

The
Irish Chieftains ;
Or,
A Struggle For The Crown.

Charles Ffrench Blake-Forster.

1872

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

The Annals of Galway : with copies of original Charters and Deeds, Notes, &c.
A Topographical Description of the County of Clare, its Castles, Abbeys, and Round Towers.
General Forster's Rebellion, or the Rising of 1715.
The Lady Adeliza Dillon : a Story of the Penal Laws.
The Genealogies of the principal Families in the Counties of Galway and Clare.
A Collection of the Oldest and most Popular Legends of the Peasantry of Clare and Galway.

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1872.

TO
THE DESCENDANTS OF THOSE DISINTERESTED PATRIOTS
WHO FOUGHT
AT THE BOYNE, AUGHRIM, ATHLONE, GALWAY, LIMERICK,
AND
ON THE CONTINENT,
IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR RELIGION AND COUNTRY,
OF
THE VALOUR AND PATRIOTISM OF THEIR HEROIC ANCESTORS
IS INSCRIBED,
BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IT is now one hundred and eighty-three years since Ireland was devastated by the unfortunate war, the principal actors in which were the characters introduced in the following pages. The man dies, but his memory lives : and though they have so long ago passed away, oblivion has not covered the recollections of their time; and story, song, and tradition record the memorable events of that melancholy period in the history of our country. No man who feels proud of his native land could read the soul-stirring lines of Caledonia's gifted bard without being struck with the patriotic feelings they express : —

“ Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
 This is my own, my native land !
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned.
 From wandering on a foreign strand !
If such there breathe, go mark him well ;
For him no minstrel raptures swell ;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim ;
Despite those titles, power and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown.
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung,”

At least this was the opinion I entertained on my return from England, where I had been educated ; and therefore one of the first places I visited in my native county was that portion of it which anciently comprised the historic territory of Cineal Aodh. For me its various hallowed and long deserted ruins, like the rest of that locality, possessed pleasing, though some-what melancholy associations. Yes —

“ Land of my sires ! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand !
Still, as I view each well-known scene,
Think what is now, and what hath been.
Seems, as to me, of all bereft.
Sole friends thy woods and streams were left ;
And thus I love them better still.
Even in extremity of ill.”

Therefore I resolved to ascertain all I possibly could, concerning the past history of those now silent and desolate memorials of the past. While I gazed on the ruins of Fidane Castle in particular, and pondered on the many festive scenes which had been here enacted, they recalled to my mind those beautiful and expressive lines, so suitable to the occasion :—

“ Time-hallowed pile ! no more, no more
Thou hearest the hostile cannon roar ;
No more bold chiefs thy drawbridge pace,
To battle, tournament or chase ;
No more the valiant man thy towers,
No more the lovely grace thy bowers,

Nor bright eyes smile o'er the guitar,
Nor the trump stirs bold hearts to war.
The falling meteor o'er thee shoots,
The dull owl in thy chamber hoots ;
Now doth the creeping ivy twine,
Where once bloomed rose and eglantine ;
And there, where once in rich array
Met lords and knights, and ladies gay.
The bat is clinging to those walls,
And the fox nestles in those halls."

Accordingly I read, searched, and collected : not, however, without being apprehensive of the great responsibility of such an undertaking ; and being aware of the magnitude of the subject, I was for a long time reluctant to publish the result of my researches, principally on account of the prominent position which members of my own family occupied in this locality during the past days of tyranny and confiscation. But, on consideration, I concluded that many of the facts narrated in the following pages would be for ever lost to posterity, should any of the private and authentic MSS., which I had occasion to consult, and which I was kindly permitted to inspect, be destroyed. This was a matter which of course I naturally wished to prevent, taking as I did such a lively interest in the pathetic story of the misfortunes of the Chiefs of Cineal Aodh, whose extensive possessions were confiscated in consequence of their adherence to the great principle of religious liberty—a principle which, for venturing to maintain, England, which prides herself on being the most civilized of nations, drove one of her most, if not *the* most courageous and frugal of her sovereigns into exile : and from this circumstance sprung the various incidents which transpired within the period embraced in the story of ' THE IRISH CHIEFTAINS ; OR, A STRUGGLE FOR THE CROWN' — 1689 to 1770. It is therefore one hundred and two years since an alien and arbitrary Government unscrupulously accomplished the total ruin and subsequent extinction of one of the noblest aboriginal families of Ireland. These considerations, together with the solicitation of some friends who examined the MS., have induced me to lay before the public the result of my inquiries, having first abridged (as much as was consistent with the work) all that related to the Blake-Forster sept. Although I was, moreover, convinced that it was no easy matter to compile a work which treats of so many different subjects, I was, however, encouraged to persevere in the under-taking by the example of Josephus, the historian of the Fall of Jerusalem, who relates how he ' grew weary' and ' went on slowly,' and how many persons ' are induced to draw historical facts out of darkness into light, and to produce them for the benefit of the public, on account of the great importance of the facts themselves with what they have been concerned.' In conclusion, I have to thank the many friends and strangers who so kindly offered to subscribe liberally towards the publication of this work. However, I felt myself bound to refuse subscriptions, as I wrote entirely at my own suggestion, and therefore wished, when the work would be completed, to give the public an opportunity of using its own discretion with regard to my self-imposed labour. To all those friends of literature who take an interest in the history of their country, I have also to return my most sincere thanks for the valuable assistance they gave me while compiling the work. I trust that no Irishman, whatever be his creed or politics, will imagine that I wrote of this unfortunate period in the chequered history of our country, for party purposes, as no one could be more anxious than I am to have all Irishmen united, and see them live in harmony with each other, as the sons of our common Fatherland should, and following the example of two of our illustrious countrymen, the gallant Earl of Lucan, and the learned Sir Toby Butler, who, though differing widely in their political opinions from the Duke de Schonberg and Baron de Ginckell, maintained the most friendly relations towards them. Indeed Sarsfield, though not recognising the authority of William III., whom he viewed as a usurper, addressed Baron de Ginckell as the Earl of Athlone, while the Dutch nobleman, who viewed James II. as an arbitrary tyrant, justly de-throned by his indignant subjects, addressed the Irish patriot as the Earl of Lucan.

FORSTER-STREET HOUSE, GALWAY,
12th of July, 1872.

THE CHIEF OF CINEAL AODH.

THE Castle of Fidane is situated on the confines of the counties of Galway and Clare, and was formerly a fortification of great strength, and one of the most secure strongholds of the ancient O'Shaughnessy sept. It was a frontier castle, and well calculated to guard the western portion of their territory against any invasion of their warlike neighbours, the fiery Dalcasians. History does not record exactly the date of its erection, but its style of architecture shows that in all probability it was built during the fourteenth century. The architect, most undoubtedly, must have had the eye and head of an able engineer, having chosen a site difficult of access, and admirably fortified against an enemy at a time when the bow, the sword, and the spear were the principal weapons used in warfare. The castle stood between two lakes ; the one to the north was the smaller. The lake to the south was a picturesque sheet of water. Large trees bound the margin on the castle side, and bulrushes growing in great profusion rose high above the surface, lending to the scene an air of romantic beauty not easily described. These lakes were supplied by a river which derived its source in the lofty mountains known as Slieve Boughta (1), and, descending, passed through the ornamental waters of Loughcutra. From this lake a river took its course to the west, and formed a confluence with other streams which flowed from the lake of Inchiquin, in the county of Clare.

It was a beautiful sight to behold, of a fine summer's evening, thousands of the red trout peculiar to the latter lake sporting in the calm waters of Fidane, and forming circles on its placid bosom.

At the commencement of winter, a spectator, on the top of this ancient castle, by night, could enjoy a most picturesque view of several of the clansmen of O'Shaughnessy pursuing, with lighted torches and fishing spears, the speckled trout along the flooded lands, and the rivers and neighbouring streams. The south lake was deep, and bore the curious name of Lough-an-airgiod, from a tradition that a Chief of the O'Shaughnessys had, during a period of civil war, thrown his money and plate into it. The castle parks contained about fifteen acres of land between the two lakes, and were guarded by fortifications extending from one lake to the other. Those to the west consisted of a broad and deep canal, extending from Lough Dubh, and meeting a strong wall full of port-holes, in which was a gateway strongly fortified. From this gate the wall was continued to Lough-an-airgiod. On the east side a canal extended from Lough Dubh, also meeting the waters of Lough-an-airgiod, and thus completing the outer fortifications of the Castle of Fidane. Midway between the two lakes, on this fosse, stood the principal entrance, which was erected in the form of a small castle. It was called, in Irish, Caislain-beg, or the little castle, and was three stories in height. The gateway was vaulted, and protected by a strong drawbridge, which, when not in use, was drawn up by chains into a groove in the castle wall, and formed an outer defence to the strong gate of iron. Another gate, strongly plated with the same material, stood opposite to this, forming the grand approach to this great castle. To the right of the entrance, on the drawbridge side, was a low, vaulted, dungeon-like room, where the warder in charge of the gate had his lodging. The immense iron bar that secured the gate passed through a groove of cut stone into this apartment, and could be easily pushed forward or drawn back at the pleasure of the warder. The stairs leading to the upper guard-room were very narrow, and furnished with a thickly-plated iron door. The first guard-room extended along the whole length of the building, and its walls were full of port-holes towards every direction, in order to afford an opportunity of annoying the foe from whatever quarter they approached. The third story was not vaulted, but a battle-

ment surmounted its upper walls. The roof was thatched, in accordance with the peculiar style of Irish castles for a long time previously. The guards of this castle were chosen from amongst those of the retainers who were the bravest, and most distinguished for their skill in arms and valour as soldiers. The way from the barbican to the castle lay through an avenue studded with venerable old trees, of the oak and ash species, and the ground on which the castle stood was slightly elevated. This massive pile was surrounded by a wall, surmounted by strong battlements, which formed an oblong, except on the western side, where a triangular projection of the wall was placed, in order to produce an additional mode of defence, should the enemy approach the fortress from that direction. The battlements of this part of the castle were well supplied with port-holes capable of receiving either arrows or the falconet wall-guns, so much in use in the middle ages. On this also was a parapet with port-holes, which made it stronger than any other portion of the castle walls, and in it was placed the great gateway to the castle court-yard. It was two stories in height. Over this gate there was a projection, with an aperture through which hot water, molten lead, or any other destructive missile could be cast down on an enemy daring enough to approach this strong castle. Like in the outer barbican there was a strong iron bar across the gate when closed, and which, when access was required, could be drawn back into the warder's vaulted apartment. Outside the inner entrance was a flight of stone steps leading to the upper apartment, which had its port-holes and a number of wall-guns and other arms were always kept here ready for use, and, by ascending a few stone stairs, the garrison could perambulate the entire of the battlements. The eastern side of the castle had at its angles projecting turrets, with port-holes so placed that the enemy would suffer considerably should he attempt to assail the corner-stones of the wall. The south, which was very near the lake on that side, was the worst protected part of the castle, having only the cross fire of the southern turret, some port-holes, and the advantage of the retainers' fire from the parapets to defend it. A large postern door of iron was placed in the wall, in order to give the inhabitants of the castle ready access to the waters of the lake whenever they required it. Originally there were no buildings in the court-yard of the castle but the Great Keep. At the time we are writing of, however, many other buildings were erected to supply the want of accommodation. During war time, when several families were obliged to seek refuge here and in other strong-holds, in order to save their lives and their valuables, an ample kitchen was added to the south side of the Keep, to suit the developed requirements of the household ; smaller buildings to the west, which were used, respectively, as guard-houses, store-rooms, and sleeping apartments ; and under its northern wall a large banqueting hall was erected. A view of the Keep presented to the beholder a well-built castle, tall and stately, surmounted by a high, peaked roof, having a lofty but narrow watch-turret, which projected from the eastern angle, from which, upon state occasions, the standard of the O'Shaughnessy sept was displayed. The door of the Keep was of iron, and had port-holes overhead ingeniously contrived in a sort of double wall, with the usual facilities for giving the assailants a warm reception whenever they appeared. The iron bar, called by the Irish *Maide Emun*, was used here, as described of the outer gates, and the warder's apartment was small and vaulted. To the front was a large vaulted hall, with a capacious fireplace, and to the left of the door the narrow, winding stone stairs which led to the apartments and galleries of the castle, some of which were small at one side of the building, while at the other two were of rather a large size, and used as the principal rooms by the family while they resided here. Those apartments had also large fireplaces, with heavy chimney-pieces of black marble. All round, the walls were hung with beautifully-worked tapestry, representing various scenes in foreign lands and at home, together with paintings and pictures, some of warriors of the Cineal Aodh, looking grimly down from the castle walls, and others master-pieces from the early Flemish, Italian, and French schools ; while from other parts were suspended antique warlike weapons—the sword, the shield, and the helmet of warriors who for ages were passed away.

Although the rooms were pleasant, still the Chief preferred to dine and pass away his time in the large banqueting hall, which was at some distance from the north entrance to the castle,

and in front of which was a beautifully-designed garden. Here himself and his family whiled away the time pleasantly, and at night retired to the Keep ; while double locked was each door of iron, and the guard kept vigilant watch throughout the night.

Since the return of Sir Dermot O'Shaughnessy, the present Chiefs father, from France, on the Restoration of King Charles II., in 1660, the country being in a state of quietude, this castle was uninhabited, the more comfortable mansion of Gortinsiguara being chiefly used as a summer residence ; but when the alarms of war again disturbed the peace of the country, Fidane was judged to be the most suitable place to collect together men and arms for the approaching struggle for the crown of Ireland. The report of the expected arrival of the King from France naturally caused great excitement over the island, and while the bold rejoiced at the prospect of measuring swords with the enemy, the aged feared a recurrence of the dreadful scenes which they had witnessed in their youth. Those who possessed goods were afraid of plunder, and the husbandman feared to sow lest he should not reap.

Early in the month of March, 1689, while the retainers of O'Shaughnessy were sitting round the watch-fire in the guard-room of the warder's castle at Fidane, Emun Laider said to his companions —

“ Listen ! I think I hear the sound of horses' hoofs clattering down the road through the rocks.”

“ Your ears never deceive you,” said Shane Oge Killerna. “ But, hark ! the sentinel calls us to our posts.”

“ Taggert,” said Emun Laider, “ you, as our commander, had better question the horseman on his arrival—not that there is any danger that he could take the castle by storm, but merely to show him how much we have improved of late on the points of war and parley.”

Taggert was of that class who, like the Mac Sweeneys and Mac Sheeheys, made it his profession to engage in the service of Irish chieftains, for the purpose of training their retainers in military tactics. His family were for a long time in the service of the Chiefs of Cineal Aodh, and, in consequence of their faithfulness and skill, were rewarded with a grant of land, as were also the descendants of a gentleman named Clayton, who likewise served under O'Shaughnessy, and had at this time a residence adjacent to the Castle of Gortinsiguara. The tribes of Taggert and Clayton had increased since their settlement in Cineal Aodh, so that now their fighting men amounted to more than seventy, and were in the full possession of manly strength and courage, and well versed in all the military manoeuvres of the time. Taggert was about forty years of age, but still he could easily bound over every wall and ditch that came before him, and with his long-barrelled Spanish gun in his hand he seldom failed to bring down any object that he fired at. In his habits, though kind and affectionate to his family and friends, he was, nevertheless, a strict disciplinarian, and insisted on all occasions that the soldiers under his command should perform even the most trivial movements of their drill with regularity and exactness. He now seized the opportunity of putting his men through the military evolutions of the day, having more facility for doing so than before the entire body were concentrated.

On reaching the battlements, Taggert ordered Emun Laider to tell some of the men to be prepared to raise the portcullis and let down the drawbridge, while himself ascended to the parapet. From thence he observed that the horseman had checked his speed ; but, notwithstanding this, was still stoutly approaching. When he arrived at the gateway, taking in his hand a small bugle which was suspended at his side, he blew loudly the first few notes of an old Irish air, called “ Tha me ma culla,” or “ I am asleep.” Taggert then called aloud —

“ Who comes there ?” To which the horseman replied —“ I am an express from Athlone, with despatches, and am one of Colonel Clifford's dragoons, of Captain Forster of Rathorpe's troop” .

“ Cead mille failthe !” said Taggert. “ If I mistake not, you are Nicholas Power, who joined that regiment about two years ago ; but you have grown so much that I did not recognise you at first. Lig síos !” he continued, and in a moment the chains were unloosed that held up the drawbridge, which fell with a loud report. The portcullis was then raised, and the massive iron doors flew back, revolving on their tremendous hinges, with a dull and heavy sound against the inner walls of the vaulted apartment, and Power, dismounting from his horse, entered the archway. Two large torches of bog-dale were now lighted, which, emitting a bright glare, illuminated all around, and revealed the guard drawn up in order, who were furnished with long-barrelled muskets, and having in their belts daggers of highly-polished steel, which were made to fit their guns when required. Their ammunition was contained in bandoleers suspended from the shoulder, and their heads were covered by the Barred, a conical cap worn by the Irish. A trousers and tight-fitting jacket, with a large, loose frieze cloak, completed their dress. Taggert now put them through several military manoeuvres, until he was fully satisfied Power had formed a high opinion of his skill as a disciplinarian. The young dragoon, having assured him that his men were as well disciplined as the regular troops in Athlone—which, of course, reflected great credit on their commander—he desired them to leave by their arms and greet their friend. This they did not fail to do in the warmest manner, and Shane Oge produced a large bottle of usquebaugh, or poteen, which he requested him to partake of. Power, however, declined, saying—

“ I must first take care of my good charger.”

“ Give yourself no trouble about your horse,” said Conor Buighe ; “ I will bring him to the stables, and take good care to provide the best provender the place affords for him.”

“ In that case, Conor,” said Power, “ I will resign my horse to your care, and proceed with you, Taggert, to the castle, in order to deliver my dispatch to O’Shaughnessy, your Chief.”

He then wished the guard good-night, and, accompanied by the warder, proceeded to the Keep. When they arrived at the door. Power sent one of the retainers to acquaint the Chief of Cineal Aodh of his arrival. The result of this message was that he was immediately admitted. On entering the room he beheld O’Shaughnessy, sitting at a round table near the fireplace. He was middle-aged, of fair complexion, and his long brown hair fell loosely over his shoulders. He wore a moustache, and his beard was slightly trimmed ; while his look, though calm, betokened a great deal of anxiety. He wore a green coat, with a standing collar and large silver buttons. His waistcoat was long, and furnished with ample pockets. His small clothes were of buckskin, and his large French boots were ornamented with gold spurs. The ruffles of his shirt sleeves covered his wrists, and on his fingers were several rings inlaid with precious stones. His broadsword, which he had previously taken off, was placed alongside the chimney-piece ; whilst his holster pistols, adorned with silver mounting and the family arms, were suspended from the wall, beneath the portrait of Rory More Dearg O’Shaughnessy, and his three-cornered cocked hat lay on a chair, near the door. On the table were placed some large account-books and other papers, which he threw aside when the courier entered. On the opposite side of the table sat Dermot Oge Cloran, Esquire, his secretary and confidential friend, with a pen in his hand, and apparently busily engaged over some accounts. Cloran’s family were for a long time previously in the confidence of the Chiefs of Cineal Aodh, and anciently held considerable property in their extensive territory.

Power, after saluting the Chieftain, said—

“ Sir, I received at Athlone a letter for you from my officer, Captain Forster.”

So saying, he unbuckled his sabertache, and took from it the epistle, which he presented to O’Shaughnessy, who, having read it, laid it on the table, and, turning to Dermot Oge, said—

“ Cloran, please leave by your papers until we hear what news the courier brings from Athlone. I hope my young friend Captain Forster,” he continued, addressing the dragoon, “ is well?”

“ In good health, sir, thanks to Providence, and there is no officer in the garrison more respected. Kind and affable to his soldiers, he still up-holds the dignity becoming his noble

descent. His purse is always at the command of his troop when they require it, and whenever letters arrive for any of us he personally delivers them. He is most attentive to our drill, and very often instructs us in the sword exercise, which he acquired while at college in France. He is a great favourite with the veteran Colonel Grace, Colonel Sheldon, and other distinguished officers. The Captain has obtained leave to come to Clooneene, for the purpose of recruiting men for the army from amongst his father's and grandfather's tenantry, and I am sure he will be most successful."

"How can you know that?" said O'Shanghnessy.

"I suppose you do not recollect me, sir. My name is Nicholas Power, and I was born on the Clooneene estate."

"What!" said O'Shanghnessy, "son of Power of Park-na-attinagh?"

"Yes, sir; I am his son, and you may recollect he fought against the Cromwellians, under my Chief, Frincheas More na Fion".

"Yes, I know him well," said O'Shanghnessy—"trusty, honourable, and venerable old soldier; and, inasmuch as I esteem him, I insist on your remaining here to-night, where you are welcome to the best entertainment my castle affords."

"I could not think of doing myself the injustice of not accepting your invitation," said the dragoon, "though, I must confess, I was anxious to see my father to-night."

"Dermot Oge," said O'Shaughnessy, "open the closet door, and take out some bottles of the claret which my father Sir Dermot, received from Bordeaux, in 1666, and which the captain of the fast-sailing brig 'The Outlaw,' landed at Duras, not being over-particular about putting into Galway to pay the king's duty. Now, Dermot Oge, three cups if you please," he continued, after Cloran had brought the wine from the closet.

Dermot Oge, in obedience, opened a small oak press in a recess near the fireplace, from which he took three silver goblets, with the armorial bearings of the O'Shaughnessy sept emblazoned on them. On a shield *argent* a castle, triple-towered, *azure*; crest, an arm embowed, holding a spear; supporters, two lions *or*; with the motto *Fortis et stabilis*; and, placing them on the table, filled them to the brim with the rich, red wine of France.

"Come," said O'Shaughnessy, taking one of the goblets in his hand, "let us drink the health of King James the Second. God restore to its hereditary rights the House of Stuart!"

Power drew his sword from its scabbard, and, flourishing it over his head, with his whole heart responded to the toast. Then, after laying his goblet on the table, and sheathing his blade, he bowed, and retired to his quarters in the outer buildings of the castle.

When alone with O'Shaughnessy, Dermot Oge said, "I am exceedingly glad to hear that young Captain Forster is well, for I knew him from his childhood, and no better officer exists. I assure you, O'Shaughnessy, that, next to yours, I esteem the Clooneene family, and will, in my last hours, leave to you and them the disposal of all my worldly goods and chattels".

"I am sure you have a high opinion of that sept," said O'Shaughnessy, "and my father, Sir Dermot, had the same. After my marriage he made Captain Francis Forster of Clooneene one of the trustees to the deed confirming my marriage settlement."

"Oh, yes," said Dermot Oge, "I remember the deed very well; it is dated 10th of September, 1668, and is here among the papers. I brought it for your perusal."

Dermot Oge then drew forth, from under some of the papers, a large volume of parchment tied with red tape, and commenced to read—"This Indenture, made between Sir Dermot O'Shaughnessy, William O'Shaughnessy, and Captain Francis Forster, of the first part, and Conor Lord Viscount Clare, the Honourable Colonel Daniel O'Brien his son, Mark Lynch, and Donough O'Brien, of the second part"

"You need not read further, Dermot," said O'Shaughnessy, who feared Dermot Oge would not cease until he had read over all the long recitations of remainderships and covenants therein, commenting on the several clauses and provisoes as he went over each parchment.

“ What I wished to look at in the deed were the clauses as to the remaindership of the property, in case of failure of heirs male in my family.”

“ In that case,” said Dermot Oge, “ the reversion and remainder of all and of each and every one of the aforesaid thirty-five quarters of Gortinsiguara.”

“ You may skip over long recitals,” said O’Shaughnessy, “ as the hour is rather late. I know you and your ancestors always took care that the deeds required by my family should be most correctly drawn up, and minute in their limitations, provisoes, and so forth.”

“ Indeed, you are quite correct, O’Shaughnessy ; myself and my ancestors always took particular pains with every document connected with your family, and used our best endeavours to lead them into a knowledge of the nature of their deeds and agreements with other parties.”

“ Fill your goblet, Dermot Oge, and let us finish this magnum ere we read over the deed,” said O’Shaughnessy.

Dermot, who was rather thirsty, drank the contents of the goblet at a draught, and then said — “ Sir, I have studied this settlement and its clauses well, and my poor father’s opinion thereon. The words are — ‘ The remainder to all that and those the twelve quarters of the castle and island of Fidane’”

Here O’Shaughnessy, who did not relish the perusal of so voluminous a manuscript, interrupted him by saying —

“ Come, Dermot, fill your goblet ; the wine is *de premiere classe*, and we can look over the deed at some other time.”

“ To sum all up,” Dermot Oge continued, “ in case you or your sons, or their descendants, should fail in male issue, the reversion goes to your brother, Charles O’Shaughnessy, of Ardemilevan Castle, or his descendants ; and my opinion is that this deed will hold good, both in law and equity, as long as justice rules the land ; but we can see Captain Forster at Clooneene on to-morrow, and get his opinion on the subject,” at the same time filling up once more O’Shaughnessy’s and his own goblet.

“ You are right, Dermot,” responded the Chieftain, “ for he, as trustee, has a copy of the deed ; but, at all events, he ought to be a solid opinion on such matters ; for, as you are aware, his grandfather, Sir Thomas Forster, was a celebrated judge, and also his uncle, Sir Robert, who settled at Egham, in Surrey.”

“ Yes,” said Dermot Oge, “ I am fully cognizant of that already ; but, as you are not inclined to hear the deed read at present, may I ask what is the nature of the despatch you have received ?”

The Chieftain handed him the letter, saying, “ This will afford you an opportunity of satisfying yourself.”

Dermot Oge then trimmed the lamp, and, taking the proffered packet, read aloud the address —

“ To Roger O’Shaughnessy, Esquire, of Gortinsiguara, These,” and, taking off the cover, continued as follows : —

“ By His Excellency Richard Earl of Tyrecnnell, Lord Lieutenant General, and General Governor of Ireland.

“ Sir, — His Excellency regrets much your ill health, but hopes daily to hear you are better. Indeed, he knows well your zeal in the King’s cause, which is now your country’s cause also. His Majesty is daily expected at Cork, and, of course, will call a Parliament to meet in May next. I need not urge you to give every assistance in providing recruits for the army, as you

are well aware that the ranks of the several regiments should be filled at once, owing to disturbances arising in the North. Captain Forster will take charge of recruits from your estates. His father, the present High Sheriff of the county of Galway, stands high in the confidence of the Government, and he can now be of great service to the King. You are likely soon to be restored to the former honours of the O'Shaughnessy family, and his Excellency hopes soon to see you, and thereby renew former acquaintance.

“ By His Excellency's command,
“ Richard Nagle.

“ Given at Dublin Castle, this the 28th day of February, 1689.”

“ I care but little,” said O'Shaughnessy, “ either for his promises or rewards. Nothing makes me act but a sense of my duty to my religion and my country. Restore me to the honours of the family, indeed! Why! my sept held their position till the time of Henry VIII.”

“ Yes,” said Dermot Oge, “ in Anno Domini 1543, King Henry of England granted to Sir Dermot O'Shaughnessy, Chief of his Name and Nation, and to his heirs male *in capite*, by service of a knight's fee, the lands of Gortinsiguara, with their several manors, namely.”

“ Dermot,” interrupted O'Shaughnessy, “ you need not repeat them at present. I was mentioning the fact that my sept maintained their rights against all, and even the Burkes of Clanrickard could not root us out of our territory ; and if my ancestor, Dermot O'Shaughnessy, Chief of his Name, and of Cineal Aodh, did then reluctantly submit to the power of England, it was because all the odds were against him. The Chief of the O'Briens accepted the title of Earl of Thomond, and laid aside the crown of his father. Burke of Clanrickard also submitted, throwing the name of Mac William Eighter aside on being created Baron of Dunkellin and Earl of Clanrickard. As to the title of knighthood which my family held under the patent granted by King Henry, you know, Dermot, that the patent of the 20th December, 1676, to me did not confirm it.”

“ I know that,” said Dermot Oge, “ inasmuch as your patent commenced as if a *de novo* grant, you paying certain quit or crown rents, instead of knight's service in the camp. Therefore, unless the honour of knighthood is conferred on you, you are not entitled to bear it. Nevertheless, wherever you are known you are esteemed and respected as the descendant of the Chiefs of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne, and the ancient monarchs of our country.”

“ I feel I am, Dermot Oge,” said O'Shaughnessy ; “ but, as supper hour has arrived, we will defer discussing the subject until to-morrow.”

“ As you please,” said Dermot Oge, who commenced to arrange the papers on the table ; and, having carefully tied each packet with divers coloured tape, conveyed them to the Muniment Chamber, where he placed them on their respective shelves, and, after locking the door, returned to the room.

Here he found Lady Helena O'Shaughnessy seated at the foot of the supper table, which was well supplied with beef, mutton, and the choicest wines ; and even tea, which was then considered such a great luxury, had found its way to the Castle of Fidane.

Lady Helena O'Shaughnessy, who was in the full bloom and freshness of womanhood, possessed many admirable qualities, and those enviable charms of personal beauty for which her noble family were long remarkable. Her ladyship was dressed in the gay costume of the Court of the late King Charles, and on her fingers, which were white and tapering, she wore many valuable rings. From a green ribbon which encircled her neck was suspended a miniature of her noble father, the late Lord Clare, while her auburn hair was divested of all artificial ornaments. Lady Helena O'Shaughnessy possessed great wit, which contributed materially to increase the natural vivacity of her disposition ; while, at the same time, her conversation was elegant and engaging. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a lady whose demeanour and accomplishments were superior to hers.

Her ladyship received Dermot Oge with great cordiality, and inquired most anxiously after the health of his family.

“Margaret Lynch,” said Dermot Oge, who was accustomed to call his wife by her maiden name, “is well, and so are all the little ones. My eldest daughter, Mrs. Conor O’Hogan, of Kilkeedy, also enjoys good health ; and I know your ladyship will be glad to hear that Conor is a kind husband, and in independent circumstances.”

“The O’Hogans,” remarked O’Shaughnessy, who up to this was actively engaged in carving a large joint of beef, “suffered terribly in former times.”

“Yes,” replied Dermot Oge ; “but a few of them have received patents for small portions of their hereditary properties in the barony of Inchiquin — the O’Hogans of Kells and Cross amongst the number.”

“I am aware of that already, my friend,” said O’Shaughnessy, “but why waste time in talking of the past, while the best part of our supper is getting cold ?”

“I was waiting, sir, for the young lady to join us,” said Dermot Oge. The Chief was about replying, when he was prevented by the entrance of his daughter.

Helena O’Shaughnessy was a young, blushing girl, and in manner and appearance resembled her mother. Her hair, however, was of a different colour, being a rich brown, and on the whole she bore a greater resemblance to the O’Shaughnessys than to her maternal ancestors, the Viscounts Clare. She now smilingly advanced, and cordially greeted Dermot Oge, with whom she was a great favourite.

“I am daily expecting the return of my son,” said the Chieftain.

“He was very uneasy until we gave him permission to visit his uncle. Lord Clare, who is at present busily engaged drilling his regiment of dragoons at Carrigahoult Castle.”

“I saw,” said Dermot Oge, “the Yellow Dragoons at Clare Castle last year, and certainly they are a very fine body of men, well officered by loyal gentlemen of bravery and discrimination ; and your son William must be proud to see his uncle, the Right Honourable Daniel Lord Viscount Clare, the colonel of such a splendid regiment. The sight, I have no doubt, will kindle martial ardour in his veins.”

“I do not think he requires to be excited in that way,” said O’Shaughnessy, “as he appears to be a youth of spirit and resolution, bold and daring. Some time ago I missed him from the castle, and, on going to the court-yard, to my astonishment beheld him throwing his ball high into the air while standing on the top of the western chimney.”

Here Lady Helena, whose maternal affection overcame her, exclaimed —

“Oh, the rash boy ! I fear nothing can tame his wild, impetuous spirit. What shall become of me should anything unfortunate happen to him.”

“He is a very good hurler, considering his youth,” said Dermot Oge, “and well skilled in spearing the speckled trout, which amusement he often pursues at Lough-a-Torig ; nor is he deficient in the knowledge of the classics, as far as I am capable of judging.”

“Yes,” said O’Shaughnessy. “I had him at school in Galway, where Latin and Greek are well taught ; and he is instructed in French by Father Malony, who is a perfect master of that language, from his long residence on the Continent. He is also an excellent man, and was much beloved by my father.”

Glynn, the major-domo, now entered the room, and, bowing low to his Chief, said, “Master Theobald Butler, of Ballygegan, wishes to see you, sir.”

“Admit him at once,” said O’Shaughnessy, without, however, noticing the deep blush which overspread the countenance of his daughter at the mention of this young gentleman’s name, for Theobald had latterly paid her much attention, and she felt that he loved her. Lady Helena, who observed, with the discerning eye of a mother, the attention Theobald had been latterly paying her daughter, smiled meaningly at her ; for, as she countenanced his suit, she did not care about concealing her knowledge from Helena. The Butlers of Ballygegan were a

family of great antiquity, much respected, and were Jacobites. Theobald was therefore justified in aspiring to the hand of O'Shaughnessy's daughter.

Glynn withdrew, and in a few moments after Theobald Butler entered the room.

He was young, not more than twenty years of age — had fair hair, a florid complexion, and was rather tall and stout. He was greeted heartily by all the family, and invited to partake of supper.

“Come, Butler,” said O'Shaughnessy, “first take a goblet of wine to whet your appetite.”

“Few of my family would refuse a goblet of wine,” said Theobald merrily, at the same time filling the measure and draining it to the dregs.

The minstrel, Mac Brody, now entered the room, to the satisfaction of all. Placing him in an arm chair near the fire, the Chieftain handed him a large goblet of wine. After taking a few draughts he commenced to play several well-known Irish airs, while O'Shaughnessy, Dermot Oge, and Theobald engaged the ladies in conversation, until the hour for retiring had arrived.

Note 1. — Page 1.

THE proper name of these mountains is Slieve Aughty, but they are popularly known as Slieve Boughta. In the Dinnsenchus will be found a legend concerning the name of the river Owendalulagh, which rises on the slope of Slieve Aughty, and flows from thence into the picturesque lake of Loughcutra. According to this old legend, when Echtghe (Ektê), a Tuatha De Danann princess married Fergus Lusca, the cupbearer to the King of Connaught, she brought with her two cows remarkable for their milk-bearing qualities, which are put to graze on the banks of the stream ; and from this circumstance was called Abhainn-da-loil-gheach, or the river of the two milch cows. And according to the same authority, the name of Slieve Aughty is derived from this remarkable princess, Sliabh-Echtghe, Echtghe's mountain. Together with this there are several other legends and traditions still cherished by the neighbouring peasantry, and many a dreary winter's evening was passed some thirty years ago by them in genial fellowship while recounting over and over the many sensational tales which are inseparably associated with the home of Slieve Boughta. But those simple days of story-telling are now numbered with the past, and have given place to a more refined age, when National Education has become developed, and the newspaper and periodical supply the absence of local tradition and legendary lore, and no more do young and old assemble in those friendly reunions !

The Irish chieftains ; or, A struggle for the crown (1872)

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