

The
History and Antiquities
of the
Diocese of Kilmacduagh

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Kilmacduagh from the death of Guaire to the close of the Danish occupation—Chieftains of Aidhne during the period—Flan Mac Lonan, Chief Poet of Ireland, a native of Aidhne—Hispoenia—Died A.D. 896—Episcopal succession.

In the year A.D. 662, the remains of King Guaire, [1] “ who died penitently,” were laid in their last resting-place with “ great honour and veneration.” He left three sons — (1) Nar, who was progenitor of the O’Moghans, for a short period chieftains of Aidhne ; (2) Arthgal, ancestor of the O’Clerys, O’Heynes, and Mac Gilla Kellys (Kilkellys) ; and (3) Aoedh, ancestor of the Cinel Enda. Of the O’Moghans, the descendants of Nar, we have but scant records in our annals. The most important reference to them that we can discover is that they for a time retained the chieftaincy of the territory. They were “ Chiefs of Cinel Guaire and of Ceanrighe,” until Mae Giolla Ceallaigh, who represented the more energetic descendants of Feargal, deprived them of the chieftaincy of their ancestral territory. [2]

Arthgal, second son of Guaire, had a son Feargal, who succeeded to the crown of Connaught. His reign seems to have been short and uneventful. His death is recorded by our annalists A.D. 694.

On the death of Feargal Aidhne, grandson of Guaire, the provincial sceptre passed for ever from the tribes of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne to the Hy Brain tribes, who were collateral branches of the same great family. The Hy Bruin tribes, known in more recent times as the O’Flahertys and O’Connors, were descended from Duach Gallach, King of Connaught, who died A.D. 420.

The transfer of the royal residence from Gortinsiguair and Kinvara. was calculated to deprive the territory of Aidhne of much of its former prestige. However, the chieftains who ruled the territory impressed themselves on the history of the period with a boldness that was not un-worthy of their historic and royal descent The following entries with reference to them are found in the annals of the Four Masters : —

“ In 763, Conchobar, son of Commascach, Lord of Aidhne, died. This Commascach was great-grandson of King Feargal.

“ In 768, Art, also called Arthgal, son of Flaitnia, chief of Aidhne, was slain. This Flaitnia was second son of Feargal Aidhne.”

In A.D. 780, we find that there was another great battle fought at Carn Conail, in Kilbecanty, in which the tribes of Hy Fiachrach were defeated by Tibraide, son of Taog, King of Conn-

aught. The battlefield was the same on which Guaire had been defeated more than a century earlier. There is no mention made of the leader of the Hy Fiachrach tribes on the occasion.

Cleirigh, who was grandson of Comasach already referred to, is regarded as the founder of the O'Clery family, who retained the chieftaincy of Aidhne till the close of the tenth century, and who continued to be after favourably known in the history of the country. The Kilkellys were also of the same line.

Cleirigh had two sons, Maelfavail and Eidhin, the progenitor of the O'Heynes, who succeeded the O'Clerys and Kilkellys as lords of Aidhne. The death of Maelfavail is recorded by the Four Masters, A.D. 887.

Maelfavail had two sons, Tighernach and Flan. Tighernach succeeded to the chieftaincy. The annalists record his death, A.D. 916.

The successor of Tighernach in the chieftaincy was Maelmacuagh, a name which indicates the reverence in which the patron of the diocese continued to be held. In its literal sense Maelmacuagh meant tonsured (*i.e.* consecrated) to Mac Duagh, the patron of the territory. The Four Masters tell us he was slain by the foreigners, A.D. 920. He may have been a son of Tighernach, but of this we have no historical evidence.

In the same year, A.D. 920, the death of Aedh, son of Lonan O'Guaire, Tanist of Aidhne, is recorded by the Four Masters.

The murder of Maelmacuagh by the foreigners in A.D. 920, is one of the earliest intimations given by our annalists of the presence of the Danes in the diocese of Kilmacuagh. However, we find by reference to Miss Stokes's valuable map, [3] illustrative of the Danish incursions on our country, that the foreigners invaded Corcomroe in A.D. 816, when the churches of Glan Columkille and Oughtmama were the only churches there to excite their cupidity or hatred. Their line of march on the occasion seems to have been by Kilmacuagh to Oranmore and Lough Corrib (Orbsen).

The Four Masters tell us that in 928 the "foreigners of Luimneach went up Lough Orbsen, and the islands of the lake were plundered by them." It is certain that in the territory of Aidhne the Danes met, not merely with spirited opposition, but with crushing defeat. In A.D. 938 it is recorded that "Aralt, grandson of Imhar, *i.e.* the son of Sitric, Lord of the foreigners of Luimneach, was killed in Connaught by the Ceanraigh of Aidhne." In reference to this entry of the annalists, Mr. O'Donovan tells us that "the Ceanraigh of Aidhne were a sept seated in Ard Aidhne, near Ardrahan, in the barony of Kiltartan and county of Galway." Though he does not mention the exact site of this important victory over the Danes, we consider there is ample evidence to justify us in stating that it was within the present townland of "Raheen," in the parish of Ardrahan. The *Annals of Clonmacnoise* record the same event, though assigning a different date, and expressly mention RATHEYNEY as the site, thus : "Harold (Aralt) O'Hymar (Imhar), King of the Danes of Limerick, was killed in Connaught at ratheyney." O'Donovan distinctly states that the event recorded by the Four Masters is identical with that recorded by the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, notwithstanding a difference in chronology. [4]

There can be no doubt that those events occurred when Flan, brother of Tighernach, was Lord of Aidhne. He seems to have succeeded Maelmacuagh as lord of the territory. The annalists record his death, A.D. 950. The notice of his death, as given by the Four Masters, shows clearly that he was regarded as a man of eminence, — even as a recognised aspirant to

the crown of Connaught : “ Flann Ua Cleirigh, Lord of South Connaught, and royal heir to all Connaught, was slain by the men of Munster.”

We do not find that his son Comhaltan aspired, as his father did, to the throne. But we know that he inherited the lordship of his ancestral territory, and that in military prestige he was at least as eminent as his father. In the year A.D. 964 he defeated Feargal O'Ruarc, King of Connaught, aided by his ally O'Gara. The slain on the occasion numbered seven hundred. The record of the Four Masters with reference to the event may be thus summarised : “ A victory was gained by Comhaltan Ua Cleirigh, *i.e.* Lord of Ui Fiachrach Aidhne . . . on Feargal Ua Ruarc, when seven hundred were lost.” The death of this powerful chief is recorded : “ A.D. 976, Comhaltan Ua Cleirigh, Lord of Ui Fiachrach Aidhne, died.”

In A.D. 989, Muirceadhach Ua Cleirigh, who succeeded Comhaltan in the lordship of Aidhne, died.

The activity of the son of Comhaltan after the death of Muirceadhach is recorded by the annalists. He evidently endeavoured to assert the paternal claim to the lordship of their territory. In A.D. 992, Ruadhri, son of Cosgrach, Lord of South Connaught, was slain by Conchobar, son of Maelseachlain, and by the son of Comhaltan Ua Cleirigh. In A.D. 998, the son of Comhaltan Ua Cleirigh is again referred to by the annalists, in connection with a triumph over the son of the chief of the O'Maddens : “ Diarmuid, son of Dunadhach, Lord of Siol Anmchadacha, was slain by the son of Comhaltan Ua Cleirigh, Lord of Aidhne ;” he therefore succeeded in attaining to the coveted position of lord or chief of the territory. O'Donovan thinks that the son of Clery referred to in those notices was Giolla Ceallaigh O'Clery, who was himself slain by Taog O'Kelly, Lord of Hy Maine, in A.D. 1003. It would seem that the engagement in which he lost his life was one of more than usual importance. “ In A.D. 1003 a battle was fought between Taog O'Kelly with the Hy Many, and the Hy Fiachrach Aidhne with the men of West Connaught, in which were slain Giolla Cheallaigh Mac Comhaltan O'Clery, Lord of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne, . . . and many others.”

O'Donovan adds that “ this Giolla Cheallaigh is the progenitor after whom the family of Kilkelly or Killikelly have taken their surname.”

Giolla Ceallaigh O'Clery was succeeded in the lordship of Aidhne by one of the O'Heynes, who then for the first time secured the lordship of the territory. We do not refer to him in this chapter, as we shall hereafter have occasion to refer to him at some length.

Cugeola, grandson of Giolla Ceallaigh, succeeded to the chieftaincy. He was the last of the O'Clery family who received the allegiance of the clans of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne. His career must have been uneventful, as the annalists record his death only, which occurred A.D. 1025. We shall, however, see in a future chapter that the O'Clerys retained a high position amongst their clansmen until the close of the thirteenth century, when they were driven out of their possessions by the De Burgos.

Though we contemplate with pain the petty quarrels which left the Irish chieftains powerless for a combined national effort against the incursions of the Northern hordes, we must at the same time admire the persevering fearlessness with which they continued to resist them for over two centuries, until triumph completely crowned their efforts at Clontarf. The heroism of our people at that period had perhaps few parallels in history. The Northmen, though often defeated, would return in increased numbers to engage again in plunder and bloodshed ; as wave succeeds wave, to dash themselves in unavailing fury against the crags of some rock-bound coast. Our Irish chiefs, though too often engaged in petty warfare amongst themselves, seldom failed to meet those pagan plunderers with a determined spirit of resistance ; and fre-

quently their resistance was crowned with success, as in the case of the victory already recorded, which the chiefs of Aidhne gained over the Northmen at Raheen.

But long before that event, the people of Aidhne, in common with the entire western province, had ample reason to fear the presence of those barbarians. As early as the year 835, Turgesius, the fierce leader of those barbarians, invaded Connaught, and ravaged the entire province. Our annalists speak of this invasion as a “*vastatio crudelissima*,” a devastation of a most cruel character. Influenced by an intense hatred of the Christian religion, as well as by the prospect of plunder, they constantly attacked the monasteries and churches. They robbed the altars of their precious ornaments, they seized the sacred vessels ; and the shrines, which were costly with gold and gems, they carried with them, flinging the relics to the winds or into the flames. And after churches and monasteries were thus sacrilegiously plundered, they were generally reduced to ashes by those barbarians, while their helpless inmates were put to the sword, or dragged into slavery worse than death.

These constantly - recurring scenes of bloodshed, sacrilege, and rapine, suggest and explain the origin and urgent need of places of refuge, to which the clergy might fly for safety, and in which the treasures of the monasteries and churches might be comparatively secure. We have the most ample historical evidence to show that our round towers were used for this purpose during the Danish occupation. Even those who endeavour to establish a prehistoric origin for the towers, cannot question the accuracy of this evidence. It is very noteworthy, too, that those structures are never noticed or referred to by our annalists until the time when the need just mentioned was well and widely felt. And while our annalists testify that they were then used for the purposes indicated, they also testify, alas ! that they did not always afford sufficient protection to our ecclesiastics against the hostility of our pagan enemies.

After overrunning the province, Turgesius took steps to establish his authority there. Keating tells us that he erected a fort at “*Lough Ribb* which commanded the country about. He plundered *Clonmacnoise*, *Tirdaglass*, and *Lothra*.”

In course of time Turgesius was reinforced by a large body of his countrymen, who effected a landing on the west coast.

In Miss Stokes’s interesting and valuable map of the Danish incursions, [5] we see that in A.D. 866 they effected a landing near *Kilcolgan*, probably at *Maree*. On this occasion they passed through the entire territory of Aidhne, and we cannot doubt that, on the occasion, so notable a church and monastery as those of *Kilmacduagh* did not escape profanation and plunder. It may be interesting to mention even here that *Bishop Colman*, son of *Donchadthaigh*, was then not long dead.

We also see, from the map referred to, that the barbarians extended their incursions from *Inis Cealtra* to *Baeth* in Aidhne, which, from its position on the map, may, we think, be identified as the ancient church at “*Beagh*,” situated a short distance east of the present town of *Gort*.

Considering that this terrible struggle was maintained for so many generations, and considering, too, the lawlessness which usually results from a system of offensive or defensive warfare, no matter how just, the wonder is that religion and religious institutions could have survived, and that any records of that interesting period could have been preserved. It is certain that those barbarians, with the true instincts of destruction, sought to destroy even our monastic libraries, — more valued than treasures of silver and gold. In the general ruin it was not strange that very many of our libraries were actually destroyed. It is beyond doubt that many of the most valuable historical treasures of our early Church were then lost for ever.

This destruction of our ancient records was a misfortune which fell more heavily on Connaught than on any of the other provinces. Ware, speaking of Connaught at the period, tells us that “ almost all the ancient charters and registers of the bishops of that province are lost, to the great detriment of the Church, except some few bare catalogues.” [6] These causes considered, it is no wonder that we find the notices of our distinguished and learned men in the diocese of Kilmacduagh during the period, few and unsatisfactory ; and that the notices of the episcopal succession in the diocese are equally obscure. Yet all is not obscure. Indeed, it is a subject of the deepest surprise to ascertain that, despite the prevailing disorder, the work of education was still continued throughout the land ; and this at a period when other European countries were steeped in darkest ignorance. The annalists mention [7] several learned and distinguished men during the latter half of the ninth century. The schools of Clonmacnoise and Devenish, of Kildare and Durrow, of Roscommon and Tallaght, and of many other places, were maintained, and continued to produce men whose names have been transmitted to us as remarkable for their eminence in learning and wisdom. There are equally gratifying evidences of the same intellectual activity during the second half of the tenth century. Lanigan, writing of this period, says : “ It is clear that learning continued to be cultivated during this whole period, notwithstanding its having been dreadfully troubled by almost constant wars between the Irish and the Danes, or between themselves.” [8]

The evidences which have reached us of the successful cultivation of learning in this troubled period by descendants of the ancient tribes of the Southern Hy Fiachraeh, are interesting. The Four Masters speak of Connmhach, a descendant of Guaire, a learned man who lived at Clonmacnoise. They record his death, A.D. 806, thus : “ Connmhach, son of Durbotha, a descendant of Guaire Aidhne, scribe of Clonmacnoise . . . died.”

The death of Indrect, Bishop of Kilmacduagh, is recorded by the annalists, A.D. 814 ; and in the same paragraph the deaths of many other eminent ecclesiastics are recorded. The death of Ailbe of Ceanmhara is noticed. From the context, therefore, we can have little doubt that Ailbe, too, was one of the distinguished ecclesiastics of the period. There can be no doubt as to the identity of Ceanmhara, as O’Donovan tells us it is Kinvara, “ a small seaport town in a parish of the same name, in the west of Kiltartan barony, County Galway,” of which he states St. Coman is patron.

Amongst the eminent ecclesiastics of that age, Cormac O’Killeen of the “ Hy Fiachraeh Aidhne” holds a very distinguished place. He was a man of recognised piety and learning. As Comarb of Ciaran and Coman, he must have had charge of several ecclesiastical institutions. And he was himself the builder of the great church at Tomgraney, with its Clogtech, or round tower.

The notice of his death already given from the *Chronicon Scotorum* is as follows : “ A.D. 964, Cormac Ua Cillin of the Ui Fiachrach Aidhne, Comarb of Ciaran and Coman, and Comarb of Tuaim Greine, by whom the great church of Tuaim Greine and its Cloigtech were constructed, sapiens et senex et episcopus, quievit in Christo.”

The Irish Bards have been always regarded as amongst the most favoured class in Ireland ; and as they were the most privileged, so, too, they were amongst the most learned. Their course of studies was long. The poet was also obliged to be free from every charge that could be a reproach to men of learning.

Flan Mac Lonan of Aidhne holds perhaps the highest place amongst the Irish Bards of the middle ages. He was fourth in descent from Torpa, who was great-grandson of Guaire the king.

He seems to have inherited his poetic inspiration in a great measure from his distinguished mother Laitheog, who was herself a poetess of repute.

Of her compositions, O'Curry [9] tells us that there is only a fragment extant, which is addressed to her son. It exhorts him to liberality and generosity such as became a distinguished poet and scholar as he was, and opens with the following beautiful lines : —

“ Blessing upon thee, Flann of Aidhne,
Receive from thy mother counsel ;
Let not thy noble career be without hospitality,
Since to thee is granted whatever thou seekest.”

O'Curry also informs us that the poem was quoted centuries (1452) afterwards by Brian Ruadh Mac Conmidhe, and that its author is styled the “ Nurse of the Learned.” The poem consisted of forty-eight lines, and its chief purpose seems to have been to urge him to the practice of such generous hospitality as became his high station.

Three of his extant poems are described by O'Riely in his *Irish Writers*, Of these, he, however, says that they “ are not possessed of any extraordinary beauties.” [10] (1) A poem of eighty-eight verses on the defeat of Flann Sionna by Lorcan, King of Munster ; (2) A poem of forty-eight verses in praise of the actions of Lorcan ; (3) A poem of forty-five verses on the fortress of Ceann Coradh enclosure of harvest stores. O'Curry obtained copies of four other poems attributed in ancient manuscripts to Mac Lonan, of which O'Riely had no knowledge. Those poems are noticed at great length by the learned O'Curry. It will not be out of place here to give his learned analyses of a few of those poems, and in his own graphic words.

His elegy on the death of the son of Dalach, he states, possesses a “ curious historical value,” and he continues : “ The Chief of Tirconnell died in the year 902 ; and on hearing of the sad event from his servant Mac Nagcuach, the poet, who, it appears, was no stranger to his mansion and his hospitality, wrote those verses, consisting of sixty-four stanzas, which he sent forthwith to the north ; and in them he dwells with considerable minuteness on his own reception in former times by the deceased chief, and on the various gifts and presents he had received from him. From the nature of the presents thus described, and the circumstances under which they were given, and sometimes procured by the donor, this poem presents to us a very interesting glimpse of the mode of life at the court of Eignechan at the time.

“ The most curious part of this poem, however, very valuable as it is in a historic point of view, is that in which we are told that the chief found himself compelled to purchase peace and exemption from plunder and devastation for his territory, from the ‘ Danish pirates,’ who were at this time committing fearful depredations along the seaboard of the island. This peace and exemption was purchased by the chief consenting to the marriage of his three beautiful daughters to three of the pirate commanders.” One of the ladies took the earliest opportunity of flying from her husband, and carried with her a casket containing trinkets of great value. “ When the pirate found his wife and his casket gone, he flew in a rage to her father, and threatened to have his territory ravaged if he did not restore to him his casket. This Eignechan undertook to do, and he invited the Dane to come on a certain day with his brother commanders, and all their immediate followers, to his court, when the gold would be restored and the company royally entertained. The Danes arrived, and were well entertained accordingly ; after which the company retired to the lawn of the court, where stood a tree upon which the Tirconnellian warriors were accustomed to try their comparative strength and dexterity, and the metal and sharpness of their swords, by striking their mightiest strokes into its trunk. Eignechan then stood up to open the sports ; and, drawing his sword, he struck at the tree, but designedly missed it, and the weapon, glancing off with immense force, struck his reputed

son-in-law on the head, killing him on the spot This was a preconcerted signal for the Tirconnellians, who instantly rushed on the rest of the band of their enemies, and quickly put them all to the sword.

“ The number of the Danes slain on this occasion may be inferred from the stated number of their ships, which was one hundred and twenty ; and it is stated that not one of their crews escaped. Eignechan then demanded the casket of gold from his daughter, and gave it all away on the spot in proper proportions to the tribes and to the chief churches of his principality. Just, however, as he had concluded the distribution of the whole of the piratical spoil, Mac Lonan, with his company of learned men and pupils, happened to arrive on the lawn on a professional visit to his patron. And here we have a characteristic trait of the manners of the times. When the chief saw the poet, and found himself with empty hands, he blushed and was silent ; but his generous people, perceiving his confusion, immediately knew the cause, and came forward to a man, placing each his part of the gold in the hands of his chief. Eignechan’s face brightened ; he redivided the gold, giving the poet a share of it proportionate with his rank and profession, and disposing of the remainder amongst those who had so generously relieved him of his embarrassment.”

Another poem of this eminent man is well worthy of attention. It consists of one hundred and thirty-two lines. Its opening line —

“ Delightful, delightful, lofty Echte.”

— indicates the subject with which it deals, — the mountain ranges which form the eastern boundary of the diocese of Kilmacduagh.

The poet goes on then in a vigorous and clear style to give some account of the history of the mountain, and the tribes and warriors who in succession occupied it, made it their hunting-ground, and left their names on some parts of it, among whom he mentions Fin Mac Cumhail and his warriors. [11] He then enumerates by name all the remarkable places, the hills, peaks, lakes, rivers, fords, woods, etc.; and he concludes with a vigorous eulogium on the Dalcassians of Clare, their munificence and loftiness of soul, of which the poet gives a very curious specimen. He relates that on one occasion he met a Dalcassian at Magh Fine, in the county of Galway, who had just concluded a service of twelve months to a man of that county. Having met the poet on his way home, he addressed him in these words : —

“ He said to me in prudent words,
Sing to me the history of my country,
It is sweet to my soul to hear it
Thereupon I sang for him the poem.
Nor then did he show aught of loth :
All that he had earned — not mean or meagre —
To me he gave without deduction.”

We are informed by O’Curry that Mac Lotian was murdered in Clare by a party of robbers from the county of Waterford. The record of his death, as found in the Four Masters, is noteworthy, and may fittingly be quoted here : “ A.D. 892, Flann, son of Lonan, the Virgil of the race of Scota, chief poet of the Gaoidhil, the best poet that was in Ireland in his time, was secretly murdered by the sons of Corrbuidhe — who were of the Ui Fofhaith — at Loch Dachaech in Deisi-Mumhan.” Such a laudatory notice of the deceased poet clearly shows that he was regarded by his countrymen as one of the most gifted of our mediæval laureates. He is referred to in the *Annals of Ulster* as Flan Mac Lonan O’Guairé. According to the *Innis-fallen Annals*, he died A.D. 896.

For some centuries after the death of St. Colman Mac Duagh, the episcopal succession in the diocese which he had founded continued to be involved in considerable obscurity. But it may be added that a similar obscurity envelopes the history of the episcopal succession in most of the Irish Sees during the period of the Danish occupation. In many cases the historical records were, as we have seen, destroyed with the monasteries and churches ; in many cases the succession was interrupted by long intervals, owing to the incursions of the foreigners; and in many cases also, owing to the same causes, the bishops sought security in complete seclusion. We do not doubt that the Bishops of Kilmacduagh sometimes sought that security within the mountain ranges which sheltered St. Colman's monastery at Oughtmama. This supposition would derive at least some plausibility from the example of the founder of the See himself. But we think it derives additional confirmation from the invocation in Aengus's Litany, in which, according to Petrie, the intercession of the " seven holy Bishops of Oughmama, in Corcomruadh," is invoked. It is not, therefore, we think, improbable that those " seven holy Bishops of Oughtmama" were Bishops of Kilmacduagh.

The first of St. Colman's successors in the See of Kilmacduagh whose name is recorded is St. INDRECT. His death in the year A.D. 814 is thus recorded by the Four Masters : " In the twenty-second year of Aedh Dernidhe, Indreachteach, Bishop of Cill Mic Duagh . . . died." The words of the annalists leave no room for doubting the identity of the See, and were there any doubts possible, they would be removed by O'Donovan's editorial note, in which it is expressly stated that the See referred to is that of Kilmacduagh. His death as Bishop of Kilmacduagh is also recorded by Ware, Colgan, and Lanigan. [12] Unfortunately, however, those writers have not preserved any facts of interest regarding his holy life.

In the year A.D. 846, we find the death of COLMAN, son of Donncothaigh, successor of Colman of Cill Mic Duagh, recorded by the Four Masters. There can be no doubt that he was the immediate successor of St. Indrect in the See. But though his episcopate and death are referred to on the high authority of our annalists, his name is entirely omitted by Ware and other authorities who profess to furnish a list of the bishops of the See.

Until the year A.D. 967, our annalists give no other entry relative to the See of Kilmacduagh. But in that year we find the following record : " DONNCHADH, son of Cathlan, Abbot of Cill Mic Duagh . . . died." Though we know that the office of abbot was frequently combined in our early Irish Church with that of bishop, yet we are unable to say with certainty that this Donnchadh was also bishop of the See.

The Chieftains of Aidhne — Brian Boroimhe marries Mor, daughter of Flan, Lord of Aidhne — Maelrunaidh O'Heyne commands a division of the Irish army at Clontarf — Is slain in that engagement, with most of his tribe.

WE have seen in the foregoing chapter that Cugeola O'Clery, who died A.D. 1025, was the last chieftain of his name to whom the clans of Aidhne yielded allegiance. A junior branch of the family had already risen to eminence, which was destined to retain for centuries the chieftaincy of their native territory. Its founder was Eidhin, second son of Cleirigh, whose death as chief of Aidhne is recorded, A.D. 887, and he is regarded by the O'Heynes of Kilmacduagh as their common ancestor. He had one son Flan, and one daughter Mor, who was the first wife of Ireland's supreme monarch, Brian of the Tributes.

The chieftains of Aidhne had approved themselves brave, and their royal lineage lent additional prestige to their military successes. These were characteristics which the brave Munster prince, who, in the opening of the eleventh century, attained supreme power in Ireland, was not slow to perceive and appreciate. Brian, son of Cenedeih, was indeed already connected

with the western province by a very near and dear tie. His mother Beibhionn was daughter of the King of West Connaught. But his marriage alliance with the chieftains of Aidhne, by espousing the Princess Mor, [13] daughter of Flan, rendered his connection with the western province still more intimate. By this marriage there were three sons, — Murchadh, Conchobar, and Flan, who, with their royal father, were slain on the bloody field of Clontarf. [14]

It is recorded that Murchadh, while yet a boy, distinguished himself, A.D. 978, when in a hand-to-hand engagement he slew the chief of Hy Fighenty, on which occasion Brian became sole and supreme King of Munster. His connection with Connaught secured for him the powerful and willing support of the western clans.

Both Maelrunaidh and Maelfavail, sons of Flan, succeeded to the chieftaincy of Aidhne. Maelrunaidh, who from his piety was surnamed “ na Padre,” — of the prayer, — took a prominent part in the great national effort to destroy the aggression of the Northmen. Brian’s most active supporters in effecting the great muster of the West, were, with O’Connor, the provincial king, O’Kelly, Prince of Hy Maine, and O’Heyne of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne.

Keating, in referring to O’Kelly’s action on this occasion, in mustering a large number of men, adds : “ And this gave encouragement to the princes of Aidhne, with many others of the first quality and interest in their country, to gather what strength they were able, which amounted to a considerable number, because of their near relation to Brian Boromhe, whose mother was a princess of that province.” [15]

The second division of Brian’s forces at Clontarf, which consisted of the Connaught troops, was commanded by O’Connor, King of Connaught, Maelrunaidh, Prince of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne, O’Kelly, Prince of Hy Maine, and O’Flaherty of West Connaught. They were supported by a strong body of Munster troops. This powerful corps was to engage the second wing of the enemy, which, according to some writers, was led by the fierce warrior Brodar.

The character of the engagement is known to all. It is perhaps most graphically summarised in the words of the Four Masters : “ The foreigners of the west of Europe assembled against Brian, and they took with them *ten hundred men with coats of mail*. A spirited, fierce, violent, vengeful, and furious battle was fought between them, the likeness of which was not to be found at that time.” [16]

But the mail-clad warriors, with their countrymen, were defeated, and the power of the Danes was crushed for ever in our land.

The victory gained on that memorable occasion was, however, purchased by the blood of Ireland’s noblest and bravest. Ireland’s monarch Brian, “ the Augustus of the West of Europe, in the eighty-eighth year of his age,” [17] was amongst the slain ; and with him was his son Murchadh, grandson of Flan O’Heyne, and heir-apparent to the sovereignty. Immediately after those of the king’s household lost on that field of glory, we find honourable mention of O’Kelly of Hy Maine, and Maelrunaidh, Lord of Aidhne, who on that day also sacrificed their lives for their country’s weal. It is perhaps impossible to form any accurate estimate of the numbers of the slain, as they are variously computed ; that they were very numerous is certain. According to a tradition which O’Donovan regards as of authority, the carnage amongst the Connaught clans was so dreadful, that “ very few of the O’Kellys or O’Heynes survived it.” [18]

There are few events in the chequered history of our country which Irish students may dwell upon with such natural feelings of pride, as the glorious victory gained by the monarch

Brian at Clontarf, A.D. 1014 We must admire the genius of the prince who evoked order from the confusion of over two centuries of lawless turbulence ; who created strength from comparative weakness, and union from discords which held a nation so long divided. We must admire the valour of a people who, galled to madness by continuous aggression and crying injustice, resolved to drive for ever from their shores the cruel oppressors of their religion and race, or perish in one grand and general effort for freedom. And we may perhaps, without weakness, drop a tear upon the page which records the heroism of the monarch, who, while the shouts of his victorious army came ringing in his ears, fell, clasping to his bosom the sacred symbol of man's redemption.

As regards the monarch's efforts to promote the religious and material interests of the country, we cannot over-estimate his untiring activity and success. He rebuilt the monasteries in a style of elegance to which they had not hitherto attained. He also laboured to restore the libraries which the Northmen had destroyed. For this object he commissioned men of learning to go abroad and purchase new supplies.

“ He sent professors and masters to teach wisdom and knowledge, and to buy books beyond the sea and the great ocean, because their writings and their books in every church and every sanctuary where they were burned and thrown into the waters by the plunderers from the beginning to the end.” [19]

As might be expected, the erection and protection of churches was the object of his special care. In his life we read that “ by him were founded cells and churches, and were made stone houses, bell houses, and wood houses in it.” [20] (Ireland).

And again : “ It is Brian that gave out seven monasteries, both furniture, and cattle, and land, and thirty-two bell houses.”

We believe it will be admitted that the only bell-houses of that period of which history knows anything are our round towers, which were also used for the various other purposes of protection and defence which we have already indicated. And though the number of bell-houses attributed to Brian by his biographer be large, yet we do not find that the names are particularised in more than one instance, that, namely, of the tower of Tomgraney.

In the history of the *Wars of the Gaedhill with the Gael*, we have similar entries showing his active energy in the construction and repairs of churches and towers : “ By him were erected also noble churches in Erin and their sanctuaries. . . . Many works also, and repairs, were made by him. By him were erected the church of Cill Dalua, and the church of Iniscealtra, and the Clochteach of Tuaim Greine, and many other works in like manner.”

In the case of the churches mentioned in the foregoing passage, it is only to the restoration of those churches that reference is made. Many other churches were similarly rebuilt by him. We cannot, therefore, think that the chief church of Aidhne received no share of the monarch's patronage. His intimate connection with its chief lay patrons, the O'Heynes, renders such a supposition in the last degree improbable ; and, as already indicated, we can scarcely doubt that the restoration of St. Colman's Church there, and the erection of its tower, was one of the earliest works in which he engaged.

Apart altogether from historical evidence, similarity in the architectural alterations effected in the churches of Killaloe, Inis Cealtra, and Tomgraney, during the monarch's reign, are noticed by such modern authorities as Brash and Miss Stokes. Now, the general features of the oldest portions of the Kilmacduagh tower and cathedral are quite similar, and belong to the same period. They are so classified by Miss Stokes, but belong rather to its opening than

to its close. Though in the cathedral and tower of Kilmacduagh we have no traces of Romanesque, we have the latest and best of the old pelasgic work, — the large polygonal blocks of well-dressed ashlar, and the cemented and closely-fitting joints.

So similar, indeed, is the masonry to which we are referring in Tomgraney and Kilmacduagh, that the description of the one, which we take from Mr, Brash, exactly applies to the other : “ The west end of Tomgraney church is the finest specimen of the primitive type in our island ; its massive pelasgic-looking doorway, and grand old masonry, strike both antiquary and architect with astonishment.” These words ' apply without a change to Kilmacduagh.

- [1] *Manners and Customs of Hy Fiachrach*, p. 314.
- [2] *Tribes of Hy Fiachrach*, p. 62. O'Donovan says it is probable that the name O'Moghan is now anglicised Mooney, of which there are some respectable families in Westmeath.
- [3] *Early Christian Architecture, Ireland*.
- [4] The date in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* is A.D. 833.
- [5] *Early Irish Christian Architecture*.
- [6] *Antiquities*, p. 148.
- [7] *Lanigan*, vol. ii. p. 370.
- [8] *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 370.
- [9] *Manners and Customs of Ancient Erin*, vol. ii. p. 98.
- [10] *Irish Writers*, p. 59.
- [11] *Manners and Customs of Ancient Erin*, vol. ii. p. 99.
- [12] *Eccles, Hist.* vol. iii. p. 266.
- [13] *Manners and Customs of Hy Fiachrach*, p. 398.
- [14] *Loc, cit.*
- [15] Keating, p. 496.
- [16] *Four Masters*, 1014
- [17] *Ibid.* A.D. 1013.
- [18] *Four Masters*, A.D. 1013.
- [19] *Wars of the Gael with the Gaedhill*.
- [20] *Life by Mac Liag*.

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