

The District of Sligo

The

History of Sligo

Town and County.

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The district of Sligo was formed into a separate county in the sixteenth century, at the time when the other existing counties of Connaught were constituted. About the middle of the thirteenth century, if not somewhat earlier, the province was divided into two counties—the county of Connaught and the county of Roscommon [1]—the former lying to the south, and the latter to the north, of a line which stretched from the Shannon to the Atlantic Ocean ; and that this line was only ill-defined would appear from Harris's *Hibernica*, [2] where we find the sheriff of Connaught and the sheriff of Roscommon maintaining, each that a certain specified district called Athruim O Many, belonged to his own county. The county of Connaught comprised the present counties of Clare, Galway, and Mayo ; while the County of Roscommon took in the existing counties of Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim, and Cavan, as well as the part of Donegal that lies between the Drowes and the Erne. Ware shows by abundant proofs, taken from the records of the country, that this dual arrangement continued in force down to the year 1565 ; and there is other evidence, which escaped his notice, that it lasted still longer ; for we find Christopher Bodkin, the Archbishop of Tuam, signing, as Queen's Commissioner in Civil Causes, an injunction addressed to the sheriff of the “ county of Connaught,” on the 2nd of October, 1567. [3]

Cox in his *Hibernia Anglicana* leans to the belief that the second division of Connaught into shire land—into the shires of Clare, Roscommon, Galway, Sligo, Mayo, and Leitrim—was effected by Thomas, Earl of Sussex, who was Lord Lieutenant from 1559 to 1565 ; [4] a more common opinion, held too by Sir James Ware, [5] is, that it was the work of Sir Henry Sidney, who entered on the office of Lord Deputy in 1565 ; while others, including O'Flaherty in his *Ogygia*, ascribe the change to Sir John Perrott, who became Lord Deputy in 1584—the fact apparently being, that Lord Sussex originated the project, that Sir Henry Sydney executed it substantially, and that Sir John Perrott confirmed and completed it by his famous Compositions with the Connaught chieftains. [6]

Before the formation of the county Sligo, the areas, now comprised in it, were known as the countries or territories of Tirerrill, Corran, Leyney, Coolavin, Tireragh, and Carbury ; names which now designate the baronies of the county. It will not be out of place to examine here for a moment what land these districts anciently contained as territories, and what they now contain as baronies ; and, taking them in the order in which they lie in the preceding sentence, it would appear, in the first place, that Tirerrill has undergone little change in the course of time as to its contents. It was said of, old to extend from the Yellow River of St. Patrick's Mountain to Tir Tuathail or Kilronan—*ab amne flavo Montis Sancti Patricii ad frontem de Tir Tuathail*—and these are the present limits of the barony ; for the Yellow River of St. Patrick's Mountain, though not now known popularly by that name, can be no other than the stream which falls from the slopes of Slieve Gamh, and which, at its junction with the Owenmore, near Annaghmore, forms the western limit of Tirerrill. The mountain of Slieve Gamh was called St. Patrick's Mountain after St. Patrick, as he laboured much on it,

raised churches on its slopes, and left his name to some of its wells, as, for instance, those of Dromard and Tullaghan. It is stated in an inquisition taken at Sligo on the 25th July, 1607, [7] that twenty quarters of the barony of Tirerrill were incorporated with the county Leitrim at the time of Perrott's Compositions, but with this exception Tirrerill, *recte* Tiroillill—the land of Oilill—is now in extent what it was in the early part of the sixteenth century, and what, most probably, it was before that time, and ever since it received its present name from Oilill, the son of Eochy Moighmedhoin and Mongfinna.

On the other hand, Corran was much more extensive, as a territory, than it is, as a barony ; for “ the country called Corann,” says O'Flaherty, [8] “ formerly comprehended Galenga in the county of Mayo, Lugny and Corann, in the county of Sligo ;” and Ware observes on the same point : “ Coranna, a Territory, anciently comprehending Galenga (now the Barony of Galen, in the county of Mayo), Lugnia (now the Barony of Leny), in the county of Sligoe), and Coranna (now the Barony of Corrann), in the same county.” [9] The contraction of the district is proved too by the old annals of the country ; for places which now lie far outside the barony, belonged in ancient times to the territory, as Kilcoleman-Finn, now in Mayo, but of old in Corran, [10] and Cunghill, now in Leyney, but in Corran in the eleventh century. [11]

Leyney too has had its variations of extent. At first, when Cormac Galeng, the ancestor of the O'Haras and O'Garas, got possession of it, in the third century, the district of Corann or Coranna received the new name of Leyney or Luighne, in honour of Luigh, the son of this Cormac, and continued to retain the name, as an *alias* one, for several centuries. During this period places which certainly lay within the ancient territory of Coranna, as already defined, were said to be in Leyney. louder the year 1225 we read in the Four Masters that “ Hugh O'Conor and the English pursued the sons of Roderic that night to Meelick, and for three nights afterwards continued plundering Leyney in all directions ;” this plainly implying that Meelick and the neighbourhood of Meelick formed part of Leyney at the time. And under the year 1253 we are told by the same authority that “ a monastery for Dominicans was founded at Ath-Leathan (Ballylahan), in Leyney ;” and though ; John O'Donovan, in a note to this entry, ventures to affirm that, “ the Four Masters are wrong in placing this in the territory of Leyney, for it is certainly in the ancient territory of Gailenga, O'Gara's original country,” still it is certain that it is O'Donovan himself who is tripping, and not the Four Masters; for not only in the Four Masters, but in all our old authorities, the diocese of Achonry, which included then, as it does now, the district of Galen, is styled the diocese of Leyney, and the bishops of Achonry, the bishops of Leyney [12]— nay, this very writer admits as much in another place; for, in a ; note in the Book of Rights, [13] he lays it down that the territory of Leyney and the territory of Achonry diocese are exactly identical.

Coolavin is not so old a denomination of territory as Tirerrill, Corran, or Leyney, and therefore the region, designated by it, has not been so liable to vary in extent. The ancient name of the district was Greagraidhe ; but Coolavin did not, and does not include as much land as Greagraidhe ; for a considerable tract in the north of the present county Roscommon belonged to the latter district. [14] In other respects Coolavin has gained rather than lost, for it now includes part of Kilcoleman, which of old belonged to Corran.

Tireragh has lost much of its ancient extent. Always a most important portion of Hy Fiachrach, with which, however, it must not be confounded, as it was only a part of that extensive region. [15] Tireragh, or Hy Fiachrach of the Moy, stretched at one time from the Moy to the Erne. O'Donovan makes the Drumcliff river the oldest northern limit of this territory, but it is clear from the *Chronicon Scotorum* that it extended at one time all the way to the Erne, as this river is there set down as the boundary between the Fiachrach and Cinel Conaill. [16] Later, the Codnach—“ the river which discharges itself into the bay of Sligo at Drumcliff” [17]—became the extreme limit towards the north ; and this river is set down in the Topographical poems of John O'Dugan, [18] and Giolla Iosa Mor McFirbis, [19] as the bound of the district in this direction. Even before the time of Giolla Iosa Mor McFirbis, Tireragh

had shrunk up to Ballysadare river—" the beauteous stream of salmons—[20] and on reaching that river, in his description of the territory, Giolia Iosa himself, notwithstanding his partiality as local bard, admits virtually that the land that lay beyond the "stream" does not belong to Hy Fiachrach, but belongs to Cabury :

" Let us pass into Carbury of the battles,
Let us leave the soil of Hy Fiachrach." [21]

By the pressure of the O'Rorkes and others the northern limit was forced still further back, on to the Beltra Strand ; for the Four Masters tell us of Brian Ballagh O'Rourke, who died in 1562, that " his supporters, fosterers, adherents, and tributaries extended ... from Granard in Teffia to the Strand of Eothuile the Artificer, in Tireragh of the Moy." [22] And the Strand continued to be the bound of the territory, till baronies were formed, as it is, and has been all through, the bound of Tireragh as a barony.

The district of Carbury was of different dimensions at different times. In remote times it comprised Lough Melvin, for the Four Masters state that when the grave of Melghe Molbthach was digging, " Lough Melghe burst forth over the land in Carbury ;" [23] and we learn from the Tripartite Life of St. Patrick that Crich-Conaill, belonged at that time to Cairbre as far as Rath-Cunga, [24] a tract of about five miles in width. In O'Dugan's Topographical Poem there is mention of " the two Carburys," which shows the district was then divided ; and though the writer supplies no means of knowing the extent or position of each division, we may with great probability conclude that " the two Carburys" of the poem coincide, or nearly coincide, with the Upper and Lower Carbury of recent times ; the former stretching from Belladrehid to Kilsellagh river, and the latter from the Kilsellagh to the Duff river.

The plain of the Moy or Magh Ene, on the south bank of the river Erne, was commonly regarded in the past, as part of Carbury, though there is respectable authority for considering it to have been a portion of Tirconnell or Donegal. As the northern limit of Carbury and the northern limit of Connaught coincided, there is the same diversity of opinion in regard to it under the one respect and the other, Connaught writers generally making the Erne the limit, and Ulster writers, the Drowes. [25] In forming the county Sligo, in the sixteenth century, the Erne was made the northern boundary, though, later, the Drowes was substituted as such : apparently with the object of allowing the counties of Fermanagh and Leitrim direct access to the seaboard, as may be inferred from a petition on the subject, which certain Undertakers, or would-be Undertakers, addressed during the Plantation proceedings of Ulster to the Commissioners of Plantation, and which opens as follows : " Eight Honourable The 40 Undertakers whose names are hereunder written, are petitioners for a grant of that small part of the county Sligo, now in the King's hands, which lies between the end of Lough Erne and the sea ; as they intend to have a market town on the south side thereof at Ballike, and from thence, three miles nearer the sea, to erect a strong corporation. This part of Sligo contains about three miles being a piece of ground very convenient adjoining the sea, for the necessary use of the inhabitants of that corporation for bringing-in or transporting their commodities." [26] Whether it was this representation or some other consideration, that influenced the Government, the northern limit of the county Sligo, as well as of the barony of Carbury, was moved, soon after the receipt of the Undertakers' petition, from the Erne to the Drowes, and later to the Duff river, where it remains. The county then is bounded on the south-west by the county Mayo ; on the north-west by the Atlantic ocean ; on the north by the Atlantic and the river Duff ; on the east by the county Leitrim ; on the south-east by the county Roscommon ; and on the south by the counties Roscommon and Mayo. As to latitude and longitude, the bay of Sligo lies 54°20' north latitude, and 8°40' west longitude ; Sligo town 54°10' north latitude, and 8°25' west longitude; and the centre of the county 54°10' north latitude, and 8°35' west longitude.

Though one would be inclined to infer from an inquisition taken at Sligo, in 1607, before Sir Anthony St. Leger, declaring the length of the county, from the Curlews to the river Erne, to be 40 miles, and the breadth from Ballifernan to Bellaghy, to be 40 miles, that the county is a square, the inference would be quite erroneous, for there is hardly a county in Ireland more irregular in outline. To reduce it to some symmetry it would be necessary to cut off, on the south, most of the barony of Coolavin, which runs in between Roscommon and Mayo ; on the north, as much of the barony of Carbury as lies below a line running from Coney Island through Drumcliff, to the county Leitrim ; on the east, the parishes of Shancoe and Kilmactrany in the barony of Tirerrill ; and, on the west, the parishes of Easky, Kilglass, Castleconor, and Kilmoremoy, in the barony of Tireragh. Even with this adjustment there would still remain much zig-zag in the outline, not only along the sea coast, where the indentations are frequent and, sometimes, notable, but also inland, at some of the points where Sligo touches the adjoining counties.

The coast line, from the mouth of the Moy to that of the Duff, is sinuous and varied both in contour and elevation. The sea line is diversified not only by the three deep estuaries of Ballysadare, Sligo, and Drumcliff, but also by the mouths of several little rivers—the Fined, Ballybeg, Easky, Dunneill, Skreen, Portavad, Kilsellagh, Carney by the headlands of Lenadoon, Aughriss, Raghley, Knocklane, and Mullaghmore ; and by the minor points of Cloghagh, Leckacurry, Rathlee, Kinnasharnagh, Carrownrush, Carrickadda, Pollnagat, Carrownabinna, Lackaverna, Donagh, Lackmeeltaun, Rinnadoolish, Streedagh, and Rosskeeragh ; while, as to elevation, the coast rises abruptly in some places—at Aughriss, Knocklane and Mullaghmore ; shelves off from the land, along a great part of the Tireragh shore, and, in Carbury, from Aghaphreghan to the mouth of the Drowes ; sinks into flat strands at the mouth of the Moy, Dunmoran, Beltra, Coolerra, Bomore, Trawnavannoge, Trawativa, and Bunduff Strand ; and slopes down gently and gradually to the water's edge in parts of Tireragh, at Beltra and Streamstown in Leyney, near Sligo on both the right and the left bank of the river, and at some other points in Carbury. This great variety in the sea line and the surface line of the coast, unlike the sameness, often met with elsewhere, is most pleasing to the eye, which, wherever it turns, finds new combinations of the picturesque.

Mountain scenery is so prevalent in the landscape, that almost wherever you happen to be, if you look about you, you will find yourself surrounded, or apparently surrounded, by mountains. The mountain system of the county forms to the eye, allowing for a few breaks, the figure of 8, or two connected circles, one superimposed on the other. The upper part of the figure is traced by the Ox Range, Slieve da En, Braulieve, the Curlews, Bockagh, and Mullaghnoe in the county Mayo, and contains the baronies of Corran, Leyney, Tirerrill, and the half barony of Coolavin ; while the lower portion of the figure has its counter-part in Slieve da En and the Ox Range, as they are seen from the north, Knocknarea, Benbulbin and the other hills of the Benbulbin group together with the Donegal mountains, which, though belonging to another county, blend so naturally with those of Sligo, as to appear a continuation of them. This second circle encloses the baronies of Tireragh and Carbury. These elevations are of various altitudes—the highest point of the Ox Range, above the level of the sea, being 1778 feet ; of Slieve da En, 967 feet ; of Braulieve, 1396 ; of the Curlews, 1062 ; of Cashelgal and Coologeaboy, 1430 ; of Knocknarea, 1078 ; of Benbulbin, 1721 ; while the ridge of Slieve Lughna, including Bockagh (745 feet), and Mullaghnaohoe (775 feet), is scarce bold enough to be dignified with the name of mountain.

The geological formation of these ranges varies. Slieve da En and the Ox Range are primitive, metamorphic, and volcanic rocks, composed of quartz, mica slate, gneiss, crystalline greenstone, but in different proportions and combinations, at different parts of the range ; a narrow strip of old red sandstone runs along the sides of the range ; while beyond this strip lies the floetz limestone, which permeates most of the county, running through the whole seaboard, from the Moy to the Duff, as well as through the baronies of Tirerrill, Leyney, and the greater part of Corran the stone, along the shore, in the parishes of Skreen and Bally-

sadare, being of prime quality, both as to the thickness of the strata and the texture of the grain, so as to supply material fit either for the blocks of a breakwater, or for articles of *certu* ; portions of it being susceptible of the finest carving and the richest polish. The Braulieve mountain, which forms the chief part of the Connaught Coal-field, contains the usual strata of the Coal Measures ; millstone grit, limestone, and coal, etc.

The Curlews and, more especially, the Sligo side of them, are supposed to consist of the Old Red Sandstone, which also passes down from the east end of them, for some distance, along the western shore of Loughs Ce and Arrow ; but Mr. Kinahan in his *Geology of Ireland* [27] holds the formation is not true Old Red Sandstone, but limestone of the Burren type.

The same authority characterises Benbulbin and the adjoining hills as Limestone Hills, and fixes the contents of a section as follows :—

- “ 4. Sandstones, the lowest beds of the coal measures.
3. Pale grey limestone, with magnesian limestone bands.
2. Thin bedded black shaly limestone, with magnesian limestone bands.
1. Olive, grey, and whitish sandstones, with black slate partings.” [28]

Though Knocknarea lies to the south of the Sligo river, while the Benbulbin hills are to the north, its geological formation seems to be the same, so that it may be set down as Burren limestone, or, as this formation is commonly called in England, mountain limestone.

It will come with surprise on many to be told that the Benbulbin group of hills lay for ages at the bottom of the ocean, and that, vast as these ranges are, they are composed in large measure, like the Coral Islands of the South Sea, of fossil shells and shell-fish. And yet there is no room for doubt on the subject ; for various specimens of the stone, when examined under the microscope by competent judges, exhibit unmistakably this composition. Professor Hull, an authority second to none on the geology of Ireland, bears witness after careful personal examination and study, that “ the formation, notwithstanding its great thickness, must be considered as the work of marine animals, which lived in the waters of the clear ocean of the Carboniferous period, generally far removed from land, and uncontaminated by muddy or sandy sediment.” [29]

It was long supposed that coal might be found in several parts of the Ox and Slieve da En mountains. This opinion, becoming generally known, brought scientific and practical coal miners to the place, who after making careful and extensive searches, and finding no trace or indication of coal, concluded there was no ground for the popular belief.

Iron stone exists in the mountains of Kilmacley ; in a tract lying between Dromahair and Ballintogher ; as well as on both banks of the Arigna river, and in other places. The Kilmacley mine was worked by a Mr. Rutledge “ till all the woods of the country had been burned out and carried to Foxford, where he had iron works.” [30]

In 1816, the well-known Jack Taaffe, who had recently purchased a large stretch of the Ox mountains, discovered what he took to be a valuable slate quarry on the property. The Reverend Mr. Neligan was then drawing up his *Statistical Account of Kilmactigue*, and sharing Mr. Taaffe’s views of the quarry, reports it as capable of yielding slates six feet long, of any thickness required, of a close hard grain and blue colour, and so easily worked that “ two intelligent hands could produce one thousand pounds’ worth of slates in a nionth.” [31] This promising find, which was to enrich its owner, and diffuse benefits of all kinds throughout the neighbourhood, ended, like so many others of the time and kind, in disappointment and loss.

An incomparably greater failure and loss resulted from the Arigna Collieries and Iron Works, about which, though belonging less to the county Sligo than to the neighbouring counties of Roscommon and Leitrim, a word or two may be said. The Iron Works were started in 1788 by three brothers of the name of O'Reilly, who soon incurred such losses that they had, first, to mortgage and, ultimately, to sell the property to the Messrs. Latouche, the famous bankers of Dublin, who had advanced to the O'Reillys large sums of money. One of the Latouches, thinking the concern a promising one, purchased from the bank the interest which the O'Reillys had parted with, and set to work single-handed with great energy and unstinted outlay, but with the result, which is well brought out in the following anecdote, as told by Isaac Weld, in his admirable Survey of the County Roscommon : " I well remember taking a ride with that excellent and kind-hearted man, Mr. Latouche, at a venerable period of his life, and on stopping before a large iron gate, in his beautiful park of Bellevue, being asked, whether I had ever before seen so costly a piece of workmanship ? The gate was a spacious and goodly one, but there was nothing extra-ordinary in its appearance. ' I see you are hesitating, sir,' said the good old gentleman ; ' and yet I can venture to assert that you never before saw a gate which cost the owner so much. That gate, sir, cost me £80,000, for it is the only thing I ever got out of the Arigna Iron Works, in return for all my money expended there.' " [32]

It was in 1818, Sir Richard, or as he then was, Mr. Richard Griffith's report on the Connaught coal district was published, and as the paper spoke very favourably both of the coal and iron of the district, speculators were set in motion, so that in a year or two three different companies, the Arigna Coal and Iron Company, the Irish Mining Company, and the Hibernian Mining Company were in the field. The Hibernian Mining Company soon retired, having inferred from some experiments, which they prudently made, that they could not work with any prospect of remuneration ; the Irish Mining Company continued raising and selling coal on a small scale for several years ; while the Arigna Coal and Mining Company, after a series of fraudulent proceedings, hardly to be surpassed in the unsavoury history of joint-stock companies, after robbing their shareholders and demoralising the neighbourhood, collapsed disgracefully, pretending to suspend, but in reality, closing their operations.

There is little prospect of these coal fields being worked on any large scale with profit. It might be otherwise if Sir Richard Griffith's estimate, that the principal seam is three feet inches thick, were well founded, but instead of that, eighteen inches or thereabouts would seem to be much nearer the truth. The expense of extracting the mineral from this thin seam is so great, that a ton of the large coal would cost perhaps as much at the pit's mouth, as a ton of Scotch coal at the quay of Sligo ; and the consequence is, that the produce of the Arigna Collieries is rarely seen at present beyond the immediate neighbourhood, except in the shape of culm, a cart of which may find its way occasionally to a lime-kiln at a considerable distance from the pits. Meantime, however, the mine is feebly worked to supply the demand of persons who live near it, but so remote from Sligo, where English and Scotch coals are sold, that the cartage would equal or exceed the price of the coal.

There is a silver and lead mine on the northern slope of the Ox Mountains, in the parish of Ballysadare, another at Abbeytown, in the same parish, and a third upon the very Harbour-mouth of Sligo, " in a little demy-island commonly called Coney Island," [33] this last being the only one of the three mentioned by Boate, in his *Natural History of Ireland*, as if the others were unknown to him.

It does not appear that the Coney Island mine was ever worked, though the other two were, in the last century, the scenes of extensive operations, judging by the great quantity of debris which lies scattered upon them. In his *Tour in Ireland*, Arthur Young writes of the Abbeytown mine, " Near Ballysadare is a lead mine, but not worked with success, though very rich. People say that the works were carried on as long as there was timber in the neighbourhood for smelting, and that they were discontinued only when this fuel failed."

There is reason however to think that the poverty of the mine had a good deal to do with its abandonment. A few years ago, on Mr. Middleton purchasing Abbey town, he sent over various specimens of the ore to England to have it tested, with a view to working the concern vigorously, in case the experiment warranted him, and on the trial leaving things doubtful, he sank a shaft of sixty or seventy feet, in search of a richer vein than any that showed itself near the surface, but failing to find it, he gave up the undertaking : a pretty satisfactory proof, when one takes into account his great intelligence and energy, that the mine under present circumstances is too poor to pay. It may still be hoped, considering the large tracts of the county in which the silver and lead appear, that veins will be one day found rich enough to warrant their working.

Minerals of other kinds are known to exist through the county : copper in the Ox Mountains, manganese in the Slieve da En range, garnets in the neighbourhood of Lough Esk, and asbestos on the confines of the county of Leitrim.

The surface of the county has quite changed in appearance within the last two centuries. The whole county was little better than a wilderness in the closing years of the 17th century. What the French Officers said of parts of Ulster in 1689, that a march through it was like “ travelling through the deserts of Arabia,” was quite true of the county Sligo, which had suffered more than most other places from the ravages which followed the insurrection of 1641. Since that time everything has been altered—Pestilential swamps have, by draining and cultivation, become rich tillage land, producing luxuriant root and cereal crops ; extensive tracts which grew nothing but heath and furze are now covered with the sweetest and greenest of grasses ; and from a county which struck the traveller, so late as the first years of the present century, as particularly destitute of trees and shrubs, Sligo has become perhaps the best timbered county in Ireland. If Wakefield who, in his *Account of Ireland*, writes, “ On the 11th of September, 1809, I went to Nymphsfield through Sligo and Ballisodare, but I observed no trees during the whole course of the way,” could now revisit the place, there is probably nothing, among all the great changes which have occurred, that would strike him so forcibly as the profusion of timber on all sides. Woods are given, in writings of the seventeenth century, as then existing here and there on the skirts of the Ox Mountains, and of the Slieve da En range, round the Curlews, and along the northern shore of Lough Gara ; but much of it is spoken of as “ firewood ;” and it is certain that the trees which grew in these places were small in number and size, as compared with those which may be now seen in Union Wood, and Slish Wood ; the demesnes of Markrea, Annaghmore, Templehouse, Holly brook, Hazelwood, and Lissadell ; and in other places, where the gnarled oak, the spreading beech, and the stately ash, reach their fullest perfection.

Trees in vast numbers have been cut down of late in those places and removed. For about twenty years, carts have been constantly on the roads of the county, carrying off timber from woods and demesnes to the Bobbin Mill of Messrs. McNeill in Sligo, to Mr. Glynn’s Chemical Works at Collooney, to Mr. Anderson’s Saw Mill, Sligo ; to Messrs. Manly’s Saw Mill at Collooney, and to other places ; and still this enormous consumption has not diminished the supply very sensibly, at least to the eye of the casual observer. Except in one or two cases, planting, to supply the place of the timber removed, is not practised to the extent it ought. Colonel Cooper has planted large tracts on the south side of Slieve da En, on the Ox Mountain, at Derreens, the Sessus in the parish of Cloonacool, and the neighbourhood of Lough Esk, and here and there in Union Wood, Ballygawley Wood, and the demesne of Markrea ; the number of trees planted in these places within the last twenty years, reaching at least a million and a half. Mr. O’Hara, too, has planted a good deal in his demesne of Annaghmore.

As a matter of course, the security and shelter of plantations have led to the multiplication of such singing birds as blackbirds, thrushes, linnets, finches, &c. ; and it is hard to tell whether the student of nature is more struck by the sights or by the sounds which he meets

with in his rambles through the groves of the county. The scenery in some of these tracts is varied and beautiful—hills and shady dells, crags covered with coppice wood or enamelled with wild flowers, alternating with stretches of full grown forest trees.

The eagles which used, a couple of centuries ago, to frequent the peaks of Benbulbin and the Ox Mountain have nearly disappeared. Mr. Sibery, junior, has shot three of them in his time ; and last year (1887), another was seen, which must be still at large. Hawks are diminishing greatly in numbers, and abandoning their haunts, though some of them still retain possession of *Carrig-na-shouk*—the hawk's rock—near Coolany ; and if man or boy comes near the rock, they are sure to sally forth from their eyrie on the face of the precipice, and to keep whirling round high up in the air, screaming and clattering till the intruder has taken himself away out of their sight, and left , them again in quiet occupation of this their immemorial retreat.

While these formidable and hardy birds are dying out, pheasants, introduced in the county about a dozen years ago, are multiplying in our woods and demesnes. When Wakefield wrote his *Account of Ireland* in 1812, there were no pheasants in the country except a few “ in a coop at the seat of Lord Bantry, and some in Lord Roden's park, county Down,” though, at present, owing to the great care that is taken of them, they are found, in constantly increasing numbers, in all the parks of the county Sligo, where their exquisite plumage so bright, so glossy, so beautiuilly blended and varied, offers the most charming object conceivable to the eye. The famous Greek philosopher, Solon, is said to have been so struck by the dazzling beauty of this bird, that when Cræsus, the fabulously rich king of Lydia, showed him all the gorgeous adornments of the Lydian throne and palace, and asked him had he ever conceived anything so fine, the philosopher replied, that he could think of nothing finer except the plumage of the pheasant. The following figures, marking the proceeds of a day or two's shooting in a county Sligo demesne, r.f an average size, give an idea of the proportion of pheasants to other species of game in the county : 335 pheasants, 4. woodcocks, and 53 hares.

An authentic anecdote or two, current till lately about Sligo, show that eagles were numerous in the neighbourhood in the early years of the century. First : a well-known rope manufacturer, named Billy Black, was tricked rather cleverly by a country woman who passed on him, at a high price, an old plucked eagle for a turkey. It is told that Billy's cook found the cooking of the bird rather tough work, and Billy himself, the eating of it still tougher. Second : eagles were to be had so near the town as Cairns Hill, and one of them, that was shot there on a moonlight night, but not killed outright, though blinded, flew into the town and down through Market Street, putting out the candles of the shops by the flapping of its wings, to the consternation of the people, who, at first, regarded the occurrence as a supernatural visitation.

Rabbits are more numerous just now than at any former time, on account of the greatly enhanced price, and the daily increasing demand that is for them : For these reasons, they are better preserved than in the past—owners of land finding them, in many instances, more profitable than cattle or sheep. In some pasture tracts, on which cattle are taken in, to be depastured for the six months from May to November at a given rent, as much profit is sometimes made by sale of the rabbits trapped, as by the rent of the cattle. Thus, in a large stretch near Knocklane, in Carbury, where the rent of the grazing cattle brought in £300, the sale of the rabbits is said to have realized £300, If the demand for the small quadruped continues to increase, it is not unlikely, that, as some landlords found it their pecuniary interest to substitute on their estates cattle for human beings, so those, or other landlords, may soon come to count it more profitable to have rabbits than to have cattle on their lands.

The leading gentry of the county keep deer—either in parks, walled in for the purpose, as in the case of Colonel Cooper, Mr. O'Hara, and Mr. Wynne, or more at large in their demesnes as in the case of others. Sir John Davis, who wrote in 1613, his celebrated

Discoverie of the True Causes why Ireland was never entirely subdued, tells, that in his time, there was “ but one Parke stored with Deere in all this Kingdome, which is a Parke of the Earl of Ormond’s, near Kilkenny,” but since that day deerparks have become sufficiently common in Ireland—with a good proportion in the county Sligo. Colonel Cooper’s park is stocked with about fifty deer, chiefly of the fallow kind, with a few red deer ; and Mr. O’Hara, Mr. Perceval, Mr. Wynne, and Sir Henry Gore Booth’s parks or demesnes contain equally large numbers.

Sligo is one of the most favourably circumstanced counties of Ireland in respect of water, containing the three great lakes of Gill, Arrow, and Gara, with scores of minor lakes and lakelets ; the four great rivers of Moy, Uncion or Arrow, Owenmore, and the Sligeach or Garavogue ; with many rivers and rivulets, and quite a number of spring-wells—one at least on an average to the townland—the water of several of them being so pure, limpid, and palatable, that nothing, it is said, like it can be had elsewhere.

Lough Gill deserves the first place among the lakes of the county. Reserving for another place some remarks on its appearance and surroundings, it will be enough to state here that it is about eight miles long and two and a-half broad ; and that it is of very varying depths, the changes of bottom level being frequent and abrupt, resembling in this respect the surface of the adjoining townlands of Corrownamodow and Aghamore, which is a series of sharp hills and hollows. The greater part of Lough Gill belongs to the county Sligo, lying between the barony of Carbury on the north, and that of Tirerrill on the south, but a considerable stretch lies in the County Leitrim.

Like Lough Gill, Lough Arrow belongs to two different counties, a part of it being in Roscommon, but much the larger part in Sligo. It is 102 feet above sea level, is about eight miles square, though owing to the high banks, it hardly looks that size. It is famous for its gillaroo trout, which bring? fishermen from all quarters in the month of May.

Lough Gara called, anciently, Lough Techet, lies partly in each of the three counties of Sligo, Roscommon and Mayo. Its surface elevation above the sea is 222 feet, and its area seven miles square.

The minor lakes are Esk, which stretches between Leyney and Tireragh, is a mile and a quarter long, and 607 feet above sea level ; Talt in Leyney, about a mile long, and 455 feet above sea level ; Templehouse, between Corran and Leyney, which is an expansion of the Owenmore river, and is about two miles long, and 386 feet above sea level ; a little to the south of Templehouse, Cloonacleigha, three-fourths of a mile long, and 400 feet above sea level ; Tubberscanavan, called in *Down Survey* Knockmullen Lough, greatly reduced in area by recent drainage ; Ballygawley, or Ballydawley, a charming little lake about a mile square, lying in the valley between Slieve da En and the Ox. Mountains ; Skean, more than half of which is in Roscommon ; Colgagh, in the parish of Calry ; Glencar, partly in Sligo and partly in Leitrim ; Cloonty, near Cliffony, in the parish of Aliamlish, part in that parish and part in the county Leitrim ; and some scores of lakelets here and there through the county, but more especially on the northern slopes of Slieve Gamh and Slieve da En, where they often take a deep bowl shape.

The Moy, which holds the first place among Sligo rivers, is popularly supposed to rise in a well in the townland of Cloondrihara, but its source is more correctly placed, on the Ordnance Survey maps, in the interior of the Ox Mountains, where its infantine movements escape the gaze of the vulgar, like the infant Nile, which, as Lucan tells, is similarly privileged : —

“ Nee licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre.”

Even when the mountain stream has descended into the valley, it is still so tiny that little boys can easily jump across it. By degrees as the Mad river, the Owenaher, the Talt, and the Owen Garrough, pay their tributes, it swells and expands, and is already a fine river when it winds around the quiet, sacred groves of Benada Convent, in measured, noiseless movement, as if guarding against disturbing the religious meditations of that holy retreat. At Rathmagurry, it enters the county Mayo, and after a detour of several miles in that county, comes back from its excursion, and joins again the county Sligo at a point about two miles above Ballina, from which point it forms the boundary between the two counties.

The Sligeach has been always reckoned one of the chief rivers- of Ireland, and is numbered by Eochy O'Flynn among those which Partholan is said to have found before him on coming to the country : —

“ Muadius, *Sligachus* Samerius dictus—Buasuis perennis per rura amæua,
Modornus, Finnus velde limpidus — Banna inter Lee et Eile.”

It is about two miles long from where it issues from the lake to the Victoria Bridge, and it is this part of the river which received the name of Garavogue, the part below the bridge being known from time immemorial, as *Sligeach*. Garavogue or Awen Garrough signifies Rough River, and the name was applied to the Sligo river, when the stream was shallow and impeded by rough stones in the bed. As it will be necessary to recur to this subject, there is no need to dwell further on it here.

The Arrow, or Uacion, rises in Lough Arrow, runs for ten miles in a north-north-westerly direction, passing by Riverstown, Cooperhill, and Markrea, and joining the Owenmore at Collooney, flows on in a broad and rapid stream to the sea at Ballysadare.

The Owenraore takes its rise in Tubber-na-neeve well, in the parish of Kilfree ; forms for some distance the mutual boundary of Corran and Coolavin ; acquires such increase near Buninadden that some would count that place its source ; passes through, or touches on, the parishes of Kilshahy, Drumrat, Cloonoghill, and Emlaghfad in Corran ; expands at Templehouse into a lake, which lies partly in Corran and partly in Leyney ; winds in loops through the flat lands adjoining the so-called Island near the village of Ballinacarrow ; turns, or used to turn, the machinery of two or three mills at Thornhill ; moves slowly through the demesne of Annaghmore ; receives, as it quits the demesne, the tributary waters of the Owenbeg, or Owen na Leave; unites with the Uncion at Collooney ; and, greatly increased in width and volume, hastens over the intervening slopes and ledges to the bay of Ballysadare. As this river, in length of run, body of water, and picturesqueness of course and surroundings, is greatly superior to the Arrow or Uncion, it is strange that it should pass, as it commonly does, as a tributary of the Uncion, instead of the latter being counted the tributary, and the Owenmore the principal river. The small rivers through the baronies, though benefiting greatly their respective districts, call for no special notice in this place.

The passage of the Owenmore through Collooney offers some charming views, of which the following description by the writer (*Ballysadare and Kilvarnet*, p. 50) will give some idea, though a very imperfect one. “ Coming slowly and gravely into the town, passing demurely by the beautiful glebe of Ard cotton, leaping playfully, after it gets from under the rector's eye, over two or three hundred yards of fantastic ledges, till it makes a splendid plunge of twenty feet at the fall, and throws up a cloud of glittering globules to hide its antics ; then darting rapidly away to the east in a bold and graceful curve, to pay its respects to McDonogh's Castle ; and, after receiving the waters of its tributary, the Arrow or Uncion, moving with a sense of new dignity majestically along under the overhanging trees of Union Wood, and, like Galatea in the eclogue,

‘ Et fugit ad salices et se cupit ante videri,’

coming out now and again from under the shade to show itself to admirers before disappearing finally from view at Ballysadare, our river discloses, in a run of two miles, as many beauties as any other river in Ireland in the same length.”

A word or two regarding the lineage of the people will not be out of place before passing on to the separate consideration of the baronies. While it may be assumed that the main element in the population of Sligo is Celtic, there is good ground for thinking that the Anglo-Saxon element is much more considerable than is commonly supposed. This would seem to follow clearly from the crowds of people that came over to this county from time to time from England or the Lowlands of Scotland, and settled in it. As will be seen hereafter, the town of Sligo, when first founded by Maurice Fitzgerald, was stocked with English inhabitants, and the place continued English while the Fitzgeralds and Burkes held sway in Lower Connaught, that is, for about a hundred years. During these years not only the town but most of the county, notably the baronies of Leyney and Tireragh, was in the possession of the foreigners, and so remained from 1237, when the Barons of England began to build castles in Connaught, down to about 1333, when they were defeated and expelled by the O’Haras, O’Dowds, and other native chieftains.

In the earlier years of the seventeenth century streams of immigrants were constantly coming across the channel to this part of Ireland, and settling themselves here and there through it ; and after the ill-starred Insurrection of 1641, the Cromwellians invaded the county *en masse*, spread themselves over its different districts, and occupied the town of Sligo so exclusively, that it may be doubted, whether at one time a single Catholic Celt could be found within its limits. Nor did these accessions cease with the seventeenth century. They have been since kept up, through importations, by our gentry, of batch after batch of domestics and others, who, when their term of service expires, and one batch is succeeded in office by another, instead of going back to their native place in England or elsewhere, are generally located, after the manner of an overflow meeting, on such valuable farms as may be vacant or available.

These invasions and immigrations could not fail to affect largely the natural descent of the inhabitants. The masses that came over, on the occasion of wars or insurrections, like the individuals who came over for domestic service, did not in general return, but settled down in the county, and became gradually absorbed in the population. The English and Scotch names so often met with in all the baronies, indicate the descendants of the immigrants, though it should be borne in mind that the foreign blood is much more common in the neighbourhood than the foreign names. The old maxim that the prefix of Mac or O makes known the genuine Irishman, is not now as generally true, at least in the county Sligo, as it used to be in the past, or as it may still be in other counties ; for many an O’Connor, O’Hara, O’Dowd, or Mac-Donogh, notwithstanding the O or Mac, has, perhaps, as much Saxon as Celtic blood in his veins. Let any man who demurs to this statement, start inquiries with regard to particular families in his neighbourhood, and he will probably find, while examining the genealogical tree of any Celtic family he may select, that he will not have to go far back to discover more than one Saxon graft on the Celtic trunk. And, conversely, if he make the experiment on a family with a Saxon name, he is likely to arrive at a similar result. It is well to be acquainted with this state of things, both for the sake of having correct knowledge on the subject, and in the interest of social peace and harmony ; for if the inhabitants of the county recollected this relationship, and had often in the mind the mollifying consideration, that they are not only living side by side in the same district, but that the same blood is flowing in their veins, they would hardly be so prone, as they have too often shown themselves, to look on one another as aliens and enemies.

[1] In the times of Edward I. and II. Conaught did not contain that whole province, as we now account it ; but there was then the county of Conaught, which was but a part of that province, and the county of Roscommon, which is now accounted a part of the province of

- Conaught,”—Sergeant Muryarts Answer, etc., in Harris’s *Hibernica*, Part I., p. 68
- [2] Part II., pp. 70-71.
- [3] *The Episcopal Succession in England, Scotland, and Ireland*. By Fr. Maziere Brady, Vol. II., p. 125.
- [4] “In the time of Lord Lieutenant Sussex . . . Connaught was divided into six counties—Clare, Galway, Sligo, Mayo, Leitrim, and Roscommon. . . . And yet some (not without probability) attribute this to Sir Henry Sydney.”—*Hibernia Anglicana*, Part I., p. 317.
- [5] “Anno 1505, Sir Henry Sydney divided Connaught into six counties.—Harris’s *Ware*, Vol. II., p. 34.
- [6] It was not until late in the reign of Elizabeth that the province of Connaught was brought under subjection to the Crown and laws of England. The proceedings by which that event was achieved were commenced by the Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sydney, in A.D. 1575 : and completed by a succeeding Deputy, Sir John Perrott, in A.D. 1585.”—O’Flaherty’s *West Connaught*. By James Hardiman, p. 299.
- Mr. Hardiman supports his assertion by a letter of Sir Henry Sydney, addressed to the Council of England, informing that body that he had “devided Connaught (besides the East Breanie or Oreilies and the Annalye or Offeralls countries) into fower counties ; namelye, Sligo, which was a part of Nether Connaught, and Maio, which was another part of the same ; Galway, which was called Upper Connaught, and Rossecommon, which was called the Playnes of Connaught.”—*Ibid*.
- In the *Ogygia* O’Flaherty says : “There were six counties constituted in Connaught by Sir John Perrott, when Lord Lieutenant, viz. : Clare, Galway, Sligo, Maio, Roscommon, and Leitrim.”—Hely’s *Ogygia*, Vol.I., p. 40.
- [7] “There is twenty quarters of the barony of Tyrc-Irrell in the possession of the conntie of Leytrym, since the making of the Composition which the jurors finde by office, warrant, and other good proofes, to be of right parcell of the said county of Sligo.”—Inquisition of 25 July, 1607, taken before Sir Anthony St. Leger, Knight, &c.
- [8] O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia*—Hely’s translation—Vol. II., p. 236.
- [9] Harris’s *Ware*, Vol. II., p. 48.
- [10] Dormot. the son of Roderic O’Conor, took the house of Hugh, the son of Manus O’Conor, at Kilcoleman-Finn, in Corran.—*Four Mastors*, A.D. 1212.
- [11] A battle was fought between Rory O’Conor, King of Connaught, and Hugh, son of Art O’Ruairc, at Conachaill, in Corann.”—*Four Masters*, 1087. On this entry O’Donovan remarks, in a note : “Now Cunghill. a towuland in the parish of Achonry, barony of Leyney, and county of Sligo.”
- [12] *Four Masters*. A.D. 1213, 1218, 1226, 1236, &c. And Ware says : “In the ancient Annals of Ireland, the Prelates of this See for the most part are called Bishops of Luighny or Leny.”—Harris’s *Ware*, Vol. II, p. 58.
- [13] O’Donovan clearly contradicts himself on this subject ; for while he writes , in one place (*Battle of Magh Rath*, p. 232) : “The ancient territory of Luihhne is co-extensive with the present barony of Leyney, in the county of ; Sligo, in which the name is still preserved.” he states in another : “The exact limits of their territory” (the Luigne) “are preserved in those of the ; diocese of Achadh Chonaire (Achonry), in the counties of Sligo and Mayo”—*Book of Rights*, p. 103. According to this, then, the exact limits of the Luighne territory would be, at once, those of the present barony of Leyney, and those of the present diocese of Achonry, though the diocese is about three times the extent of the barony ! *Bonus aliquando dormitat !*
- [14] *Greagraidhe*, now, ridiculously called “The Gregories,” a district in the south of the county of Sligo, supposed to be co-extensive with the barony of “Coolavin ;” but it was originally much more extensive.—O’Donovan’s note to “*Book of Rights*,” p. 90.
- [15] Along with Tireragh, Hy Fiachrach included Tirawley, the distnct of Ceara, in the county of Mayo, the Hy Fiachrach Aidbne (co-extensive with the diocese of Kilmacduagh) the Cineal Aodha, na h-Echtghe (in the south-west of the county Galway) and Killovyergh, in the north western portion of the barony of Kiltartan, in Galway.—*Tribes and Customs of the Hy-Fiachrach*, p. 3.

- [16] *Chronicon Scotorum*. By W. M. Hennessy, page 7.—“ Samoir between the Fiachrach and Cinel Conaill.” Samoir was an old name of the river now called the Erne.
- [17] O’Donovan’s note in *Tribes and Customs of Hy Fiachrach*, page 302. V
- [18] From the Codhnach of gentle flood,
The mark of the boundary
To the boundary of the Rodba, to be mentioned.
It is a beauteous perfect territory.
Of the illustrious race of Fiachrach.”—*Tribes and Customs of Hy Fiachrach*, page 279.
- [19] “ From the Rodba of prosperous course
I have bravely pursued my career
To the Codhnach of winding current.”—*Ibid.*
- [20] *Tribes and Customs of Hy Fiachrach*, p. 275.
- [21] *Ibid.*
- [22] *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 1562.
- [23] *Ibid.*, A.M. 4694.
- [24] *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*. Translated from the original Irish. By W. M. Hennessy, in M. F. Cusack’s *Life of St. Patrick*, page 434.
- [25] For the Erne we have the *Chronicon Scotorum* (page 7). The *Annals of Loch Ce* agrees with the *Chronicon Scotorum*, and makes the northern and southern limits of Connaught to be, respectively, the Erne and *Slieve Eichte*. Hennessy’s *Annals of Loch Ce*, A.D. 1316.
For the Drowes on the other hand we have Colgan who writes, “ Magh Ene cst campus Tirconnalliæ ad australem ripam numinis Ernei inter ipsum et Drobhais fluvium protensus.” *Trias Thaumaturga*, page 180.
The Four Masters are at one time for the Drowes and at another for the Erne, according, probably, to the source from which they draw their information. See years 1137 and 1597.
- [26] *Calendar of State Papers of James I*. Edited by Rev. C. W. Russell, D.D., and John P. Prendergast, Esq., vol. 2, page 315.
- [27] *Manual of the Geology of Ireland*. By G. Henry Kinahan, M.R.I. A., *etc.* p. 121.
- [28] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- [29] *Hull’s Physical Geology of Ireland*, p. 33.
- [30] *Doctor McFarlan’s Statistical Survey of County Sligo*, p. 10.
- [31] *Statistical Account of Ireland*, Vol. II., p. 315.
- [32] *Weld’s Survey of County Roscommon*, p. 38.
- [33] *Thorn’s Tracts and Treatises*, Vol. I., p. 115.

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