and funerals, and even joined in the lament over the dead. Garret's cottage was thronged that night, both by the villagers and by the more distant inhabitants of the valley. Next day Mary was carried to her resting place on the hill of Ardpatrik ; the funeral attended by all the grown persons of the village. She was laid, as she had requested, under the old whitethorn bush, by the side of her little Jimmy ; and Garret returned for the first time to a lonely house.

During the whole troubled period from the last struggle of the sufferer, there is no time at which so keen a sense of their loss is felt by the mourners as when they first enter home after the funeral. The

* I witnessed the scene described here on one occasion when I was a boy.

dreary appearance of the house, all in confusion after the wake; the cheerless hearth without its usual blaze—for all attend the funeral, the fires are put out, and the door locked—the complete silence, rendered more chilling by contrast with the hurry and confusion and lamentation that still ring on the ears of the mourners; but, above all, the sudden recollection, forcing itself vividly on their minds, that there is one absent, abandoned for ever to the cold abode—all these, aided by the bodily exhaustion which want of rest produces, throw a feeling of chilling desolation over the mind, which those only who have experienced it can understand. How intense a feeling of misery Garret felt on first entering his lonely cottage, and seeing Mary's chair empty, and missing her accustomed kind welcome, we shall not attempt to describe. But he resolved that this should be his last night in Glenosheen; and he kept his resolution.

Garret had one younger brother, to whom he was much attached, and who in early life left his home and settled in some distant part of the country, where he occupied a farm. At that time the means of communication between different parts of the country were very imperfect. The country was wooded and thinly populated, and there were few roads except between the larger towns; so that Garret had never seen his brother since they parted, and for the last eight or ten years had not even heard from him. Once indeed a pedlar, who had travelled in that part of the country about four years before, brought him word that he had heard his brother intended to remove to another locality, still more distant; so that he was

in a state of uncertainty with regard to his place of residence. To him he now however turned his thoughts; he determined to seek with him an asylum for his remaining days, and leave a place that only embittered his existence by many painful recollections.

He had a few articles of household furniture, and some simple agricultural implements left. These he readily disposed of among his neighbours, merely however for the purpose of obtaining whatever trifle of ready money would be necessary to bear the expenses of his journey. Few preparations were necessary, his intention soon became known through the village, and early on that evening he was standing, with a small bundle in his left hand and a stick in his right, surrounded by a group of the villagers taking his farewell of them. Some of the neighbouring farmers were also there. From the beginning they had endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, and now pressed on him with double earnestness to remain. "Sure, Garret, man alive, can't you stay for a couple o' days, anyway? You can stop below at the house, an' welcome; there's a spare feather bed there, that we have no use in life of, an' the ould woman will have a rale *Céad mile fáilte* for you. I'll be bound if you stay wid us for a few days, it 'll wear away, an' may be you'd be continted to remain intirely."

"Indeed Tom," said Garret, "I know I'd be welcome to stay with you—you 'an yours never shut your doore in the face of a sthranger, let alone an ould neighbour, the blessin' o' God be on you for id. But indeed Tom, there's no use in thinkin' I could live here; no, I must go, an' wid God's help I

will. Roger was a good brother whin we wor both young; he had the big heart o' the Mac Enirys in him; an' I know he'll not refuse to shelther these grey hairs in my ould days."

"The deer knows," observed a woman to her neighbour, "'tis a burnin' shame to let the poor ould crathur go at all, so it is. Sure he's out of his mind clear 'an clane wid throuble, 'an hardly knows what he's doin.'" "Why thin indeed Nancy *agragal*, that's thrue for you, an' I'll go bail he'll be sarry for id yet. But anyway, goodness knows 'tis no wundher the way he's in now, God help him, without a mother's sowl belongin' to him to care for him. Sure after all, Nancy, no one has the *nature* for a person like one's own, an' God help uz 'tis a sarraful thing to be left all alone. God rest poor Mary's sowl, 'tis she was the good housekeeper in her day, an' the good *warrant* to take care of her husband. But anyway Nancy I think we ought to spake to him, along wid the rest, an' thry to make him stop."

"Garret," said a grey-headed old man, who took him warmly by the hand, "you're now ould an' haven't the sthrinth to go thro' much, an' you ought to considher what you're about afore you go. 'Tis a hard journey you have afore you, an' many a long road you'll have to thravel, afore you meet wid a Christhen that would as much as say 'God save you.' Indeed the never a one o' me likes the iday of you attemptin' that journey at all at all."

In this manner was he earnestly pressed by several persons, but in vain; Garret, tho' quiet in his disposition, was resolute in character. But he was deeply affected by their kindness: he tried in vain to

conquer his emotion, for tears filled his eyes, as he finally replied :—

“Misther O’Brien, God knows but id goes to my heart to refuse you an’ all my ould neighbours. Many a long day we all spint together, an’ God sees that my heart’s nearly broke to be lavin’ the ould frinds and the ould hills behind me. I’m goin’ now, neighbours, from among ye, an’ may the God of Heaven keep ye, that doesn’t forget an ould an’ frindless man, from bein’ ever left solithary like me.”

They ceased to press him further, and he was on the point of taking his final leave when he encountered another appeal not less powerful than that of his neighbours. Among the many privations which he suffered, death as if tired of persecuting him had left him his dog. He was a great shaggy animal, with huge tail, and hair which was originally nearly black, but which age had converted into a kind of dirty grey. In his more youthful days, before affliction had visited him, Garret was fond of hunting, armed merely with a heavy stick, and always accompanied by Bran. In these excursions, from his great skill and the sagacity of his dog as well as from the abundance of game on the mountain, he was often more successful than the best accoutred sportsman of modern days, with choice brace of pointers.

When age and trouble came at last on Garret, he gradually relinquished his favourite sport, but Bran’s love of the mountains never ceased. He still continued to resort to his favourite haunts, and almost every day he repaired to the hills alone to chase the game as when his master accompanied

him. He sometimes remained out for two or three days, sleeping on the heath, and subsisting on the prey he managed to catch. In the end however the poor old fellow found this rather a precarious mode of subsistence, for age had blunted the keenness of his nose and stiffened his limbs ; and his visits to the hills became less frequent, though they never altogether ceased. On the day before Mary's death he set out on one of his usual excursions, and just as Garret was preparing to go, he returned. When he came to the cottage and found the door closed, he scratched at it as usual when he wanted to be let in. When he found that the door was not opened, he scampered through the garden and round the little farm searching for his master, but not finding him, he returned again to the cottage ; then he scratched violently at the door and listened, walked back to some distance, and looked wistfully at the house, scratched again, whining pitifully, and at length, finding all unsuccessful, he sat down and began to howl in downright agony. Suddenly he jumped up, scampered down through the village, and with that extraordinary certainty with which instinct sometimes directs these animals to find out their masters even in the most hidden places, he bounded in among the group just as the old man was preparing to depart.

Nothing could exceed the wildness of his joy at finding his master so unexpectedly. He jumped upon him, howled and yelped and frisked around him, scampered away to some distance, and instantly returned to jump upon and around him again ; then he would crouch motionless on the ground opposite

him, and, with a steady eye, look straight in his face for a few moments, then springing suddenly off the ground, would yelp and whine, and play the same gambols over again. A smile—a transient slight gleam of gladness—lighted Garret's features, while a tear stood in his eye, as he looked on his dog, the faithful companion and the only living remnant of his happy days. He had in fact searched closely, inquired, and repeatedly whistled for him that morning : and not being able to obtain any tidings of him, one of his neighbours, by his request, promised to adopt him as his own. This was now rendered unnecessary, as he resolved to take Bran with him. He accordingly set off, with the blessings and regrets of all his acquaintances.

It is not our intention to follow Garret through all the incidents of his long and weary journey from the home of his heart. In the evening of the fourth day he found himself approaching the townland where he hoped to find his brother. The country lay along the foot of an extensive range of mountains and was rather thinly populated, but here and there a few comfortable-looking farmers' houses lay scattered at wide intervals. There was one of these that stood a few perches in from the road that presented the appearance of both wealth and comfort. A haggard behind the house, hedged in with whitethorn, was well stocked with newly made stacks of corn, surrounding an enormous hayrick ; and in front a large *bawn* field of several acres extended, through which a pathway led into the house. Into this field the cows were *just after being* driven to be milked ; and it was pleasant to hear the busy sounds that proceeded from

the place where all were collected. It was a beautiful evening in autumn—one of those that so often occur at that season, during a long continuance of dry weather—clear, serene and silent. The sky was covered all over with a uniform veil of small mottled clouds, perfectly motionless, and spread out at a great height, leaving the lower part of the atmosphere so clear that the outlines and features of the most distant hills appeared with perfect distinctness.

Almost the whole family had retired to the field. The girls were busily engaged in milking—each her favourite cow—and one or two of them were singing their milking songs; “the boys”—viz., the servant man and the farmer’s two eldest sons—were occupied in preserving order and distributing fresh cut clover among the numerous herd; the children were playing “highgates” at a little distance; and the farmer himself, a healthy comfortable-looking old man with a face full of contentment and good-nature, walked among them, his left hand in his breeches pocket and a stick in his right, occasionally giving directions, and gazing with placid enjoyment on the busy scene. At this moment their attention was directed to an old man who had just crossed over the stile that led from the road into the field, and who now approached them. His shoes were covered with dust, and he was evidently very tired, for he came on slowly and with difficulty; and though he endeavoured to yield as little as possible, he was obliged to halt slightly and lean on his stick for support at every step. His hair was white, and his face wrinkled with age, and he looked worn and dejected. He was accompanied by a large old dog who appeared as weary and spiritless

as his master, for he hung his ears and tail, and scarcely raising his head, he trudged along close behind him.

The road by which Garret arrived at the place was a lonely mountain one, where for the last two hours he had not met with an individual; and he now turned his steps towards the farmer's house, as being the first place that presented itself, for the purpose of making inquiry. Behind the house there were several large dogs lying, who now pricked up their ears and eyed the travellers for some time attentively. I suppose they could discover nothing in their appearance that looked in any degree pugnacious, for after having gazed at them till they appeared to be satisfied, they proceeded to dispose themselves leisurely in their former lazy attitudes; and the travellers would probably be allowed to pass quietly, were it not for the malice of a sour-looking cur, one side of whose nose had, from constant practice, permanently curled upwards, into a perpetual grin, exposing his teeth. This wretch chafed and snarled, and succeeded at last in angering his quieter companions to such a pitch that they all suddenly started up and scampered helter-skelter towards them, howling and yelping like a legion of devils. The women who were milking instantly stood up to avoid the danger of being trampled on by the startled cows, while the boys ran toward the dogs, threatening them with their sticks and shouting at them to come back.

“Tundher an’ ages! Dick, run, man, run,” cried the farmer; “fly Tom!—skelp away you *omadhawn*, an’ bring back them divels (bad luck to ’em), afore the poor man will be ate, body an’ sowl. Oh;

murder alive, the life is frightened out o' the poor crathurs. That's id, Dick, leather the thieves! Faith an' sowl Boxer wait till I ketch you an' if I don't sink the top of my shoe two inches into your ribs, the divel a cotner in Cork"; and the good old fellow raised his stick and shook it at them as he spoke. Dick and Tom arrived just in time to come between them and their victims, and by shouting and *leathering* succeeded in driving them off. "Lie down Boxer! Captain! Captain—ha! you divel's limb, you'll yowl loud enough now when you're not wantin' but I'll make you yowl a little loudher I'm thinkin.' *Hishth do rayal a vchoonig*" (whack, whack, accompanied by a doleful yelping, and Captain scampered home howling and limping). "Down with you Boxer! Pincher, I say, you thief o' the world come here!" At length the dogs were all driven home and peace restored. The cur, it must be remarked, like many another cur under similar circumstances, after having provoked the fight, was the first to scamper ingloriously off the field, looking furtively behind him when the appearance of the boys with their sticks threatened danger.

By this time Garret had arrived at the group. "God save ye all, an' God bless the work," said he with as much assumed cheerfulness as he could command. "God save you kindly honest man," said the farmer in good-natured accents; "the deer knows but I'm ashamed that a stranger can't as much as show his nose inside that stile but thim rogues o' dogs is ready to frighten the life amost out of him."

“Oh!” replied Garret, vexed with himself for having been the cause of so much confusion, “’tis nothin’ at all—I never mind the bark of a dog, for I’m well used to id.”

“Well! honest man you look tired at any rate; sit down here on this bundle o’ clover an’ take a dhrink. Biddy *alanna*, bring hether two piggins o’ the *sthrippins* for I’m dead wid the dhruth, an’ so is this good man too; I’m thinkin’. Begor, I know what it is to travel myself; an’ many a time when I’d be on a long streel of a road, an’ hardly able to wag, I’d give anything for a couple o’ good *slugs* o’ new milk.”

“Why thin,” said Garret, seating himself as desired near the farmer, who was sitting on another bundle, “as the thruth is best to be towld, I *do* feel a little fitagued, an’ I’ll take a dhrink, may God increase you for your kindness. Indeed Sir I’m ould now, and haven’t the sthrinth nor the sperrit in me that I had; sure only for I am, twenty or thirty little miles wouldn’t be after knocking me up.”

“Oh! Holy Virgin,” exclaimed the farmer, looking at him in surprise, “an’ you’re after walkin’ thirty miles to-day—an ould man like you! Stop! don’t dhrink id in that way—’twould kill you to put such stuff into your stomach after such a walk. Here, Biddy, take this kay an’ run in, *ma colleen dhas*, to the three-cornered cupboard, an’ bring me out the black bottle that’s stannin’ in the right hand corner. Mind, Biddy, the *black* bottle.”

“A little dhrup put into id,” said he turning again to Garret, “will knock the cowl out of it anyway.”

“The blessin’ o’ God be on you,” said Garret deeply grateful, “sure I didn’t think I’d meet wid

this kindness among strangers, once I left the ould neighbours, God be wid 'em. Indeed, Sir, I'm a sthranger in this part o' the counthry, an' don't know id at all; an' I just stepped down to ax."

"Oh! the divel a question you'll ax till you dhrink that first; an' thin you can come in an' rest yourself for a *thommul* (a short time), an' we'll get somethin' to ate; you must be in want of id now after a hard day's walk. An' indeed for the matther o' that, you're too tired to go any farther to-night, an' there's a good feather bed within there to spare, that you'll be welkim to. Sure God is good to me, an' gev me the manes, glory be to His Holy Name (taking off his hat reverently) an' it'll never be said that the sthranger or the thraveller ever turned away from Roger Mac Eniry's doore widout"—

He started in surprise and alarm, and looked at the old man, who had suddenly dropped the piggin from his hand. His body had shot up to its full height, though he still remained sitting—his open hands were thrown a little forward—his mouth half opened—and he stared dazed and astonished at the farmer. For a considerable time he remained perfectly unconscious of what passed around him.

The farmer stood up, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, attempted to rouse him. "Yerra! honest man, what ails you—sure, murdher alive, I wouldn't say anything for the world that id offind you. Oh! *monom a yec*, I'm in dhread he's gettin' into a fit, the Lord purtect uz! I suppose the crathur is bate all out wid the long journey an' the hardship, an', God help him, may be wid hunger too. Yerra, girls come here and thry"—Here he was interrupted by

the low accents of Garret. "Roger Mac Eniry, did you say—eh?" and he peered closely into his face. "Roger Mac Eniry! Oh, that can't be; dheeling, that can't be! You, my fair-haired brother Roger, that used to hunt wid me long ago on the side o' Seefin!" The poor old fellow's senses still wandered. The fact was, he had met no one from whom to make an inquiry within the last six miles; before that, though all could direct him to the townland, yet no one could tell him of "one Roger Mac Eniry that lived there"; and with that unaccountable tendency to depression that seizes the heart as the moment draws nigh that is to determine success or failure, all hope of finding his brother had very nearly abandoned him. It is therefore not to be wondered at that, worn with the fatigue of a long journey, his mind depressed with sorrow, and harassed by uncertainty approaching to despair, the unexpected discovery of his brother should overcome him. When to this we add that he had always cherished the memory of his brother as he was when they parted; and though of course he knew that age must have produced the usual effect, yet his memory obstinately refused to change its object, and still recalled the image of "his fair-haired brother Roger, that used to hunt wid him on the side of Seefin." In the sudden perplexity of his feelings he found it impossible to reconcile these traces of his brother that clung to his memory, with the aged man that now stood before him, and for a considerable time he could not bring himself to believe in the reality.

It was now, however, the farmer's turn to be surprised. "God of mercy," he exclaimed, as he

grasped Garret's two hands in his and looked in his face; "is it to my own brother I'm spakin' all this while. Garret, a *drahaar machree*, is it you. Sure, Garret, I'm Roger, your own brother Roger; don't you know me and won't you spake to me;" for Garret was only beginning to collect together his scattered faculties, though tears streamed plentifully down his wrinkled face. "Garret, avourneen, sure it is I that's here alive an' well, glory be to God for bringin' uz together once more."

We shall not attempt to describe further the happiness of the brothers on meeting after so many years' separation, or the joy of the youngsters on finding their "uncle Garret," of whom their father had told them so many stories. For many years they lived together after this, and many a time would they delight the family by relating stories "about ould times" when they lived together in the lonely cottage on Seefin.

As for poor Bran he did not long survive separation from his native mountains; he died, and was buried by the children on the side of a glen, with due funeral honours, and followed to his grave by his old master, who dropped many a tear over him, a tribute to his worth and faithfulness.

Garret's grief for Mary softened down at last to pious resignation, but he still cherished her in his memory, and he looked forward with hope to the time when he should go to join her and "his little crathurs." Before he died he made a request which was not refused—"To be carried back again to the ould place, and berrid on the hill of Ardpatrik, undher the ould whitehorn, by the side of Mary."

THE OLD IRISH BLACKSMITH'S FURNACE.

IN my two books, "A Social History of Ancient Ireland" and "A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland," there is a chapter on "Workers in Wood, Metal, and Stone," of which one section is devoted to an account of the Blacksmith and his Forge. It is necessary to remind the reader that this section—as well indeed as the whole chapter—relates to a period from the eleventh century backwards to ages of unknown antiquity.

The various appliances of the forge are there described in detail:—the anvil with its *nose* and block; the sledge and hand-hammer; the pincers or tongs; the water-trough; the bellows and bellows-blower, as well as the manner of blowing. The fuel used was wood-charcoal (appropriately called *cual crainn*, "coal of *crann* or wood") of which that made from the wood of the birch tree gave the greatest heat obtainable by the old metal workers. The smith always kept a supply of charcoal in bags in the forge. All these appliances, helps, utensils, and tools, as well as others, are described, and as it were reconstructed, with their make and the modes of working them, from a minute examination of Ancient Irish Writings.

After the publication of the "Social History," a further close inspection of the old texts enabled me to arrive at the construction of the blacksmith's furnace, as it existed more than a thousand years ago: a point never worked out till now. As an example of

a proper *and sane* method of investigation and of careful induction, I will here set forth the whole process, mainly for the instruction of those numerous persons—and especially young workers—who are now busily engaged in the study of Irish lore all over Ireland, as well as elsewhere. I will do so in simple language too; and I ask my readers to be careful not to mistake simplicity of language for shallowness of treatment, as some people do.*

The following short essay—and indeed the whole of this little book—may be considered as still carrying out the main literary function of my life: namely, to simplify and popularise Irish lore, and thereby to make it more generally read and enjoyed.

In ancient times in Ireland, as well as in many other countries, smiths, as being the makers of arms, were held in great estimation; many stories were told about them in Irish writings, which are still extant; and they and their various implements are often mentioned. So the literary mine we are now about to open up in search of Smith-lore is richer than usual.

The great legendary Smith of Ireland was Goibniu, of the magic-skilled Dedannan race, who was such a mighty master of his craft, that after his death he became a god, like Hephaestus or Vulcan among the Greeks and Romans, and Wayland the Smith among the Germans; and we often find his

* For two other, though less ancient, examples of the application of this inductive method, the reader may look at the identification of Spenser's "Baleful Oure" with the river Avonbeg in Wicklow (p. 90, above), and of his "Molanna" with the little stream Behanna (pp. 99 to 105).

name mixed up with old Irish literature. He is mentioned in a "Glossary" written in the late ninth (or early tenth) century by Cormac Mac Cullenan, Archbishop and King of Munster. The main purpose of this Glossary was to explain old Irish words that had become in the time of the writer more or less obsolete and obscure. This little work of Cormac's, which is very scholarly for the period, is still extant and has been translated in our day by Dr. John O'Donovan : and edited and printed by Dr. Whitley Stokes. One of the old words Cormac explains is "*ness*," and in doing so he brings in a short story about Goibniu. He relates—taking his information of course from documents older than his own time—how Goibniu was one day in his forge holding in his hand a wooden instrument called a *crand* or *crann*, when a person came in and told him a very unpleasant story about the misconduct of his wife, which put him into a terrible rage. His anger continued ; and day after day he stood in his forge, boiling and fuming in bad humour with the whole world ; and whenever anyone had the ill luck to walk in, Goibniu—having first breathed a baleful spell into the *crann* to charge it with hellish venom—lifted it up and gave the visitor a blow, which either killed him outright or left a malignant and incurable lump or boil *in the shape of the crann*, that burned like fire and was worse even than death ; all by the power of the spell.

Here we will leave him for a moment standing in his surliness, to have a look into an Irish document still older than Cormac's Glossary for another illustration of the use of this word *crann* as denoting a wooden implement. In the eighth century some

scholarly Irish monk, then living in his monastery in Milan, while reading a Latin copy of the Old Testament, wrote, in the wide spaces between the lines, explanations of unusual Latin words as he met them while reading along, and sometimes general explanatory comments on the text. These "Glosses," as we now call them, he wrote in his native language—Irish. But the Irish of that time which was then in every day use, is now, after more than a thousand years, "Old Irish" and hard enough to understand. This was a usual practice with the Irish scholars of those days, mainly for the use of their young Irish students: for there were then no Latin Dictionaries available.

This monk, commenting on an expression in the 9th verse of "Psalms" II, about a potter's vessel, takes occasion to mention two implements used by [Irish] potters in their work:—viz. (1) the round *crann*, that is to say, as he explains, the wooden block on which the vessel is first roughly formed in the soft clay: and (2) the wheel on which it is finally turned into shape. This makes clear what the potter's *crann* was.*

But to return to Goibniu. What was this *crann* which he turned away from its proper function and used as a weapon when his passion was up? So far we only know that it was a *wooden* implement of some kind, like the potter's *crann*; for *crann* means

* That venerable copy of the Psalms is still in Milan with the very handwriting of our countryman. The passage relating to potters has been published and translated in a learned work, "Thesaurus Palæo-hibernicus," by Drs. Stokes and Strachan. vol. i, p. 23.

a tree, a piece of wood, or anything made of wood. But it is not Cormac's custom to leave his reader in doubt as to his meaning; and the mention of the smith's *crann* leads him up to the explanation of that and of the old word *ness*. He begins by saying that *ness* has four meanings, all of which he gives. With two of these we have nothing to do: the other two concern us here. First, as to the implement that the smith had in his hand; Cormac says that this particular kind of *crann* was called a *ness*, adding, after his usual happy manner, that its use was to mould or form on it the *urnisi criad* or "furnace of clay" [for the forge fire], an expression that comes like a flash of light, and makes everything clear.*

But he gives another meaning:—that *ness* is also a name for [a smith's] *urnisi* or furnace. To illustrate and prove this he quotes an old verse from an elegy written on a smith by his wife (given here in translation):—

"It is grievous to me to look at him [lying dead]:
The red flame of his furnace mounted up to the roof:
Sweet was the murmur that his bellows
Used to chant to [or at] the hole of his furnace."

Here the furnace comes in twice, and in each case the word applied to it is *ness*, though not in the nominative but in the genitive form, rendered necessary by the construction, as seen in the verse. What the "hole of his furnace" means is explained

* The reader will observe that in both the cases where the function of the *crann* has been determined, it was used as a mould to shape soft clay on:—in the one case for potters' vessels, and in the other for smiths' furnaces,

farther on (p. 240). This explanation of Cormac's is corroborated in a manuscript quoted by Dr. Kuno Meyer in his "Triads of Ireland," p. 52: in which it is stated that *ness* is *aurisí criad*, a "clay furnace."

There was still a third application of this word *ness* that touches our subject, which we learn from another and totally different old Irish document. The Irish—like the Welsh—have always been fond of presenting things in *triads* or groups of three; as is seen in the modern triad:—"Three good things to have—a clean shirt, a clean conscience, and a guinea in one's pocket." There is a collection of old Irish triads, in the Irish language, which has been lately translated and edited by Dr. Kuno Meyer, of which one is:—"Three renovators of the world—the womb of woman, a cow's udder, and a smith's *ness*."* This old writer does not—as Cormac does—explain *ness*; but another writer in another manuscript quoted by Dr. Meyer, explains the word as *Mála cré*, "a bag of [moulding] clay": but goes no farther. From all this we learn that *ness* was a name for three different, but closely related things:—

1. The clay [kept in a bag] of which the smith's furnace was made.
2. The wooden mould on which the furnace was formed of the soft clay.
3. The furnace itself fully shaped.

It is well to remark that all the preceding Irish lore, which is presented here in plain readable

* Royal Irish Academy, Todd Lecture Series, vol. xiii., page 21 (No. 148).

language, is, in the originals—whether Irish or translation—excessively condensed, almost as much so as algebra.*

We are now in a position to draw our conclusions—to give the shape and material of the furnace, and show how it was made. At the back of the fire stood upright a small flag-stone, with a hole in it for the pipe of the bellows—exactly like the hole for the pipe of the present smith's bellows: and as illustrating the close observation of the old Irish writers, even this little hole is referred to in the verse of the elegy quoted by Cormac: p. 238, above. It was the hole through which the bellows used to chant the murmur that the poor woman loved to recall.

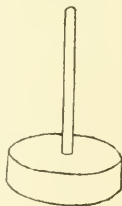
The *Crann* or *Ness* that Goibniu had in his hand was a wooden mould round which was formed the soft clay furnace to contain and confine the fire. From what precedes we can see—as we might indeed expect—that whenever the walls of this furnace got burned or worn out (as our present fire-clay blocks often wear out in our grates)—which might be perhaps once a week or fortnight with constant use—it was cleared away, the *ness* or mould was set in the proper place (the exact place for the fire) and a new structure of soft clay was formed round it in a few minutes with the hands; after which the mould was gently lifted up, leaving the furnace (*urnisi criad*) ready for use. At the time the incident above related occurred i.e. when the unwelcome story was

* Another example of how our concentrated old Irish literature may be expanded and popularised, without departing from accuracy, is seen in the first paper in this book, "The Wonders of Ireland."

brought to Goibniu, he happened to be engaged in moulding a fresh furnace round the *ness*.

It may be asked what need had those old smiths of an enclosed furnace at all : why did they not use an open fire-place like our blacksmiths ? The answer is obvious :—they used wood-charcoal, which being much lighter than our coal, would be blown about and scattered by the blast of the bellows, if not confined by the furnace.

From Cormac's statement, that the lump or boil which was left on the visitor by Goibniu's blow was in the shape of the *ness*, we may infer that the *ness* was round or nearly so ; with perhaps a small part of the surface flat to lay up against the back flag, just opposite the pipe-hole. Putting all the references together we may be pretty sure that this *ness* or mould was like what is represented here, either solid or hollow. The handle was for holding and lifting up ; which same handle Goibniu found very convenient when using the instrument as a weapon.



A word about the clay for the furnace. It had of course to be carefully selected, just as our modern artisans select their fire-clay—which you may now buy in the shops ; and no doubt these old Irish workmen well knew the best fire-clay to stand the fire. It was not common clay, but was more or less valuable, and accordingly was kept in bags in the forge like the charcoal to prevent waste ; as we may gather from the expression of the writer quoted by Dr. Kuno Meyer—*Mála cre*, a “*bag of [moulding] clay*,” p. 239 above.

Of the three meanings of *ness* given at p. 239 above, the writer of the triad, when citing the word as applied to a renovator, must have had one or the other of *two* in his mind, viz., either the bag of clay, or the mould for shaping (the third—the clay furnace—would not apply). And whichever of the two he meant, mark how satisfactorily it squares in with the main function running through the triad—the function of renovating or renewing:—the clay, or the mould, whichever we take, renewed the furnace.

This short essay illustrates how our old Irish authorities—brief and dry as they often are, and uncommunicative as they often seem—may, when subjected to a searching cross-examination, reveal to us the various materials, appliances, tools, and modes of working of the ancient Irish handicraftsmen of the several arts and trades.

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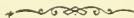
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