

## A Chapter of The River Erne

### *An Irish River*

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‘Enniskillen’ is the English form of *Innis-Kethleann*, the Island of Kethlenn, wife of the famous gigantic warrior Balor, of the legendary period of Irish history. Whether *Feara-Viri* means Men of the Monks (from the sanctity of Devenish?) or Men of the Marshes, or something else, appears doubtful. Erne received that name, say some, in place of the older one Saimer, when Erna, the favourite waiting-woman of Meav, Queen of Connaught, was drowned therein ; while others derive it from the Ernai, who dwelt hereabouts, a sept of the Fir-Bolgs.

Ballyshannon (properly *Bel-atha-seanaigh*, pronounced Bel-a-shanie) is a place of older note than Enniskillen, but now a decayed and poverty-stricken town, with a population, mainly Keltic and Catholic, yearly diminishing by emigration. The situation of it, on either bank of the wide swift river, is as pleasant as need be, the streets on the north side climbing up a somewhat steep hill, and the aspect of the town picturesque from several distant points ; but once enter it, you find little that is attractive, except indeed a population who, poor and neglected as they are, have much vivacity and intelligence and very kindly manners.

Ugly as most of the houses in Ballyshannon are (as in what Irish town are they not, whether prosperous or declining?), there is something cheerful in your not feeling shut in ; glimpses of the river, the blue Dartry mountains, the harbour and its sandhills, being visible at many points as we traverse the ragged streets. The sanitary conditions, too, are much better than a stranger would guess, nature supplying brisk air, clean water, and a soil that soon absorbs the frequent rains.

Both in salubrity, and in variety of interest, Ballyshannon far excels the trimmer and richer Enniskillen. The country round is in great part moory and rocky, with a multitude of lakes and tarns of all sizes, and many a rapid brook. Warm little vales, too, lie hidden here and there ; and the circles of ancient raths are frequent on the greener hills. From the higher points northward of the town, the long range of the Donegal mountains stands in view, a wavy blue line from Barnasmore to Slieve-League, that great ocean-cliff, an almost perpendicular precipice of 1,800 feet. Southward, between the Dartry mountains (which have their name from the Clan Dartry, of whom the MacClancys were chiefs), the Erne and the sea, spreads a broken plain, almost treeless, of some fifteen miles by seven, *Magh Kedne*, ‘the Plain of Treaty,’ a locality of note in ancient Irish history, which includes much good pasture and arable land, and also some large tracts of bog.

This, the south side of Ballyshannon, is for the most part a limestone country, but on the other side of the Erne begin those vast beds of ‘primary’ rocks—granitic, gneissose, schistous, and micaceous, which are characteristic of this country, and the most extensive of the kind in Ireland. The limestone forms the greater part of the north bank, also, of this part of the River Erne, but at a short distance from the water’s edge the primitive rocks appear, chiefly gneiss and mica-schist, occupying the whole of the moory, barren, and rocky district of Dhubally, Breesie, &c, and joining edge with the limestone formation at the pool below Asaroe Fall, of which the west bank is mica-schist, and the east bank encrinitic limestone. The limestone, especially along the Bundoran shore, is remarkably rich in fossils. Indications of mineral wealth are abundant ; copper and lead ores have been found in many spots ; and mining has been attempted, but with inadequate means. A ship-canal from Belleek to the sea was also begun in the last century, one lock remaining as monument of the scheme, and endeavours have since been made to improve the entrance to Ballyshannon Harbour, with some but no very great practical effect, and the business of the country has found itself other channels. Moreover, the military garrison, once numerous, is removed, the moneyed people have mostly gone to live in Dublin or elsewhere, and thus Ballyshannon is left in its corner poor and idle, with scarce anything but its grain market and its salmon fishery. There is also the winter eel-fishing, which produces largely in bulk, but the value of this is comparatively small.

The pool below the Fall is the place where most of the salmon are caught, and the scene there of a fine summer's evening, when the nets are at work, is lively and pleasant. Gray cliffs, verdant here and there with ivy and briar, half enclose this large deep pool. Let us sit on the close greensward, opposite the Cataract of King Hugh. The low amber torrent pours into the tide with continuous murmur, heard day and night, summer and winter, throughout the town, like the voice of the past. More than two thousand five hundred years ago, say the oldest histories, the sovereignty of Erin was committed to Aedh Ruadh (Red Hugh) son of Badharn, and to Dithorba son of Deman, and to Kimbaeth son of Fintan, who were the sons of three brothers ; and each took his turn to reign for seven years. Red Hugh's turn was first, and came round twice again, and towards the end of his third period of sovereignty, being then an old man, the king (attempting, it would seem, to cross by one of the fords) was swept away and drowned in this river. He ' was buried in the mound over the margin of the cataract.' [1] ' Hence *Eas-Aedha-Ruaidh*, pronounced As-a-roe,' ' Waterfall of Red Hugh.' This name was long subsequently applied to the Abbey, and was also often used as a general name for the locality. The name of ' Ballyshannon' is corrupt, both in the ' Bally' and the ' Shannon' ; the Irish form, as I have said, is *Bel-atha-Seanaigh*, and the people call it, properly, ' Bel-ā-shanie' *Bel atha* means liter-ally ' Mouth or Opening of the Ford,' but the compound seems to have no other significance than *Ath* by itself, and merely to signify ' ford.' *Seanach* would seem to be a man's name (forgotten man), and if so Seanach's Ford—Shanasford—the English equivalent of the place-name. *Ath-seanaigh* was a ford a little above the present bridge, and by this name the town and castle are usually designated in the Annals.

But see, after all these centuries, King Hugh's Fall rolling down with low steady thunder, and sending whirls of sailing foam to run circling into the broad pool at our feet, its green depths full of quivering reflexes of variegated cliff and summer evening sky. On the grassy banks are lounging groups and children at play, who point the finger now and again, as a salmon, ' itself at once the arrow and the bow,' shoots up with a curve into sunlight from the bubbling abyss below the Fall, and struggling one moment on the edge of the swift-descending water wins his upward way, or is swept down like driftwood. Sometimes two spring at once and touch in air, sometimes an unlucky fish alights on that corner of rock, and has to struggle off as best he can.

The salmon-boat is going to ' make a shot ;' let us watch the process from point to point. The word given, with deliberate speed the fishermen enter their boat, one rope being left with a man on shore ; the skipper stands up, the five large oars sweep together, the net is cast out fold after fold over the stern, and its corks bob in their wake ; they pass the cliff-point, cross the current, glide close to the pouring Fall—each man in turn shortening his oar—and again bend towards the starting-point their eccentric orbit, marked with floating corks. Now comes the tug ; the skipper gives his net-rope a turn round the sternpost, the whole weight of the net is dragged at every pull, the rowers strain, the boat creaks, and advances inch by inch, till at last, the rope being suddenly cast off—'Give way, my boys !' she darts forward and rounds nicely into her birth, the oars are slid over and project on one side, on the other the net is already being hauled in. At stem and at stern stands a fisherman, pulling determinately on the heavy main rope with its corks, twisting a hand in it, leaning back as it slowly yields, and shaking the wet festoons into the boat behind ; at the centre of the boat another stoops low over the gunwale, closing and lifting the two bottom-ropes or skunks, while a comrade beside him keeps plashing with balanced oar, to scare the fish from the opening ; at intermediate places others of the crew are gathering in handfuls of meshes, and so, by degrees, the whole compass of the net swims up, and is absorbed into the boat. Three-fourths of it is aboard ; the oar no longer plashes, but is darted down and twirled with a turn of the wrist, for the salmon, if any, are close by, and too violent a commotion might urge them to overleap their corded prison. The *tail* once in, the net forms a bag, and all plashing ceases; fish, perhaps, like other short-sighted creatures, congratulating themselves on the cessation of danger, just when it has grown imminent. The corks are in ; the people on the banks move to better places for seeing ; the fishermen are all stooping, the meshes rise ; ' Fish, or no fish ?' say the people on the banks, and suddenly, if the luck be good, a great splashing churns up along the boat's side, spray flies into the men's faces, but they haul steadily, and after a short struggle the mass of scaly treasure climbs and rolls like a silver surge over the dipping gunwale. Flapping and splashing continues at the bottom of the boat, but the men merely proceed to shift their net and refold it in the stern, ready for the next shot, and meanwhile glides up a small boat, known as ' the collector,' which receives the salmon just caught, and with them vanishes round a corner. The fishermen have now

some sweet moments of repose ; but if the pool appears full of fish, their vacation is short. Besides daily wages, they receive an allowance proportioned to the number caught.

In this fishery there are three large boats employed for the draught nets, each with a regular crew of seven men, and these fish the pool described and other good places in the tidal channel between the Fall and the main sea, from before break of summer dawn (when the tide serves) to twilight of summer evening. The total take may probably be averaged at 500 salmon a day, during the latter half of the season (which closes in August) ; but as many as 2,000 have been taken in a day, and above 400 in a single haul. The average weight is nine pounds, but at times there is a plentiful run of fish over fifteen.

Bound the corner, where the collector's boat disappeared, stands the fish-house, where piles of empty and full fish-coffins form a rude colonnade, An amphibious carpenter (half fisherman) is sawing, boring, and hammering, making and repairing ; and at its gable a tired old boat lies asleep on the grass, as her crew used sometimes to lie asleep when she floated. Within the fish-house we inhale a curious combined aroma of fresh fish, dried fish, turf and tobacco-smoke, cordage and tar ; a fire of two or three coals burns on the hearth ; in a corner beyond it is a man stretched in deep slumber, and near him a net-maker sits on the floor, adding mesh to mesh with rapidity.

The collector touches the bank below ; the weighing scales are mopped ; one creel (a deep wicker basket) after another is swung off plodding shoulders, and salmon after salmon is lifted by a grasp near the tail and slid into the balance, where they lie passive that so lately cleft the river-deeps with quick fin and nervy tail ; though some still twitch, and the delicate hues of the water, gleaming and melting from the dark spotted back through purplish and pale green into silver and clouded white, are not yet obscured by terrestrial handling. ' Six ; 109 pounds,' is booked by the clerk at his desk : and these are old fish, as may be inferred not only from their bulk but from the shape of their tails ; for the tail, which is much forked in the young salmon, becomes less and less so, from the central caudal rays growing faster than the rest, till, in the fourth year, its extreme edge is nearly or quite straight. A card is marked and nailed on its box, two men swing the salmon from the scales, a third mops them ; and there they lie stretched, alternate heads and tails, with white bellies up, in their box (measuring about five feet by two, and one foot deep), which a couple of men immediately hook to a shoulder-pole, and trot off with to the ice-house close by.

From hot sunshine into the ice-house is a sudden transition. One bleak tallow candle is fastened there, like a weeping prisoner, to the wall of the crooked passage, through which you come to the bottom of a pit of frozen snow mixed with glassy lumps, in some corner of which a white bear might comfortably lodge. We follow our salmon-box, rapidly shovelled full of ice and nailed down, towards daylight again, and feel the outer air striking on our faces like the breath of a stove. In half an hour, perhaps, this, with a pile of similar boxes, will be on its way to Liverpool, either direct in a swift-sailing smack, or by cart to some of the neighbouring steamer-ports, and so to Billingsgate and Bond Street and the West End dinner-tables.

The salmon that evades the dangers of the ocean and the lower river may either face the Fall or choose the side stream that runs between an irregular rocky island and the shore. If the latter, he is a gone fish : he ascends the current, enters a minor rapid, pierces a very narrow strait—in reality, the entrance of a trap—and next finds his nose knocked against a wooden grating, and can merely poke about amongst some fellow-prisoners until their hour shall come. The stream through the box is swift, and drifts him to the lower corners, and he cannot *swim* down it to seek the narrow opening (like an entering V opened at the angle), for the water would pour into his gills and drown him. No creature is absolute even in that element where strongest : the fish conquers the water, and the water rules the fish.

The fishes' hour has struck—though the poor creatures know nothing of clocks. The men are, as they term it, ' robbing the boxes.' A hand-net on the end of a long pole sweeps down and rummages every nook, and by ones or twos, or when the box is full, by threes and fours, lifts the strong creatures struggling into air, and disgorges them on the causeway, or into a dry stone basin built for the purpose, where a knock on the nose with a short stick is their speedy quietus.

Those lucky salmon that surmount the Fall by agility, or by advantage of a high tide, are free of the upper waters, which are carefully guarded from poaching by numerous 'water-keepers.' Here they gradually change colour, the females growing dark, the males golden orange, and are then called respectively 'black fish' and 'red fish.' Their spawn is deposited in furrows or redds, [2] which they make in the gravel with their noses. This usually occurs in November, and about five months afterwards the fry appear in the shallows as inch-long fishes. They are now marked across with narrow patches of dusky gray, in common with the young of trout, Welsh charr, and some other fish ; but the salmon soon changes this coat. The similarity, however, remains long enough to supply ground for discussions, especially as to the identity of the parr, or *jinkin*, with the young salmon ; and on this the most experienced persons hold opposite opinions. The fry descend as spring advances, at first keeping in slack water, then venturing towards mid-stream. On meeting the tide they wait two or three days to grow used to the salt water, and then go direct to sea. There they get quit of certain small fresh-water parasites that cling to them, but only to be saddled with substitutes peculiar to the salt water ; and the reverse effect occurs on their return to the fresh. It is during the summer or autumn that they return to the estuary ; those that come in June weighing two to four pounds ; in July or August three to seven pounds—for their growth is chiefly in the sea, and very rapid, their appetite being proportionately ravenous. They are believed to feed on sand-eels and other small fish and marine animals, and a good deal on the ova of crabs and lobsters—a rich diet, which in turn enhances their own flavour.

While in the estuary, the salmon generally move up somewhat with the flood-tide, and retire with the ebb. They are supposed to return, in most instances, to their native rivers ; but if they have roved far in the ocean, the probability is that, after the season has arrived, they enter the nearest congenial stream. In most cases, probably the warmest rivers have the earliest fisheries ; but there appear to be many exceptions to this, and the difference in time, and also in quality of fish, between fisheries only a few miles apart, is remarkable.

Those 'grilse' or 'gawls' (fish returning up for the first time) that escape the hazards their parents escaped, pursue in turn the same course ; and after spawning, head again for the sea as 'kelts' or 'keeves' ; at which time they are unfit for table. They descend in the floods at the end of winter and beginning of spring, from pool to pool, and once in the sea, begin quickly to grow plump, firm, and weighty. Salmon can live wholly in fresh water, but poorer in size and quality.

Once in the waters above the Fall, the salmon, no longer legally assailable with physical force, become peculiarly subject to the seductive arts of the angler, and are tempted with monstrous flies of every glaring colour and unnatural shape ; for, in fly-tying, as in some other departments of the fine arts, it is found that the most catching article is not that which keeps closest to the modesty of nature.

From boat, wall, or field on the river-verge, often from the old bridge, the angler, wielding the heavy rod with both hands, bids his fly fall softly into a particular ripple or eddy, and swim up-stream with wavering motion. To the spectator not a brother of the craft, it seems slow work ; yet yonder rich idle man, to whom the world is an oyster ready opened, with a whole cruetful of relishes soliciting his hands, finds this the most desirable occupation for six summer weeks ; and yon other, among professional cares and toils in the city smoke, has comforted himself with memories and anticipations of such angling holidays as he is now enjoying.

Your true angler will not interpose other pursuits ; he does not qualify his water ; soon and late he is at work amusing himself. Had you visited the river-side at half-past two this morning, you might, at that early hour, have observed the dim figure of an old gentleman thus engaged, his nightcap glimmering in the dawn ; and about 8 a.m., if the fish were rising, you might have seen the same old gentleman hastily consuming a mess of porridge at some rock or low wall, while his attendant kept the rod in vibration ; and evening dusk will perhaps find the veteran on duty, at this or another of his favourite 'throws.'

Angling, indeed, has attractions for people of every class and age, as there is plenty of evidence along the pools and rapids of the Erne on a favourable evening. The child dips his thread and crooked pin ; the lad, with clumsy but serviceable home-made rod, and line woven of horse-hairs hazardously filched from the living tail, turns trouser above knee, and wades sturdily. The grave old pensioner

handles his rod with military precision ; the unshaven, sedentary shoemaker has thrown by the lap-stone, spat out the piece of leather he was chewing, and twisted his apron to one side, to seek an hour's happiness by the margin of the cool flowing waters, while, above or below him, the comfortable shopkeeper or householder swings his sober line from a station where wet feet are impossible.

But most of these people, observe, are fishing for trout, some few for perch, bream, and the like ; none for salmon. That is a lofty privilege, requiring not only a government licence but permission from the lessee of the ' several fishery,' which is accorded only to particular friends, or on payment of a smart sum ; and all the salmon caught must be given up, except two in the season for each angler. Angling for salmon is therefore chiefly the occupation of ' Nobs'—who from distant cities repair hither, donning waterproof boots, jackets with special pockets, and wide-awake hats embowered in artificial flies, engage an attendant, and fish, or pretend to fish, all day long, smoking continuous cigars. Old hands there are, tho', such as our early rising friend, who, in less ambitious rig, angle seriously and knowingly, and seldom suffer the rod to quit their own hands—unlike the more fickle amateur, who oft enjoys the indolent Havannah while his man keeps the rod going, and who will even play chess with a comrade till either's proxy gives check to a salmon.

The fish, being struck, rapidly dives or darts away, then succeed the incidents of holding and giving out, wading, running sideways, stepping backwards, the brass wheel whirring, rod bent like a hoop, the last struggle, the gaff, the repose after victory, the calm triumph of the spring-balance and memorandum-book.

The angler's attendant belongs to a peculiar class, which is small but unfailing. He lives near the river, and is usually a native of the locality, where it is very likely his father and grandfather before him lived their lives in the same element of sporting. He understands shooting and coursing, and is seasonably occupied therein ; but fishing is his stronghold. He perpetually ties flies ; for each lake, pool, river, rivulet, and every change of season, weather, and time of day, requires to be studied and suited in its peculiarities ; and, above all, the capricious fancy of the salmon—to-day ready to rush at something which yesterday he would not look at. Perhaps after the most renowned flies have been cast in vain, something tied hurriedly on the river bank, with a new shade of colour in it, will be seized ere it can touch the water. The attendant therefore wears next his heart an old pocket-book stuffed with brilliant silk-threads, tinsel, gold-twist, pig's wool variously dyed, feathers of the mallard, peacock, pheasant, American duck, guinea-hen, and declares to you that a fish will criticise a single fibre or bristle in the wing or body of the work of art submitted to his examination.

Droll fellows many of these attendants are, with quaint stories and humours to lighten the tedious hours when fish are too dull or too wide-awake to be persuaded ; and help to flavour the piscatory episode in the rich man's year. They are deeply versed in the characteristics of fish, and scarcely less so in those of the fishing rich man, between whose natures they seem to form a necessary middle term—their hands touched, now and again, with silvery traces of their contact with each.

The salmon boat's last ' shot' has been made for this evening, the big boats ride silent and deserted at their moorings, the fishermen have wended homewards by field-path or by water to their cottages. The tide is half-ebb, the windless sky holds a soft deep blue between the stars ; let us step into this punt and pull down the harbour, hearing ever ' the music of the water-fall' sounding through the stillness.

This one small island, a rock thinly coated with sward, bearing a single long low house, is Inis-Saimer, and owns a legendary fame stretching back centuries beyond even the time of Hugh, son of Badharn, who gave his name to the cataract. Do you remember Wordsworth's fine sonnet upon the influence of twilight, or dim nightlight, in obliterating *modernness* from a landscape? That era of the world in which Parthalon lived was 300 years after the Deluge, he being descended from Magog, son of Japhet, son of Noah. This Parthalon sailed from Greece, or, as some assert, from the Euxine Sea, with his wife, his three sons and their wives, and a body of soldiers ; and at last, in the month of May (the 14th of the moon, and a Tuesday, [3] if you are fond of precise information), they reached the mild and fertile island of thick woods wherein they resolved to stay, and which was afterwards called Eiré, or Erin—that is to say, ' western'—and at length by the Saxons, ' Eiré-land,' Ireland. First they

landed at Inverskene, now Kenmare, in Kerry (but all places were as yet lonely and nameless), and thence coasted northwards to the estuary of a rapid river—this river upon which we float. Here entering, they fixed their dwelling on the small island in mid-channel ; a clearly advantageous position ; close to the mainland but on every side protected by deep water ; near the ocean, yet well sheltered ; the climate soft, fish and wild-fowl abundant, forests good for chase spreading to the water's edge, and, full in view, the copious cataract rolling with, murmur, as to-night it rolls with murmur, into the salt creek, from far-spreading inland waters. Here, and perhaps on the adjacent river-banks, dwelt Parthalon and his people ; and this was in the time of Abram and Lot.

One day Parthalon was hunting through the forest where the Moy now is, and part of his household people were with him, and part were left behind in the river-island. He hunted up into a glen of the blue mountain-range beyond the plain, and there a messenger overtook him, whose message carried suspicion and jealousy ; whereupon Parthalon turned hastily home-wards. So that valley was called *Glen-eda*, ' the Glen of Jealousy,' now Glenade. When the chief stepped out of boat upon his island in the river, his wife received him kindly, and offered him a goblet of refreshing drink ; but after approaching it to his mouth Parthalon took it down again, and, looking at her sternly, said, ' I perceive another man's breath upon my goblet.' To this his wife replied impudently, repeating certain verses of a poet that it is unwise to shut up a cat along with a pan of cream, or a young man with a fair woman. At the same moment Saimer, the favourite greyhound of Parthalon, ran up fawning upon his master, who in his anger smote the dog and killed him.

In the old narratives no more is said of Parthalon's wife, but it is recorded that he buried his hound on the island, calling it *Inis-Saimer*, and so it is called to this day. Hence the river, too, was anciently called *Saimer*. The tidal part of this river was also named *Lough Rury*, because *Rury*, the son of Parthalon, was drowned therein.

After a time, Parthalon and his people moved away from this place to the eastern coast, to the high promontory of Howth ; and there Parthalon died, after being twenty years in Erin. In his time burst forth the lakes Conn and Mask, also *Lough Laighlin*, from the grave dug for his son *Laighlin*, and several other lakes burst forth, and four plains were cleared of forest. When 300 years had passed from the arrival of the Parthalonians, there came a pestilence among them ; 9,000 died at Howth in one week, and at last there was not one left alive. Then Erin remained void of inhabitants for thirty years. [4] How was the record transmitted across this interval ? Perhaps by inscriptions on stones and rocks, of the nature of that writing called ' Ogham' ; but, moreover, the Parthalonians could hardly have lived three centuries in Erin without communication by sea with other inhabitants of the world. Some say that along with Parthalon came a number of giants, strong but stupid, ' plures gigantes ex stirpe Cham, viribus admirabiles, sed stolidi,' one of whom, named *Ruan*, hid himself in a cave, and thus escaping the pestilence, lived till the time of Saint Patrick, a space of 2,400 years, told the saint many things of ancient times, and was baptized before death. This giant's lifetime (remarks one chronicler) ' longius est bis quam ætas Mathusalem, sed nihil impossibile Deo.' [5] And this is a fair specimen of the very ancient legendary part of Irish history.

In later times there was a residence of the chieftains of *Tirconnell* on *Inis-Saimer*. A.D. 1184, the monastery of *Asaroe* ' was granted to God and Saint Bernard by *Flaherty O'Muldorry*, Lord of *Kinel-Connell*, for the good of his soul' ; [6] and in 1197 this *O'Muldorry*, a powerful and blood-thirsty warrior in his day, 'died on *Inis-Saimer* on the second clay of February, after long and patient suffering, in the thirtieth year of his reign and fifty-ninth of his life, and was interred at *Drumhome* with due honour.' [7] In the year 1200 the chieftainship came to the *O'Donnell* family, with whom it remained till Irish laws gave way to English. *Neal Garv O'Donnell*, Lord of *Tirconnell* in 1423, built the castle of *Ballyshannon*, near the ford above the present bridge, which castle, ' a long-desired place,' says *Sir Henry Doekwra*, was taken by *Captain Digges*, one of *Dockwra's* officers, in the spring of 1602, being first battered and broken by a great gun. Only a bit of the wall of that castle remains, built into the wall of the grain-market.

This creek on our right running up among the dim hills, is the *Abbey Bay*, round whose headland in old years rowed many a boat with supplies of salmon and eels for the monks' refectory, for there were both salmon and eel-weirs on the river appertaining to this *Abbey*. Some of the fishermen whom

we saw at work this evening live under the shadow of the old walls, on a slope not far from the water. The building is now utterly ruined, the windows are shapeless gaps ; weeds and old ragged bushes grow in the aisle ; many of the stones are built into the walls of the fishermen's huts, or help to fence their scanty potato patches, while pieces of archivolts, mullions, and other carved work, are more reverently set for headstones in the neighbouring graveyard, crowded with tombstones and mounds, ancient and recent—for these burial-grounds of old sanctity are much desired resting-places. Under rugged banks, grown with hawthorn and bramble, and through the arches of a rude little stone bridge, perhaps coeval with the monastery—

A little rocky rivulet runs murmuring to the tide,  
Singing a song of ancient days, in sorrow, not in pride ;  
The boortree and the lightsome ash across the portal grow,  
And heaven itself is now the roof of Abbey Asaroe.

‘ Boortree’ (perhaps bore-tree, the pith being easy to take out) is a provincial name for the elder, which grows abundantly in this locality. And so we drift by on the current towards Coolnargit and the sandhills that guard the mouth of the Erne.

In this deep curve of the river, where it sweeps under sandhills before rushing seaward across the Bar, we rest on our oars under the starlight, and hear, now close at hand, the constant-run and dash of waves on Tullan Strand, and under this the general basso of the Atlantic roaring along leagues of sandy and rocky shore. Outside there, is broad Donegal Bay, a wilderness of heaving water, its northern and southern mountain-walls dimly visible in the summer night sky. On the left, beyond Tullan, haunt of sea-fowl, runs the ragged coast-line of black rock,—tufted with scurvy-grass and thrift, tide-worn into caves and ‘ fairy bridges,’ and topped with downs of smooth thymy sward,—leading to the sands and the rock-creeks and pools of Bundoran, delightful bathing-place. On the right, the fragment of Kilbarron Castle, once home of the O’Clerys, historians of the Clan Connell, and counting among them the chief of Irish annalists, hangs solitary on its cliff, bemurmured by ceaseless waves, the cormorants perched on the dark ledges waiting for daylight. But neither Bundoran nor Kilbarron is at present in view.

We see before us the white surf where Erne loses itself in the great Atlantic water. The spark of the lighthouse on St. John’s Point seems to beckon us seaward, but we go no farther. The tide flows ; and, half-drifting, half-rowing back by Asaroe and Inis-Saimer to Ballyshannon Quay, we find the dash and roar of the ocean gradually supplanted by the steadier sound of the waterfall.

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We lie on a rocky headland overlooking a wide, lonely bay, whose two horns are dark blue mountain-ranges ; on the ledge below, and among the great stones shaggy with seaweed, rises and sinks the great Atlantic water, peaceful to-day, with a sighing murmur. The solitary floor of ocean is lighted with a tempered cloudy radiance of sunlight, changing with the decline of day, to ruddier glow on these ranges of cliff, and on the few sad remnants beside us of an ancient castle. One gray wall, some twelve feet high, tufted with coarse grass and fern (*Blechnum borcaie*), still resists the western gales which blow heavily on this coast ; and near it, partly in the trench on the landward side, lies a fallen mass of masonry held together by its mortar. Other fragments stand on the verge of the cliff, and dim foundations are traceable among the grass of the little promontory, nibbled by a few hardy sheep and swept by the seagull’s wing. Behind these ruins is a stretch of bleak, stony hills, where the poor thatched cabins of the peasantry lurk scarce distinguished, unless the peat-smoke draws your eye ; and in front, due west, is the ocean line, and America for next neighbour. The only human being visible is a poor woman at the tide-edge picking laver (here called ‘ sloak’) off the rocks uncovered by the ebb. The district altogether has a wild, unsheltered, and somehow an *ancient* look. Geologically it is ‘ primary’ (schistose and gneissose), broken with whin, bescattered with dark, heavy boulders of *trapp*. The fences are of loose, gray stones ; a venerable stooping hawthorn here and there almost the only tree. Flat stones lie on the cottage roofs to keep the thatch from being blown away bodily. Often you come to something that was a cottage, or cluster of cottages, now roofless walls, smokestained, unsightly. The people have a sad and grave demeanour ; if you address them , you are received with

simple and refined politeness, and an anxiety to please ; should you enter one of their poor cabins, for shelter or inquiry, you will find courteous and gentle manners, and a cheerfulness which is considered due to the visitor. If you question with tact, there is generally but one story from all : the increasing poverty of the country, the progress of depopulation, their hope of sooner or later following their brothers, sons, cousins, &c, to America, or if no hope, an earnest sighing wish that they too had this resource before them in an otherwise hopeless world. America is a kind of *heaven on the level* to them. As to politics or religion you will receive no answers but such as are entirely cautious and colourless.

The landscapes here, wide, wild and lonely, have a charm of their own. Look seawards over the great bay, between its mountain-horns. On your left hand are the blue limestone Dartry mountains, the dark cliffs of Bundoran, the tawny strands and sandhills of Finner. That line of breakers marks the bar of Ballyshannon, inside of which is the harbour, with the ruins of Asaroe Abbey near one of its creeks, the island of Inis-Saimer further up ; and further still, on a threshold between harbour and river, the ever-humming cataract of Red Hugh, otherwise the Salmon-Leap.

Here at Kilbarron we are just outside of Ballyshannon harbour. Northwards stretch more strands, green hills, Donegal harbour with the ruined monastery and castle ; then, westwards again, runs the long mountain-range from Barnas-mor to the great sea-cliff of Slieve-League, nearly 1,900 feet in height. Few and far between are the ships in this broad bay of Donegal ; few even the fishing boats. You may lie on this promontory for hours and see no sail or oar.

Kilbarron Castle, now so nearly demolished, was the residence of the Chief *Ollav* (hereditary historian) of the O'Donnells, Princes of Tir Connell. The office was filled by men of the family of O'Clery, from about a.d. 1400 till the final overthrow of the Keltic chieftain-ship. After this overthrow one of the O'Clerys became the principal compiler of that famous Chronicle of Ireland, upon which the name of ' Annals of the Four Masters ' has been accidentally and not very happily fastened, but really called *Annala Bioghachta Eireann*, ' Annals of the Kingdom of Erin.'

The chief business of an Ollav was history, but he was usually more or less of a poet. There were also Bards, special for poetry, and Shanachies, special for genealogy ; but often one man was something of each. The narratives and songs of these official literary men were the books and dramas of the native Irish. These were widely diffused. Few kernes, probably, or peasants, few horseboys or cowherds even, were ignorant of the exploits of Finn MacCuhil, of the miracles of St. Patrick, of the Danish wars, of a number of tales and poems of the bygone, or failed to taste the power and sweetness of native story.

The name ' Kilbarron ' belongs to the earliest Christian centuries of Ireland. It is the name first of an early church, secondly of the parish surrounding it — *Cill* [cella] *Barraine* otherwise written *Cill Bar Finn*. [8] The C is always hard—in fact, Irish C is English K. Bairre or Bar, called *Finn*, ' the Fair,' founded in the seventh century his little church near the River Lee in Munster, in or close to a lowlying ground called Corcagh, ' The Marsh,' where the city of Cork now stands, with its cathedral of Saint Finbarr. The saint (like Columba and others) travelled far on his pious business ; he is patron of Dornoch, and also of the island of Barra in the Hebrides, which is called after him. That he founded the little church here in Tir Connell is noway unlikely. About a mile inland from Kilbarron Castle, among the rocky fields, are the walls of Kilbarron church, a very small and ancient edifice, long roofless and filled with weeds and brambles, which may as easily as not be the original building.

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Seven centuries ago, or thereabouts, when the Second Henry ruled in England, certain of his adventurous Anglo-Norman nobles sailed with a small force from South Wales to Ireland, invited to the aid of Macmurrough, Prince of Leinster against Roderick O'Conor, King of Ireland. This was in May, 1169. [9] They held their ground, and were followed next year by a large body of knights and men-at-arms under Richard Earl of Pembroke, who inherited the surname of ' Strongbow ;' and the year after that by King Henry himself, with a fleet and army, who landed at Waterford, claiming the lordship of Ireland under *privilegium* (not *bullā*, as commonly said) of Pope Adrian the Fourth.

During four subsequent centuries of almost continual strife, the English held their 'Pale' in the eastern portion of the island, pushing, with constant risk and much vicissitude, their advanced posts into the south and west. Most of the north and north-west kept free, the while, of foreign occupation and rule.

Now the De Burgos, *alias* Burkes, after much fighting, held a tight grip in the south part of Conn-aught, Hy-Fiachra-Aidne (now the Catholic diocese of Kilmacduagh, in which stand the towns of Gort and Loughrea) a dreary expanse of gray limestone, gray stones everywhere, thin soil, a lonely little lake here and there lighting it up with melancholy gleams,—and from this district the old Keltic families were forced to flee away, lamenting their accustomed stony landscape, with its little churches and standing crosses of old native saints.

The district of Hy-Fiachra-Aidne took its designation from its occupying tribe, who claimed descent from Fiachra, son of Eochy Moyvaine, monarch of Ireland in the fourth century : about a.d. 950-1000 many families of this tribe assumed distinguishing surnames, each from some noted man in its own line of descent, and henceforth were known as O'Clerys, O'Heynes, O'Shaughnessys, MacGiolla Kellys, &c. The name of the O'Clery family was perhaps connected with *claircach*, 'clerus,' and may have implied an hereditary devotion to learning. Ousted by the De Burgos, one division of the O'Clerys went to the neighbourhood of Kilkenny, another to Brefny O'Reilly (Cavan). A third settled in Tir-Awley in Mayo, a wild windy country over-looked by the mountain-cone of Nephin, and lying between Lough Conn and the rocks and sands of the Atlantic. Years went on, and generations of these O'Clerys lived and died in Tir-Awley.

About the year 1380 (in the times of Chaucer and his pilgrims) one of this Irish family, Cormac MacDermot O'Clery by name, young (it would seem), but 'a wise and intelligent man, and a proficient in both civil and canon law,' went from Tir-Awley into Tir-Connell (land—*terra*—of Connell), ruled by the Chieftains O'Donnell, whose extreme westward boundary was the river Drowas. This district, the common property of the Kinel (or Clan) Connell, included most part of what is now Donegal county. The wild Atlantic waves rushed upon the western border of Tir-Connell ; on other sides it was barriered from the Lords of the Pale by territories owned also by native clans and ruled by their elected chiefs—Brefny (Leitrim and Cavan) ; Fermanagh; and Tir-Owen, ruled by The O'Neill, land of the Kinel-Owen, sometimes allies, oftener furious rivals and opponents of the men of Tir-Connell.

The inhabitants of all these parts were unmixed Gaelic, living under laws transmitted by their ancestors from time immemorial. As to English laws, the people were not only alien to these in habit and will, but were formally excluded by statute from any share of legal protection or benefit. Unmixed Catholics too, their Catholicism made them no better friends of the Catholic English settlers. There existed in Ireland two rival branches of the Church, the one in its clergy exclusively Irish, the other admitting no Irishmen. The native Irish Church had always been a sort of wild outlier, too disregarding of papal authority, and neglecting to pay Peter's Pence. Hence the papal documents handing over Ireland, for 'spiritual' reasons, to the English Crown, and the support from Rome usually given to the English bishops, abbots, and clergy in Ireland in preference to the Irish ones.

In a little vale by an estuary of green hills and yellow sand (now Ballyshannon harbour), near a rocky brook running into the tide-mingled water of the River Erne, stood in the time of O'Clery's journey from Tir-Awley, the Cistercian Abbey of Asaroe. A residence of The O'Donnell occupied the neighbouring harbour-island of Inis-Saimer, near the famous cataract of Asaroe. On the hill above rose the ancient earn of King Hugh the Red, whose drowning gave his name to the waterfall, *Eas-Aedha-Ruaidh*. At *Ath-Seanaigh* (Bally shannon) 'Ford of Seanagh,' above the cataract, was perhaps some rude fort or defence-work. Enclosures of earth, stone, wattles, palisading, or mixed construction, with huts and sheds within, topped several of the neighbouring eminences. Numerous cattle, if it was summer time, roamed far on the hills or in the woods bent eastward by the sea wind, watched by their herdsmen ; some of the clan perhaps cutting and carrying peat from the bogs, others drawing salmon or trout from the 'fishful river : ' tillage scanty visible, and none elsewhere so careful as that of the home-fields and kitchen-gardens of the monks of Asaroe.

Cormac O'Clery, who doubtless came not unrecommended, took up his abode in this new neighbourhood ; became, through his learning and character, a great favourite at the Abbey ; and married the only daughter of O'Sgingin, chief *ollav* or historian to The O'Donnell. O'Sgingin dwelt on the land assigned to him in his house on the seaside cliff of Kilbarron, The sacredness of office, however, did not hinder O'Conor of Sligo from demolishing the ollav's house,—probably in a foray by boat. [10] O'Sgingin's only son, *Gilla-Bhrighde*, or Gilbride (servant of Saint Bridget), was to have succeeded his father as ollav of the Clan Connell, but the youth died (1382) ; and O'Clery on his marriage promised that if heaven sent him a son, he should be trained up for that office, which, so far as possible, was hereditary, and was supported by a grant of land. A son was born, and was christened Gilbride (these hints of human feeling glimmer faintly to us from the dead and dark centuries), who in due time became Historian of the Clan. To him succeeded his son Gillareagh O'Clery, who died ' after a good life ' in 1421, and was succeeded by his son Dermot, surnamed ' of the Three Schools, ' because he kept a school, or perhaps class, for general literature, one for history, and another for poetry. On account of his learning and distinction, The O'Donnell who then ruled gave to Dermot and his family an increased portion of land. He was succeeded by his son, whose death is recorded in 1492, ' O'Clery (Teige Cam), Ollav to O'Donnell in literature, poetry, and history, a man who had kept a house of general hospitality for the mighty and the needy, died, victorious over the devil and the world. ' [11] The three sons of Teige Cam,—Tuathal, Dermot, and Gillareagh,—are all described as men of learning and wealth ; and by them (it would appear) the castle, now in ruins, was built on the rock of Kilbarron, some time in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Tuathal [pr. ' Tual ' ] died in 1512, ' after unction and penance, ' ' a man learned in history and poetry. ' On June 11, 1522, ' The O'Neill took the castle and town of Ballyshannon, and two of The O'Donnell's ollavs were slain, namely, Dermot, son of Teige Cam O'Clery, a learned historian and poet, a man who kept an open house of general hospitality for the great and for the poor ; and Hugh Mac Ward, son of Hugh. ' In March, 1527, Gillareagh, son of Teige Cam, ' a scientific adept in history, poetry, and literature, and a man of consideration, wealth, property, and great power, died in the habit of St. Francis. '

Tuathal left two sons, one of whom, the second Teige Cam, died without heirs, at a venerable age, in 1566—' Ollav to O'Donnell in history, a man learned in poetry and chronology, a prop, who kept a house of hospitality for the learned, the exiled, and the literary men of the neighbouring territories, . . . and was buried with great respect and honour in the monastery of St. Francis at Donegal. ' Tuathal's second son, William, was father of Donough, who was father of Conary and Teige (afterwards Friar Michael) O'Clery, two of the Annalists, and also of Bernardine.

Dermot (Tuathal's brother, he who was slain by the O'Neill in 1522) also left at least two sons : one, Cormac, died in 1542, ' a worthy friar-minor of the convent of Donegal : ' the eldest, Cucogry, left a son named Maccon, who became head of the O'Clery family on the death of his cousin, Teigne Cam the second, in 1566. Here let it be noted that the eldest living male of a family was commonly, but not *invariably* its head ; and this applies also to chieftainship and kingship. Maccon died in 1565, ' Ollav to O'Donnell in history, an erudite and ingenious man, professed in history and poetry, a fluent orator, . . . a pious and charitable man. ' His son and successor was Lewy, the last Ollav.

We have traced these O'Clerys of Kilbarron, as befitting a family of historians and genealogists. Let us look more particularly at one of them, a Teige O'Clery mentioned above, brother of Conary and Bernardine, who was born about 1575, and died in 1643. He was first called ' Teige of the Mountain, ' but when he became a Franciscan lay-brother he took the name of ' Michael. '

A little monastery of ' the Seraphic Order of St. Francis ' was founded by The O'Donnell (Hugh Roe), and his wife Finola, near to his new castle of Donegal, in 1474, ' for the prosperity of their own souls, and for a burial-place for themselves and their descendants. ' The learned family of the O'Clerys of Kilbarron (some twelve miles distant) furnished a share of monks, and now and again a prior, to this monastery, which was of the discipline of the ' Observantines, ' or ' Brothers of the Strict Observance ; ' and in 1636 we find Bernardine O'Clery at its head. At this latter date, and for a little while longer, though miserably reduced by war, plunder, and burning, the confraternity still held together ; finally suppressed in the course of the next troublous twenty years, or perhaps dissolving from total-failure of the means of subsistence, mere inanition,—a step beyond even the utmost strictness of St. Francis. Sir James Ware, in 1654, [12] describes it as ' heretofore famous for a well-stored

library.' Such perishing from inanition was, I imagine, the fate of many of the obscurer Irish monasteries. There was no formal 'suppression,' but,—native lands confiscated and all Catholic inhabitants impoverished, and the monastic buildings fallen to decay or tumbled in destruction,—the monks wandered about, looking for a poor casual sustenance, or, when they were able, fled to France, Flanders, or some other continental country. Such fraternities as preserved humbly any local habitation and name into the Cromwellian era, were then finished off.

These evil times for the monks of Asaroe, of Donegal, and their brethren elsewhere, were approaching, but not yet arrived, when Teige O'Clery was born at Kilbarron (castle or parish) about 1575. [13] The O'Donnell still ruled in Tirconnell, and hanged his own culprits, but English power trod on his kibes. In 1581, Queen Elizabeth's viceroy, Sir John Perrot, divided a part of Ulster into seven new counties, of which Donegal and Fermanagh were two ; but not for a good many years after were the queen's judge, sheriff, and coroner, safe in venturing upon this 'shireground.' 'Your sheriff is welcome,' said MacGuire of Fermanagh to the Deputy Fitzwilliam, 'but let me know his *eric* [the fine for his death, an impost of the old Irish code], so that if my people kill him I may levy it on the country.' This part of Ireland was still entirely Catholic. It would appear that the English Church Reformation took no effect in the northern parts of Ireland; Catholic bishops continued to hold the dioceses ; up to 1607, there was perhaps no Protestant service in Ulster, save in the English garrisons. *Religion* (misused word ! ) was now the favourite war-cry on the Irish side. The English were always 'the heretics,' sometimes 'the Pagan Beast.' There were plenty of Jesuits and Spanish priests in Ireland busy keeping up the spirit. The chieftains were in frequent communication with the Holy See, and the Court of Spain. Irish—Papal—Spanish—English—each party worked and plotted for ends of its own.

Of Teige O'Clery's early years we have no record. His locality was at that period the scene of some memorable transactions. Hugh Roe, or Red Hugh O'Donnell, in 1587 (being then about fifteen years old) was kidnapped from Lough Swilly in an English ship, imprisoned three years in Dublin Castle, escaped and was recaptured, escaped again in the winter of 1592, and lied northward to his father's castle of Ballyshannon. Though his feet were frost-bitten, the brave youth immediately hastened with a force to Donegal, and compelled an English garrison who were occupying the monastery there to retire into Connaught. After this he remained a long time under cure, losing both his great toes.

In that year his father resigned the chieftainship to him, and Hugh, about twenty years old, was made 'O'Donnell,' with due ceremonies, at the rock of Kilmacrenan. He soon distinguished himself as one of the principal leaders, of the northern Irish against the forces of Queen Elizabeth. In 1597 Sir Conyers Clifford, the English governor of Connaught, with about 4,000 men, assailed Red Hugh in his castle of Ballyshannon, but, after five days' attack, was forced to retreat by the ford above the cataract, with loss of many men drowned.

The soldiers of the Irish chieftains of this time were some of them armed with matchlocks, some with bows and arrows, some had battle-axes, most had swords. They wore close-fitting jerkins and hose, and conical caps ; some had steel-caps or morions, and some plate-armour. The best armed of them were equipped much like their opponents the English ; and they marched with drums and banners. But no doubt many of the men who assembled at 'a hosting' were ill-armed and dressed, and worse disciplined. The peculiar and most common weapon was the pike ; *skians*, or short knives (for close fighting,—sometimes for flinging) were in general use, and targets were numerous. The horseman usually carried a pike, with a sword and skian, and often a javelin, with a cord or thong to draw it back ; he was attended by one or more horseboys. Of artillery the Irish had little—commonly none but what they took from the enemy ; and the possession of even a single culverin or demi-cannon was often sufficient to give victory to the English side. The O'Donnell in this day would usually take the field on a powerful horse, wearing over his plate-armour a rich mantle (to be cast aside in close fighting), and a plumed hat ; his arms, a sword, javelin, skian, with perhaps a target.

In 1601 Red Hugh's cousin, Niall Garv (Bugged) O'Donnell, a bold fighter, with 500 English soldiers, by whose alliance he sought the chieftainship, occupied the monastery of Donegal. The monasteries, for strength of walls and convenience of lodging, were often used as military posts. Niall

(pr. Nee-al [14] ) was not only cousin to Hugh, but husband of Hugh's sister ; and he had so much claim to the chieftainship as belonged to his descent from an elder brother. At this time he was about thirty-two years of age, Hugh's senior by some three years. There is an interesting account of what followed from the Sacristan of the convent : ' In the year 1600 there were there, namely in the convent of Donegal, forty brethren in the family, who performed the divine services daily and nightly, with singing and great solemnities. I myself had care of the sacristy, in which I kept forty sacred vestments, with everything belonging thereto, and many were of gold and silver texture, some interwoven and wrought with gold ; the rest all silk. There were also sixteen cups of silver, and large, of which only two were not gilt, and two *ciboria* for the most Holy Sacrament. A furnishing respectable enough [especially for minor brethren ' of the strict observance' ] : nor was the convent without glassware. But war growing heavy, and the heretics prevailing in other parts, at last they grew so strong that, the Prince O'Donnell being occupied with other affairs, they came with an army to the town of Donegal, and in the year 1601, at the feast of St. Lawrence the Martyr, they placed a military garrison in the monastery. The brethren, forewarned, fled to the woods some miles off, and carried away in a ship to a safer place the valuables of the monastery. I myself was among the last who quitted the convent, and I took refuge in this ship. Now this is what followed : the convent, occupied by that military garrison, was immediately besieged by the prince, and the English were closely shut up. But a wonderful accident befel them ; at one and the same hour, fire, thought to be sent from heaven, seized the buildings of the convent, and consumed many of the soldiers, and the ship which was coming into harbour with their supplies struck upon a rock : was this accident ? [ ' casu ?' ] The English who survived remained within the trenches they had made, and treated on articles and conditions of surrender.

' News now came to the prince that the Spanish auxiliaries had arrived at Kinsale in Munster, under D. Juan de Aguila, and having occupied the town, were besieged by the heretics ; wherefore, without delay, and leaving the Donegal business unfinished, he hastened to Munster, intending to join O'Neill and others on the way, so that all together should come to the aid of the Spaniards. But neither did things go well at Kinsale, and the Spaniards were compelled to surrender ; and the affairs of the Catholics being thus ruined, Prince O'Donnell went to Spain [where he soon after died], and in the following year, 1602, all parts of his dominion [sui domini] came into the power of the heretics ; and among other things which perished there, that ecclesiastical furniture of the convent of Donegal became the prey of Oliver Lambert, governor of Connaught on the part of the heretics, who turned the chalices into profane drinking goblets, and directed the sacred vestments to be cut up and mutilated for various profane uses ; and thus both that convent and all its furnishing perished.' [15] Some few brethren, however, as we shall see, continued to live beside the ruins. There is no mention of books, so that the ' library' of which Ware heard tell was gone before this time, or else it meant the books afterwards gathered hither by the Annalists.

The English government supported, after all, not Niall Garv, but Roderick or Rory O'Donnell as chief. He made submission to James I., and was created Earl of Tyrconnell.

Hugh O'Neill had already promised to finally relinquish his claims of chieftainship, and remain Earl of Tyrone. This (whatever English readers may think) appeared to him a very poor exchange for his ancestral title, ' The O'Neill.' After living discontentedly for some years in straitened liberty, and under constant suspicion from the government, the two earls suddenly fled from Ireland. This happened in 1607. They sailed from Lough Swilly and, finally, journeyed on to Rome. There died Rory O'Donnell in the next year, and O'Neill some seven years after, in 1616. They were the two last Princes of Ireland. The bard, Hugh Roe MacWard, who had accompanied the O'Donnell, wrote their elegy. He visits, in Rome, the grave of Roderick, and finds Nuala, the sister of the dead chieftain, weeping there solitary : ' Woman of the bitter cry,' he sings, ' were it in green Tir-Connell, this grave thou weepst over, thou wouldst not lament alone !' The family of MacWard gave many hereditary poets to the O'Donnell chieftains : the name (Mac-an-Bhaird) means ' Son of the Bard.) In the shortened form of ' Ward' it is still common in the old neighbourhood, and some lands close to Kilbarron are known by the hybrid name of Ward-town (Gael. *Baile-mac-an-Bhàird*). There are also many O'Clerys still living about here, by no means forgetful of the ancient honour of the name. O'Donnells, too, there are, of various degrees of affinity to the house of the chieftain ; but Hugh Roe's branch is believed to be extinct. While I am writing these pages I see in the London papers, ' Death of

Marshal O'Donnell ;' and he is described as descended from ' *a family of Irish extraction,*' who emigrated to Spain. ' A family of Irish extraction !'—Debrett and Burke do better than this for their clients. The Irish chieftains were recognised as of princely rank at all the chief continental courts ; and some of their descendants are now among the grand personages of Prance, Spain, Italy, Austria, and Russia.

The last Ollav of Tir Connell was Lewis or Lewy O'Clery (already mentioned) who became champion for the north in the famous ' Contention of the Bards,' on the comparative historic glories of the north and south. When the so-called estates of O'Donnell and his supporters (according to Irish law they were *clan*-property) were confiscated by James I., Lewy O'Clery was suffered to remain in the O'Clery land, or a part of it, as tenant to the English crown.

His son Cucogry succeeded him as head of their family ; but there was now no Chieftain O'Donnell and no Clan-Connell. In an ' inquisition,' held at Lifford in May 1632, it was found that the said Cucogry was ' a meere Irishman, and not of English or British descent or surname,' and he was accordingly dispossessed, and the lands forfeited to the king. Thus the house on Kilbarron cliff became a ruin ; no fire henceforth within its walls, nor sound, save of wind and wave and sea-fowl's cry. Cucogry assisted his cousin in the Annals. Afterwards he removed to Mayo, and died in 166i.

Let us now return to Teige, third cousin of the above-mentioned Lewy (that is, their great-grandfathers were brothers). Teige O'Clery seems to have applied himself from his youth to the favourite pursuits of his family—Irish antiquarianism and history; and he continued in the same course after joining, as a lay-brother, the order of St. Francis, when he took the name of ' Michael.' He established himself at Louvain—in what year I have not discovered—under the following circumstances. The town of Louvain at that time possessed, and still possesses, a university, founded in 1426, by John, fourth Duke of Brabant. It was long of high celebrity ; and in the sixteenth century is said to have taught as many as 6,000 students together. It had then, as it has now, a distinguished school of Catholic theology. In the year 1610, a certain Irish Franciscan friar, native of Galway, Flaithri O'Mulconry by name, having made him conspicuous by a learned defence of the disputed doctrine of the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin (finally decided only the other day by the head of the church), was appointed Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. Times were very bad in Ireland for Catholics. The new archbishop promoted a scheme of establishing an ' Irish college' on the Continent, to serve both as an asylum and a place of education. Louvain was the locality chosen; and in 1616 the first stone of an Irish college, in connection with that university, was laid by the Spanish governor of the Netherlands, and his wife, sister to King Philip III. King Philip paid all the cost of the building. It was placed under the patronage of St. Anthony of Padua.

Hugh Mac Ward, or Ward, a native of Donegal, and a Franciscan friar, was professor of divinity in the new college, and afterwards became its guardian or rector. He was joined by two other Franciscans, also natives of Donegal—John Colgan, for a time lecturer on theology in the college ; and Michael O'Clery, lay-brother and a scribe. These three men set their hearts upon preserving the ancient records of Ireland, and chiefly the ecclesiastical, now in peril of destruction; and on the congenial, though troublesome errand, Brother Michael, a middle-aged man, came over to his native island about the year 1626. During several years he travelled hither and thither, consulting living Irish scholars and antiquaries, and examining a great many ancient manuscripts, from which he made, and transmitted to Louvain, extensive transcriptions. These notes and copies were chiefly, if not altogether, on matters ecclesiastical ; but in the course of his researches, O'Clery found a great variety of secular information, which he by no means threw aside. He compiled from ancient authority a catalogue of the kings of Ireland, finished in the Franciscan convent of Athlone, Nov. 4, 1630. Next year, in the convent of Lisgool, near Enniskillen, he compiled a ' Book of Conquests' (*Leabhar-Gabhala*). All his writings are in Irish, of which tongue in its ancient as well as its later forms he appears to have had a perfect knowledge. Finally, in January 1632, we find him at the Franciscan monastery of Donegal, of which his brother Bernardine was an inmate, beginning his laborious compilation of Irish Annals ; and at this work, assisted by several other scribes, he continued four years and a half.

Malmurry Mac-Ward wrote an address to the ruins—‘ solitary fortress, how desolate thou art ! O mansion of music, how perished is thy loveliness ! The dark earth has risen over the whiteness of thy polished stones ; thy stately corner-stones are flung outside the ramparts. For the rich wine-feasts thou hast but the cold rain from the sky — thy doorways are filled up. The music to- day through the shattered windows is of birds and winds, and the voices of the stormy elements. Thou wert once the happy fortress of the meetings of Clan-Connell—the tributes of Connaught were poured into thee, deserted though thou art this night. From thy lofty turrets we have seen, in spring time, the white-sailed ships coming in. From thy watch-towers we have seen the fleetness of the young horses, the bounding of the hounds, the delight of the chase, O pleasant fortress of unnumbered plains !

Annala Rioghachta Ereann— Annales Quatuor Magistrorum—a brambly, weedy wilderness of uncouth names and obscure actions. Therein lie entangled, nevertheless, and latent many curious and noticeable things—much matter for examination and study by whoever desires a glimpse of what Ireland was in one or another bygone era, and how it comes to be, to-day, an enigma to itself and the world.

[1] *Donegal Annals*, Anno Muudi 4518.

[2] *Redd* (from *rid*, *riddance*), a clearance; in this instance a place cleared.

[3] O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia*, part 3. chap. ii.

[4] *Donegal Annals* (wrongly called ‘ Annals of the Four Masters’ ) ; also Keating’s History of Ireland.

[5] *Annates Hiberniæ*, Timotheus Bowling. (Irish Archæol. Soc. 1840.)

[6] *Donegal Annals*.

[7] *Donegal Annals*.

[8] Thus on map of ‘ Scotia seu Hibernia ex Adamnano Patriisque Scriptis,’ in Reeves’s *Adamnan’s Columba*, 1857. Adamnan was born A.D. 624.

[9] Some say 1170.

[10] Annals of the Kingdom of Erin.

[11] This, and the subsequent extracts, not otherwise noted, are from the same Annals.

[12] Ware’s *Antiquities of Ireland*.

[13] O’Donovan, *Introduction to Annals*. O’Curry (*Lectures*) says about 1580.

[14] In ‘ O’Neill,’ the ‘ Neill’ is possessive case to Niall.

[15] From a MS. history of the Franciscans in St. Anthony’s College, Louvain, date 1617. MS. (now in Bibliothèque de Bourgogne, Brussels) quoted in Latin by Dr. O’Donovan. *Introduction to Annals*, xxix.

Varieties in prose (1893)

Author : Allingham, William, 1824-1889

Volume: 3

Subject : Great Britain — Description and travel ; Ireland — Description and travel

Publisher : London : Longmans, Green and co.

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : University of California Libraries

Collection : cdl ; americana

Notes : Book has narrow margins.

Source : Internet Archive

<http://www.archive.org/details/varietiesinprose03alli>

Edited and uploaded to [www.aughty.org](http://www.aughty.org)

October 24 2011