

The Bardic Poets and their Work.

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Accepting the extant remains as an index we find that for nearly two hundred years preceding Kinsale the only considerable body of contemporary Irish literature, apart from legal and scientific tracts, annals, genealogical tracts, homiletic matter and religious verse, is the court poetry. This, while historically and linguistically of great value, rarely shows any imaginative quality, being in most cases strictly conventional both in style and aim. Such a falling away from the promise of the early Middle Irish lyric and the hopeful beginnings of Early Modern prose may be partly accounted for by the enormous destruction of manuscripts. We actually possess evidence that prose compositions of great interest have been destroyed. Yet the fact that a disproportionately large part of what has been preserved of the contemporary secular literature consists of documents tending solely to family aggrandizement points indisputably to perverted taste as a notable factor in producing this state of affairs. Some may plead the ever present 'state of the country,' but this does not explain all. Down to the end of the 16th century, to go no further, there was always peace somewhere. The rule in such territories as Glenmalure and Donegal, for instance, was probably despotic, but as long as the exterior enemy could be excluded it undoubtedly insured a fairly even tenor of life for men of letters [1] according to the standard of the time in Ireland. Education was not of course so easily attainable as in the present day, but that disability was not peculiar to Ireland. There was a tendency to restrict certain professions to certain families, [2] but as we see fresh names appearing in the poetical profession again and again, there was evidently some means by which those not immediately of the blood could at least learn to make verse.

When James inherited the three crowns there were bardic schools all-over the country, turning out 'rimers' much as a modern university turns out bachelors of arts. The graduates of these schools had an accurate knowledge of their native language, of the official history of Ireland and of her literature. They were men of talent and some intellectual influence, and had they possessed a larger conception of their mission Ireland might have found herself, in her national literature, long before 1600. But the light was obscured by an unhappy formalism. The candidate for poetry, as it was officially understood, had to be connected with a bardic family, and go through a tedious process of training. The training might be a good mental discipline, but the qualified poet was further constrained to work strictly in accordance with century-old rules of form. The process of literary composition was surrounded with a pompous mystery. The general use in verse of the current pronunciation, of freer measures, was treated by the schoolmen as a clownish proceeding, only worthy of illiterates. In brief—the attitude of the literati was not such as to encourage intellectual progress, and was in all probability an important contributory cause of the decay of Irish literature.

Rules of form need not prevent the expression of original thought, but to maintain himself in his professional status the poet had to follow the example of his colleagues and compose for the gratification of the only public which could support him. Hence it follows that the matter of bardic poetry is mostly encomium and elegy, and for centuries it is run in moulds conformable to the requirements of these. Towards the end of the 17th century we find Eóghan Ruadh Mhac an Bhaird [3] attempting to express a more intellectual outlook in verses which reflect a faint gleam of the humanizing influence which was beginning—too late—to rise over the schools.

Another poet of the same period whose work shows signs of intellectual advance is Eochaidh Ó Heódhusa, [4] one of the first prominent writers to use freer forms. He was a master of the strict metres, and his originality is not completely obscured even by the conventional eulogy which formed the main ware of the bardic poet.

These eulogies were fashionable portraits in verse, [5] and they brought quick profits. They added lustre to the nobleman's fame, as the lampoons for which the poets were so dreaded dimmed and sullied it. A large *duanaire*, that is, a collection of encomiums, was evidence of the possessor's liberality, and liberality and good repute were synonymous in bardic society. We have a number of references in the poems themselves showing that poetry was highly valued as an instrument for maintaining family reputations. The following lines are from a poem composed c. 1500, protesting against an attempt to suppress bardic poetry:

*Dá mbáidhtí an dán, a dhaoine,
gan seanchas gan seanlaidhe —
go bráth acht athair gach fir
rachaidh cách gan a chluinsin.
• • • • •
Dá mbáidhtí seanchas chlann gCuinn,
agus bhar nduana, a Dhomhnuill,
clann bhar gconmhaor's bhar gclann saor
ann do budh comhdhaor comhsaor.*

*Fir Eireann—más i a rothal
ionnarba na healathan,
gach Gaoidhtal budh gann a bhreath,
gach saoirfear ann budh aitheach.*

“ Should poetry be suppressed, men ; if there is to be no historic lore, no ancient lays—save the name of each man's father- none will be heard of. ... Should the historic lore of the children of Conn, and thy poems, Donal, be suppressed—then would the children of your dogkeepers be equally noble or equally servile with the children of your nobility. If it is the resolve of the men of Ireland to banish poetic art—poor will be the power of every Gael ; then will every nobleman be a churl.” [6]

The verse which illustrated family greatness was carefully preserved ; piety insured the survival of a great mass of religious poetry ; verse which was merely emotional or personal was left to chance, and that such compositions [7] have come down to us even in a small quantity is due to the rare taste of a few individuals. And so in the extant manuscripts encomium occupies a disproportionately large place.

We have remarked the shortcomings of the court poets, we may now take up the pleasanter task of recording something of what lies to their credit. For literary expression they had a certain taste, and the sound linguistic tradition which they built up has its justification in the style of the best prose writers of the 17th and 18th centuries, when the schools were disestablished and the scholars and teachers dispersed, in many cases exiled beyond the sea. We are justified in saying moreover, that those writers of our own times in whose work the genius of the Irish language is most faithfully obeyed, and taste and accuracy of expression most carefully regarded, owe something of their linguistic attainment to the careful industry of the bardic schools. The schools did not make the noblest use of the language, but they certainly watched over it carefully and jealously. They had ears and eyes for its characteristics and proprieties. They knew what was to be avoided, and distinguished carefully dialectical innovations which were permissible and those which were not. They raised no objections to

borrowed words, but they stood firmly against the misuse of native ones. If they have not left us great epics, perhaps from constitutional inability to produce them, we at least owe them our gratitude for that which they were competent to produce, for the comprehensive and scrupulous records of their language preserved and redacted in the schools during several centuries. While encomium was their principal product, they have also left us a good deal of verse, which if not always poetical in the modern sense, shows observation, thought, humor and wit of a very excellent kind. Sometimes, moreover, their encomiums include shrewd and healthy political advice deftly expressed in terms of formal panegyric. Their work is never slovenly, and vulgarity or indecency of expression is conspicuously absent. As to their political influence see below p. xlv.

A brief account of the education and methods of the poets will throw more light on their work. The views on Irish ‘rimers’ and their productions expressed by English statesmen, poets and pamphleteers of the period have been frequently printed and cited [8] and I do not propose to make any further reference to them here. The most reliable, as well as the most comprehensive account of the Irish bardic poet, his training and his work, is the paper entitled *Bardic Poetry*, published by Professor Osborn Bergin in the *Journal of the Ivernian Society* 19 13, p. 153 ff. [9] In this paper are cited the description of a bardic school given in the *Clanricarde Memoirs*, and Martin’s description of the Gaelic bards of the Hebrides at the end of the 17th century, together with an amount of valuable illustrative material drawn from the works of the poets themselves. I give here merely a short outline of the information detailed by Professor Bergin, with a few hitherto unprinted extracts from Irish writers.

During the period 1250-1650 [10] the regulations governing the bardic order do not vary perceptibly. Language, metre, methods of composition and declamation are similar for at least four centuries. *Muireadhach Albanach* is quite as intelligible—or unintelligible, as the case may be—to us as *Fear Feasa Ó’n Cháinte*. The students of poetry were instructed in the language, the pronunciation of the classical dialect, the use of the various metres, the proprieties of expression for the different styles. The course also included instruction in the official history, and memorizing the tales in the saga-cycles. Whether an acquaintance with the various adaptations of foreign romance and pseudo-history was required of the candidate is not known, but the work of the poets shows that they were familiar with these.

The training took place in residential schools during the winter months from the beginning of November until the end of March. When the cuckoo’s voice was heard the schools broke up, and the students returned to their homes. This part of the account in the *Canricarde Memoirs* is supported by the following stanzas from *Tadhg Óg ÓHuiginn’s* elegy on his brother, [11] who conducted a bardic school in Connacht in the earlier part of the 15th century:

*Ionadh coinne ar chionn Shamhna
do bhíodh ’gun aos ealadhna ;
aoinfear amháin dá maradh—
nior sgaoileadh dáibh dealaghadh.*

*A lucht do bhi ’na bhaile,
lér mhian ceard is comhnaidhe,
do bhi adhbhar fár fuath libh
labhradh na gcuaich do chluinsin.*

*Do-chuaidh ar sgaoileadh don sgoil
gach fear dána ’na dhúthoigh ;*

*ni tiaghair a toigh athar
ó éoin d'iarraidh ealadhan.*

“ When November was approaching there would be a place of meeting for the followers of poetry—did one man (i. e. the teacher, whose death has caused the breaking up of the school) survive their separation would not be a parting. O ye who were in his house and sought art and residence, well might it be hateful to you to hear the utterance of the cuckoo. When the school was dispersed each poet departed to his homeland ; from his father’s house no man comes any more to seek art.”

Some of the more celebrated bardic families conducted schools for several generations.

The process of composition was carried out in small darkened apartments, while the poet reclined on a couch. Professor Bergin [12] cites some passages illustrating this custom, and propounds an interesting theory regarding its origin and significance. It seems to be referred to in the opening line of a poem in the Dindsenchus : *Cid dorcha dam im lepaid*, “ Though I am in darkness on my couch.” [13]

The completed poem was memorized by the *reacaire*, or *bard*, whose function it was to recite, or rather chant it, [14] with some kind of harp accompaniment, to the individual addressed. It was not necessary for the poet to be present at the performance, though he naturally would be if the chief addressed were his host at the time. The following passage from a *crosántacht* addressed to one of the Burkes gives a vivid picture of post-prandial relaxation in the hall of an Irish nobleman of the 16th century : . . . *iar suidhe ar sleasuibh réidhe a ríogh-bhruighean ag ól a bhfleadh bhfíoruasal bhfineamhna agus a ndeochand ngarbh ngabháltach ; ar bhfás ruithneadh agus ruamandachta ina ríoghgnúisibh ag éisdeacht re dréachtuibh agus re duanlaoidhibh a sean agus a sinnsear ’ga soluisreic i mbéaluibh reacaireadh agus ríogh-bhard. . .* “. . . when seated on the smooth benches of their royal mansions, quaffing their noble banquets of wine, and their harsh, heady draughts ; their royal countenances flushed and glowing, as they hearken to verses and poetic lays on their ancestors and forbears, eloquently uttered by declamers and distinguished bards . . .” [15]

Poems of complaint or expostulation , begging letters ; addresses to a chief whom the poet hoped to gain as a patron, were sometimes at least, sent by messenger. In a Middle Irish story we read that Seanchán Torpéist sent a poem to the king of Ireland by his attendant, who chanted it to the king, and returned to the poet with the reward bestowed. [16]

The ordinary panegyric was usually, no doubt, occasioned by the inauguration of a new chief, or a successful foray followed by a generous entertainment. In 1549 Mac Dermot of Moylurg made a foray on which he captured 1260 cows, all of which he distributed on St. Stephen’s Day to a gathering of poets and scholars whom he entertained on that date (ALC *ad ann.*). In 1561 the same Mac Dermot made an extensive raid in Roscommon, and his camp, according to ALC, was not excelled by any camp in Ireland in the amount it contained of steeds, armature, meat, wine, minstrels, poets, galloglasses, yeomen and Scots (i. e. Scottish mercenaries).

It was common for poets to keep guesthouses (*tighe aoigheadh coitchinne*), where apparently free hospitality was dispensed. See, e. g., ALC ii 334, 378. Undoubtedly these were used as meeting places for men of letters, where news and literary opinions were put into circulation. See also ZfcP 8, 109.

Amongst his own countrymen the poet had in virtue of his hereditary profession a superior social status. In English official documents we frequently find him described as *generosus*,

the term ‘ rimer’ being rather rare on the whole. In a document of 1563 “ rymers, bards and diceplayers” (Ir. *cearrbhaigh*) are classed together as “ Idlemen”, i. e. landless gentlemen. See Hardiman’s Statute of Kilkenny pp. 59, 62-3.

It is commonly assumed that the Irish poet was permanently and exclusively attached to a single chief or family ; the evidence of historical documents and of the poems themselves points to a different order. The bardic profession was built up on the ruins of—or perhaps we might say was a protective metamorphosis of—the ancient druidic order, and was always a craft with its own dues, privileges and prerogatives, decided by itself. Its closest analogy in this country in modern times is the bar. If we read the collected poems of any one of the court poets we shall find chiefs of different families and various political tendencies addressed in the same terms of familiarity and regard. Exclusive attachment to a single chief or family is not the custom. [17]

The poet had, of course, as a member of the community, certain obligations towards the chief of his district, whose favor was a necessity of life to him. To him he would naturally look for land, pasture for his cattle, defence in times of danger, as well as support and patronage in his profession. We have an interesting illustration of this in a piece addressed to Brian O’Conor, lord of Lower Connacht (+1440) by Maol Seachluinn na nUirsgéal. The chief had bestowed land on the poet, rent free, as a reward for poems adressed to him; subsequently he deprived him of the land in a fit of displeasure, thus rendering him a homeless exile :

*Do thoradh nio thrí laoidheadh
fa cheann t’each is t’iolmhaoineadh—
gidh bé adearam red ghruaidh ngil—
fuair mé t’fearann i n-aisgidh.*

*Ga dám ?—acht ní dheachaidh as,
gur éirigh, a ucht solas,
fearg nua ret filidh oraibh,
a ua chinidh Chonchobhair.*

*Tig don feirg sin leath ar leath,
is do chomhairlibh Chairbreach,
gur cuireadh as ar n-áit inn ;
cáit i suidheabh, dá suidhinn?*

*I n-éagmais m’fearainn cairte,
nách truagh mé, a mheic Raghnaile ?
is do mheic óglách uaibh ann,
a ghruaidh mar ógbhláth n-abhall.*

“ For my three poems on thy steeds and thy abundant wealth—despite whatever I may say of thy bright cheek—I obtained thy land free of charge. But in short, the thing did not subside until thou didst again become displeased with thy poet, thou scion of *Conchobhar*’s race. From that wrath of thine, and from the counsel of the men of Carbury, was I banished from my place ; where if I may do so, shall I settle down ? Without my chartered land am I not wretched, thou son of Reginalda? while thou, O cheek like fresh apple-blossom, hast settled the sons of thy fighting men in it.” [18]

In another poem to the same chief by the same author we have a further interesting reference to bestowal of land upon poets :

*Seacht leithbhliadhna dho léigeadh,
gan chánaigh gan choimhéigean,
Magh Inghine an Sgáil fár sgoil,
ó finnbhile Chláir Chobhthaigh.*

*Dh'ionadh a n-airgheadh ná a n-each,
ni coigiltí ar chionn Chairbreach
féar uaim i n-oirchill a gcruidh,
ná cluain oirchinn dá n-eachuibh.*

“ For seven half-years was the Plain of the *Sgál's* Daughter (in Sligo or Roscommon) left with our school, free of tribute or constraint, by the fair chieftain of *Cobhthach's* Plain. In return for their herds or their steeds I never grudged to the men of Carbury that I should keep hay for their cattle, or a special (?) [19] meadow for their horses.” [20]

Tadhg Dall himself relates (infra p. 94) that he obtained land from Cathal O'Conor of Sligo, and that this chief's patronage was the means of bringing him to the notice of the O'Donnells, O'Neills, O'Rourkes, Burkes, Costelloes and others.

According to the writer of the Clanricarde Memoirs, a poet in addressing an individual other than his own chief was bound to add a supplementary stanza in praise of the latter. This was very likely the custom. A few of these additional compliments are found attached to the compositions of Fearghal Óg Mhac an Bhaire, Eochaidh Ó Heódhusa and others. We have one in Tadhg Dall's poems, addressed, however, to Conn O'Donnell. The poem would be preserved by the family of the chief to whom it was addressed, and it would not be surprising if the supplementary stanza were in many cases omitted by the transcriber, which would account for the rarity of such additions in the surviving copies. In those days every noble house kept a collection of encomiums and elegies on its members. The size of a nobleman's poem-book, or *duanaire* was, as remarked above, an index to his generosity to men of letters, and consequently of his prowess. Thus in obituary notices we find one described as a man who had a large *duanaire* ; another as the man who had the largest *duanaire* of his time. Of all these poem-books, and their number must have been very large at one time, we have now only a few incomplete examples, such as the fragments of the Maguire *duanaire* in Copenhagen and Dublin, the Book of O'Donnell's Daughter in Brussels, the Dillon poems in RIA A v 2 etc. [21]

The political influence of the poets has perhaps been overrated, [22] or at least misunderstood. The ordinances which the English authorities issued against 'rimers' from time to time, show that they credited them with power for mischief. That they gave advice at times, and could, and often did, give offence and provocation is undisputable, but that they had any real constructive power in affairs has yet to be proven. At least one Lord Deputy thought it worth his while to commission some of them to 'adorn and beautify' the virtue of the English monarch:

“ I take the Lorde of Heven and Erthe to witnesse, that I never receaved *Rhyme* at the handes of Captayne *Woodhouse*, written agaynst hir Majestie, as he most falslie alleadgeth, but upon Wordes which he delyvered, took Order for the *Rhymer's* forthcomynge, which was done by the Advise of some of hir Majestie's Counsaill. And I have given Money to *Rhymers* to sett forth hir Majesties most worthie Praises, as by Maister Treasurer's of the Warres Accomptes will appere.” (Perrott's Last Will and Testament, *History of Sir John Perrott* p. 311.)

It would be interesting to discover what sum was expended on this business, and whether the ‘ Rhymers’ are named in the ‘ Accomptes’. Cf. the panegyric on Elizabeth, attributed in some mss. to Flann son of Eóghan Mág Craith, in Ó Bruadair’s Poems iii 64. As to the alleged employment of Aonghus na nAor by Carew, the question is too big to be discussed here ; but it is not obvious what advantage the English authorities could hope to win by a whole-sale shaming of the Irish clans. See, however, O’Gr. 341 and 443 n. 2.

It can be seen from this brief sketch that the status of the Irish bardic poet was on the whole a dignified one. If, like Dryden, he ‘ must live by courts or starve,’ unlike the English poet, he was able, owing to the conventions under which he lived, to please patrons of differing views without violating his conscience.

The Subject-Matter of Tadhg Dall’s Poems.

I do not think that a better representative of Irish bardic poetry, its style, compass of subject, capabilities and limitations, could be found than Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn. He flourished at a period when the art had reached the highest and widest development of which it was susceptible under the bardic system. His verses, in their apparent ease and simplicity, and naturalness of expression, show a mastery of metrical form and style which, though equalled by a few of the craft, has rarely been excelled. In literary method he represents a kind of Augustan period, if it is not wrenching the term too violently to apply it to any manifestation of 16th century Ireland. He shows in most of his poems a calm acceptance of the contemporary strife, as though it were the natural order. Poetry flourished on it, and for him, like most bardic poets, the profession was the thing. The apprehensions and sorrows which troubled Irish poets of a slightly later period did not affect Tadhg Dall. Shadows palpable enough to us in his own poems portended no disaster to him. We may take him as a typical figure, thoroughly adapted in mind and customs to the existing order; utterly unaware of the imminent dawn of a new world.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the bardic eulogy is its studied arabiguity, a quality which of course is natural in complementary addresses. In Tadhg Dall’s verses, and those of most bardic poets the only living individual referred to is, with rare exceptions, the chief addressed. We might expect O’Donnell to be congratulated on his triumphs over O’Neill, or vice versa, but no. In the present collection the nearest approach to any actuality of the kind is in 27, where the function of MacSweeney as commander-in-chief, or wager of war (*cónsabul* or *cónsdábla* is the usual term in the annals) to O’Donnell, and so, by implication, his subservience to the latter, are clearly indicated. Battle-rolls, lists of victories, are sometimes given, but rarely are even the names of the defeated families enumerated. This assumed ignorance, within the limits of a single poem, of feuds, or of rival claims to leadership, is interesting, and seems to have been based on a convention agreed on by the poets and acquiesced in by the chiefs themselves. As to the chiefs’ real opinion of it, we have some evidence. (see O’Grady’s note, Cat. 434). To the poets it was probably more acceptable, partly as being in the interests of inter-tribal concord ; mainly, no doubt, in order to preserve amicable relations between themselves and any chief upon whom, in the vicissitudes of things, they might one day come to depend. A feeling for the social amenities and ordinary good taste may also have been an influence.

Brian Ruadh Mhac Con Midhe (fl. c. 1490) refers in the following stanza to the desirability of a certain tactfulness :

*Dá fiafraigheadh duine dhe
uaisle cháich tar a chéile,
dlighidh file freagra mhall,*

d'eagla an tighe 'na thiomchall.

“ Should anyone ask of the poet what was the relative nobility of each person, he should answer with circumspection, for fear of those around.” [23]

Maol Seachluinn na nUirsgéal excuses himself from detailing the exploits of Brian O’Conor lest he should offend not only the O’Rellys and other native gentlemen, but the English of Connacht as well. [24] The only poem I can recall in which a chief is unfavorably contrasted with one of his contemporaries is Uilliam Mhac an Bhaire’s *Biaidh athroinn ar Inis Fáil*, where the poet compares the justice and munificence of O’Donnell (Red Hugh’s father) with the brutality of Conor O’Brien, Earl of Thomond, the hanger of poets. But there was obviously nothing to expect from the Earl, and no reason (while safely under O’Donnell’s protection) for refraining from a frank opinion on his works.

The sincerity of encomium is often doubtful, and note-worthy in this connection are the following lines, in which Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh [25] describes the function of the court poet with frank cynicism:

*Dá chineadh dá gcumthar dán
i gcrích Éireann na n-uarán—
na Gaoidhíse ag boing re blad,
is Goill bhraoininse Breatan.*

*I ndán na nGall gealltar linn
Gaoidhí d’ionnarba a hÉirinn,
Goill do sraoineadh tar sál soir
i ndán na nGaoidheal gealltair.*

“ There are two kindreds for whom poetry is composed in Ireland of the cool springs—the Gaels, known to fame, and the English of Britain’s dewy isle. In poetry for the English we promise that the Gael shall be banished from Ireland, while in poetry for the Gaels we promise that the English shall be hunted across the sea.” [26]

This stanza from a 15th cent. elegy illustrates the immunity of the lettered classes of that period from ordinary burdens :

*Do-chonnarc Magh Luirg go léir —
don tsaoghal is eadh eiséin —
fá dhó gan éanbhó ón fíor,
acht bó éarloimh nó filíodh.*

*‘ Twice have I seen the Plains of Boyle—
such is the world—
left by him without a single cow,
save that of a cleric or a poet. ’RIA 3 C 13, 700.*

[2] According to the Clanricarde Memoirs the bardic seminaries were “ open only to such as were descended of Poets and reputed within their Tribes,” and this restriction of certain callings each to a single kindred in each district “ as to poetry, and most of the rest, was still preserved in Ireland upon the same Footing, till the beginning of the Troubles in 1641.” (ed. 1722 p. cxxxii).

[3] Studies 1919, 255, 438 ; 1921, 73 ; Oss. Soc. v 294.

- [4] Studies 1918, 616; 1919, 417; ZfcP 2, 351 sq., Ir. Monthly 1920.
- [5] Some amusing verses protesting against the stylish sorms of praise are translated by Prof. Bergin, Journal of the Ivernian Society, 1913, p. 206.
- [6] See the whole of this poem in the Irish Monthly, Dec. 19 19 p. 679. The date given by the editor to the piece is too late ; lines are cited from it in the early 16th century grammatical tracts. Similar sentiments are expressed by TD's contemporary, Edmund Spenser:

But such as neither of themselves can sing,
 Nor yet are sung of others for reward,
 Which never was, ne ever with regard
 Their names shall of the later age be heard,
 But shall in rustic darknes ever lie,
 Unless they mentioned be with infamie.
 What booteth it to have been rich alive ?
 What to be great ?
 What to be gracious?
 When after death no token doth survive
 Of former being in this mortal hous,

 How manie great ones may remembred be,
 Which in their daies most famouslie
 Die in obscure oblivion, as the thing did florish ;
 Of whome no word we heare, nor signe now see,
 But as things wipt out with a sponge to perishe,
 Because they living cared not to cherishe,
 No gentle wits, through pride or covetize,
 Which might their names for ever memorize.

Ruines of Time

Another ingenious defence of the profession is attributed to Colum Cille : *bidh a fiss acat nach beith an náire no an feile is na dainib muna beith daíne aca da tiubraidís ní d'ecla a cainte no a n-ærtha mar ataid na filedha*. Manus O'Donnell's *Beatha C.C.* § 332.

- [7] For exx. see O'Rahilly's *Dánta Grádha*, and Bergin's Unpublished Irish poems, Studies 1917sq.
- [8] See for example Spenser's View, Globe ed. of his works p. 640 ; Derrick's Image of Ireland, the writings of Camden and Stanihurst ; for collected citations Silva Gadelica II p. xxii, Ulster Journ. of Archaeology vi. 165, Quiggin's Prolegomena to the Study of the Later Irish Bards, 1911, Hardiman's Notes on Statute of Kilkenny, Ir. Arch. Soc. 1843, 55.
- [9] Additional material of great interest will be found in Professor T. F. O'Rahilly's *Irish Poets, Historians and Judges in English Documents 1538-1615*, RIA Proc. XXXVI C vi.
- [10] 1650 is the usual, and roughly accurate terminus as regards Ireland. Although the strict metres were fitfully practised for many years later, the schools and their system never revived. Amongst the latest specimens of genuine Irish *dán díreach* extant are the poems addressed by Maol Muire son of Eóghan Ó Huiginn to Sir Lucas Dillon of Costello-Gallen, the 2nd Viscount, who died in 1655. For an interesting example of strict verse as composed in Ireland c. 1700 see ZfcP 2, 362. Of course a few poets of our own day practise the style with artistic success, but the smallness of their number, together with the fact that their work is caviare to all but two or three, prevents any anticipation of a serious revival. In Scotland and the Isles the bardic order preserved its integrity for long after the break up of the Irish schools, and strict *dán díreach* was produced down to the early years of the 18th century; see Bergin 1. c, p. 159, and Cameron's *Reliquiae Cellicae*.
- [11] See O'Grady, Cat 366.

[12] 1. c. p. 161.

[13] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindsenchus* iii 110.

[14] Cf. Bergin, 1. c. p. 159 and see Oss. v 112 and O'Brien s. v. *reacaim*. That the *reacaire* played the accompaniment himself is suggested by the following lines from a collection of satirical stanzas on the poets, contained in the O'Conor Don MS. (Ériu 8, 81, note) :

*Digheólad go min ar Ó Gnímh a ndearna sé
do bher (?) cláirseach amesc cháich a láimh a reacaire féin.*

[15] Book of O'Conor Don f. 29 a.

[16] Anecdota from Irish MSS. i, 8 ; cf. Studies 1922, p. 80.

[17] Cf. Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden- u. Königsage* i. p. 68. The fact that a poet is sometimes described as the *ollamh* of a certain chief, e. g. *ollamh í Néill*, as in TD 25 11-15, ZfcP 2, 352, does not imply that the attachment was exclusive. See Clanricarde Memoirs 1722, clxvii (cited by Bergin, 1. c. p. 157). O'Grady's comparison (Cat. 436 n.) of the court poet to a regimental band which is permitted on occasion to perform at non-regimental functions is not quite suitable. A better simile is provided by such an official as the surgeon to the king, whose appointment does not prevent him from attending to his majesty's subjects, when they seek his advice.

[18] *Each gan aradhain an ferg*, RIA 23 H 8, 68 a. Cf. ZfcP 2, 352 § S. The family of Mac Giolla Ceallaigh, poets and historians (= genealogists) to the O'Flahertys held six quarters of land in virtue of their offices, see O'Flaherty's *Iar Connaught* 371. Cf. O'Gr. Cat. 475 § 2.

[19] Cf. *airchend* Laws Gloss.

[20] *Do bhrises bearna ar Bhrian*, O'Conor Don MS. 325 b. For another interesting citation on the subject see Bergin, 1. c. p. 205.

[21] See Quiggin's *Prolegomena* p. 14.

[22] Cf. O'Grady, Cat. 340 and O'Donovan's *Tribes of Ireland*, p. 24.

[23] *Iomdha uirrim ag Ulltuibh*, O'Conor Don MS. 172a. See Clanricarde Mem. p. clxviii for an anecdote illustrating the danger of an uncomplimentary reference.

[24] *Síol Muireadhaigh is Mainigh dho chuirfíodh am cheartaighidh bheith ag tuirim na ttreas tug, bheas gíodh duiligh a ndearmud. Goill Chonnacht do chor dom dhruim, no a n-iarmhoireacht ní féadfuinn a mbreatha troma dhá thigh, sa ccreacha orra dh'áirimh.*

[25] +1387.

[26] *Irish Monthly*, Sept. 1919. 513.

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