

Lyric Poems.

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There are found interspersed in the prose narratives of all this period, as well as separately, a great number of charming lyrics, lullabies, hunting-songs, and poems in praise of natural scenery. A good number of these pieces occur in "The Colloquy," or are connected with the names of the Fenian heroes or with their deeds, and may fitly be classed with the Ossianic literature. It will be convenient here to throw into the same chapter some other poems by unknown authors which belong to the period with which we are dealing. There seems to have been a large amount of genuine poetry produced, some portions of which have grown out of, or been introduced into, prose narratives, such as lives of saints, fairy legends or folk-lore and Fenian tales, while 'others' seem unconnected with any prose recital. Caeilte's Hymn to the Island of Arran in Scotland which occurs in the "Colloquy" is full of descriptive power. It would seem that from Lammastide (called in Ireland Lughnasadh, or the feast of the god Lugh) until "the call of the cuckoo from the tree-tops in Ireland" the battalions were accustomed to repair to the Isle of Arran for hunting. Caeilte in describing this island to St. Patrick becomes eloquent of its delights. "More melodious than all music ever heard were the voices of the birds as they rose from the billows, and from the coast-line of the island, thrice fifty flocks of winged fowl encircled her, clad in gay brilliance of every colour," he begins, and then he breaks forth into this lay :—

"Arran of many stags, the sea her very shoulders washes,
Island that feeds whole companies, among whose ridges blue
spears redden,
Skittish deer are on her mountain peaks, soft blue-berries
among her moving undergrowth,
Cool water flowing in her streams, and mast upon her russet
oaks."

He goes on to describe the search of the greyhounds and hunting dogs amongst the thickets, the crimson crop of berries on the rocks, the smooth grass of the glades and the leaping of the fawns over the crags.

The poem ends as follows :

"Right pleasant their condition (*i.e.*, the wild fruits and animals and the vessels sailing past the Isle) when fair weather sets in ; under her river brinks lie the trout, round her grand cliffs to one another wheeling sea-gulls call ; at such a time as this, right pleasant is the Isle." [1]

Elsewhere the cold of the weather and the deep snow, often commented upon in Irish writings, calls forth a song from Caeilte :

"Cold is the winter, the wind is risen, the high-couraged unquelled stag is on foot ; 'tis bitter cold to-night the mountain o'er, yet still bells out the ungovernable stag. Well sleeps the ruddy deer stretched out upon the rock, hidden from sight as though beneath the soil, all in the latter end of chilly night." [2]

He compares his own old age to the chill cold of winter, and he ends by bewailing the Fianna, once so bold and vigorous, now lying dead and cold beneath the ground.

Very charming also are the poems in praise of Benn Edair, or Howth Hill, a headland stretching along the outer side of Dublin Bay, and a favourite haunt of the heroes. One of these begins as follows :

“ The loveliest hill on Erin’s ground,
Bright as its sea-gulls circling round,
Sore grief to me my thoughts to tear
From old Benn Edair, grave and fair.”

These poems show, like those of an earlier age, a pure delight in natural things, a love which lingers round its object, giving to every aspect of it a meaning and poetic significance. The feeling for symbolism is strong in Ireland. The winds, for instance, are symbolised by colours, and a mediæval poem describes the character and destiny of a child as being fixed by the point from which the wind blew at its birth. Even states of the mind are characterised in the same way ; there are red, white and green martyrdoms in ecclesiastical literature, and by these different kinds and degrees of self-sacrifice are designated. In a long poem full of charming fancy the trees of the forest are rehearsed in turn, and to each a poetical significance is attached. The woodbine is, curiously enough, called the “ Monarch of the forests of Inisfail,” and this because none may hold it captive, while in its embrace it hugs the toughest trees ; “ no effort of a feeble ruler this.” The noble willow is sacred to poems, and may not be burned, “ within his bloom bees are a-sucking, to each his little prison-house is dear” ; “ the graceful tree with berries called the rowan is the wizards’ tree ;” “ the precious and low-sweeping apple-bough is a tree ever decked in bloom of white, against whose fair head all men put forth the hand,” and so on through all the trees of the wood.

One of the finest of these long poems is the splendid “ Hymn to Morning” which occurs in a mediæval Life of St. Cellach, of Killala. It purports to have been written at the rising of the sun on the morning on which he was to be put to death. The Saint had been seized by his murderers the day before his death and carried by them into the deepest recesses of the forest, where he was shut up in the hollow trunk of a tree, there to await his end. His murderers, who had been his former friends and fellow-pupils, but who had been induced by bribes to desert and slay him, sit in watch outside his temporary prison. His fears and his dread of death are vividly described, his sleepless night and early awakening, his dreams of flight, and his final submission to his predestined fate. With the first dawn of day he looks out only to see, sitting on the branches above him, the raven, the kite, and the scall-crow, sure harbingers of his approaching death ; on seeing him, a wolf on the track of his blood slinks back amongst the brackens. “ My dream of Wednesday night was true,” said Cellach, “ four wild dogs (*i.e.*, his four companions) rent me and dragged me through the brackens ; adown a precipice I fell, and never more came up.” Then, as the rising sun burst forth and flooded the earth with splendour, he forgot his misery for the moment and broke into a noble farewell hymn to greet the dawn of his final day of life.

“ Hail to the morning fair, that falls as a flame on the green-
sward.
Hail, too, to Him who sends her, the Morn ever fruitful in
blessings.
Morning resplendent and proud, the brilliant sun’s little sister,
Hail to thee, Dawn, thrice-hail, that lightest my book of the
Hours.”

He addresses the wild birds and beasts that are waiting for their victim, and he ruefully suggests that it was perhaps “ the tiny wren, scant of tail, who is piping a prophetic lay” from the branches above his head, who had betrayed him to his enemies. The quatrains describing his capture by his old fellow-students, and their hurried and secret journey into the depths of the forest might have suggested to Keats the famous lines in his poem of Isabella, or the Pot of Basil. [3] They are as follows :—

“ Wednesday night past I saw visions, the wild dogs troubled
my slumbers,
Hither and thither they dragged me, through russet ferns of
the coppice.
'Twas in a dream I saw it, to the lonely green glen men bore me,
Four men carried me thither, I saw only three returning.”

Lullabies and laments are also common and appear to have been set to old airs suited to their plaintive melody. The lament of Fionn, the old man, over the bier of his grandchild, Oscar, is one of these ; it sometimes forms part of the ballad of the Battle of Gaura, in which Oscar was killed, and is sometimes separate.

“ Beloved of my beloved, beloved of my beloved,
Child of my own child, white-skinned and slender.”

A weird and lovely melody which has the sound of a swing among the trees or of the night-wind sighing round the house is the old fairy lullaby, which begins :

“ My cause of merriment, soft and sweet art thou
Of the race of Coll and Conn art thou ;
My cause of merriment, soft and sweet art thou
Of the race of Conn art thou.

My soft cause of merriment, my soft rushes,
My lovely rock plant,
Were it not for the charm that is on your foot
We would lift you with us.”

These are only examples of a copious literature of lyric verse.

The Last of the Annalists.

The Irish may justly be described as a nation of annalists. The preservation of the tribal records, the recording of genealogies, and the committing to writing the local or provincial wars and raids, constituted from the earliest times the chief care of the literary class, who were trained by a long course of special studies for this particular work. The Philosophy of History was a thing of the future, and the study of history from the point of view of a general survey of the trend and course of national events can hardly be said to have begun ; in the modern sense the historian had not come into existence. Nor would he have had any place in Ireland up to the seventeenth century, or even later, for the consciousness of a united nation was not sufficiently strong to make possible the construction of a record in which the bearing of each particular part upon the destinies of the whole country should be taken into account. The provincial spirit remained strongly marked up to the time of the Stuarts at least (it will probably always exist as a dividing line in Ireland), and it was only the troubles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that dissolved to a certain extent these local separations and brought about fresh combinations, political, religious and social, which gave for the first time

a conception of Ireland as a national whole. Possibly the records, as they have actually come down to us, better represent the real conditions in ancient and mediæval Ireland than any modern history could do. For there remains to us a large series of compilations formed out of the tribal records, and in the number and fulness of her tribal records Ireland can boast a superiority over any nation of Europe. From the earliest times each sept and province possessed its own genealogist and chronicler, whose business it was, before the knowledge of writing, to keep in memory, and when writing became common, to record in special books, the deeds of the clan and its princes and the deaths of its chief lay and ecclesiastical personages. These annalists were held by the tribe in the highest honour. They ranked next to the chief or head of the clan ; they fed at his table and were supported by his bounty ; and they became his counsellors and representatives in political affairs. The office of scribe and genealogist was usually continued in certain families, the son succeeding, as a matter of course, to the position held by his father, and sometimes several members of the same family being associated in the office. These men were trained in the bardic schools or under some well-known teacher, and they handed on from age to age the traditions of their sept. Each annalist added to the existing entries the events of his own lifetime, and until the break up of the tribal customs, the records were subjected to a systematic examination at annual or triennial gatherings of the tribe or province, and were corrected wherever inaccuracies could be proved. These official genealogists continued to hold their positions in some parts of Ireland up to the middle of the seventeenth century, but the disorganisation of the clan life and, from the sixteenth century onward, the poverty of their patrons, gradually made the official scribe more and more rare. Most of the annals which remain to us come to an end in the fifteenth century or earlier, though a few are continued into the following era. We may conclude that after this period the clan system was no longer sufficiently organised for the yearly entries to be considered of importance. The devastation of the country, the uncertainty of land tenure, the transference of clan property into the hands of strangers, and the general misery and poverty consequent on these things brought the clan records to an end, and with the loss of their position and duties the office of tribal historian became extinct. But in the seventeenth century there still remained a few men who retained the old knowledge of the antiquities and history of their country, and who carried on the scribal tradition into a more modern age. They were men whose learning was profound in their own department, and who had in some instances added to the antiquarian and genealogical lore of which they were the special custodians, a considerable acquaintance with the learning of other countries.

The names and work of the annalists and scribes Dugald mac Firbis and Lugaidh and Michael O'Clery are so important that they must be dealt with separately.

Dugald mac Firbis (about 1580-1660) was the last of a long family line of historiographers and scribes whose names we frequently meet with in the annals, accompanied by the memorandum that they were " chief historians of the Tir Fiachrach (Tireragh)," " learned annalists," and so on. The most important of these ancestors was Gilla-Iosa-mór mac Firbis, the compiler of the Book of Lecan, who wrote some time before 1416, and who seems also to have partly written the Yellow Book of Lecan (*Leabhar Buidhe Lecain*), so named from the district (now Lacken, in the Barony of Tireragh, Co. Sligo), in which the family were bred, and where, as he himself says, they " wrote books of history, annals, and poetry, and kept a school of history." In older times the Mac Firbises had, along with the O'Keenes, held an honourable position next to that of their Lords, the O'Dowds, chiefs of Tir Fiachrach, in N. Sligo. At the inauguration of a chief of the family it was the duty of the Mac Firbis who happened to be poet of his day to nominate the newcomer and to touch him with his wand of office ; at the subsequent banquet, he and O'Keene drank together to the honour of the chief, and none might drink before them, and to them were given the arms and armour and steed of the elected Lord. But these days of power and dignity had passed ; the lands of the O'Dowds had been reduced by family quarrels and by confiscation, and the members of the family who

remained at Lacken in Dugald's time were simple country gentlemen whose plain lives hardly needed the services of an hereditary chronicler to recount them. Still we find that Dugald was brought up to his ancestral profession, and that he was sent to study in the schools of the Mac Egans of Ormond, and of the O'Davorens at Burren, in Co. Clare. It was probably during the time that he was in the former school that he copied and thus preserved for posterity those annals of Ossory and Leinster of which Dr. O'Donovan has published the few surviving fragments. [4]

In 1645, two years after the death of his father, we find Mac Firbis settled in Galway, where he acted as tutor to John Lynch, the future author of "Cambrensis Eversus," and to Roderick O'Flaherty, then seventeen years old, both of whom he evidently imbued with his own love of the national antiquarian records. Here, in the College of St. Nicholas, he compiled his great work on the Genealogies of the Milesian race, a work still constantly referred to by the Herald's Office in our own day to trace the pedigrees of families of Irish descent. There is in this extraordinary book hardly a branch of the old Irish stock that is not traced up to its sources and followed in all its ramifications and branches. [5] A glance at such a work as this shows us with what care the Irish genealogical records were transmitted and preserved from the earliest times down to the seventeenth century. The chief Danish families settled in Ireland are also given, showing their inter-marriages and the names of their descendants. The work was completed in 1650. On the Surrender of Galway to the Parliamentary forces in 1652, Dr. Lynch fled to France, but Mac Firbis went quietly on with his work of collecting MSS. and compiling records both for his own purposes and for the use of Sir James Ware, in whose house at Dublin he resided for some time, and for whom he did a great deal of work that Ware had not the justice even to acknowledge ; he does not once mention his name.

On his return to Sligo, after the death of Sir J. Ware, he found himself and his companions fallen into an evil case. O'Flaherty was in a state of absolute destitution, and he himself was not much better off. In a note to his genealogies, he says pathetically, speaking of the expedition of King Dathi to the Alps :

"It is no doubt a worldly lesson to consider how the Gaels were at that time conquering far and near, and that now not one in a hundred of the Irish nobles possesses so much of his land as he could be buried in." He received no recompense for his great genealogical compilation. He says, himself, that he wrote it only "to increase the glory of God, and for the information of the people in general." It is mournful, indeed, to find that the last of the Irish chroniclers fell a victim to the hand of a wanton assassin. The old man he was past his eightieth year was travelling on foot, as it would seem, from his native village in the West of Ireland to Dublin. He was resting for the night at a small shop in the village of Dunflin, Co. Sligo, where he was attacked and brutally murdered, apparently without any provocation whatever, by a young gentleman of the neighbourhood, upon whose licentious freedom of behaviour the old chronicler's presence served as an unwelcome check. The assassination of Dugald mac Firbis closed the annals of a race of masters whose genealogical and historical labours have preserved to our time the materials upon which all future histories of Ireland must be built.

It will be well to say here a few words about his friend and pupil, O'Flaherty.

Roderic O'Flaherty was born in 1629 or 1630, in Moycullen Castle, Co. Galway. On the death of his father, when he was only two years old, he became a ward of the Crown. He was educated under the father of John Lynch in Galway, and studied Irish History under Dugald mac Firbis, who was living in Galway at this time. His famous book, the *Ogygia*, [6] written in Latin in 1685, appears to have arisen out of a correspondence between himself and John Lynch, then Archdeacon of Tuam, on the difficulties of Irish chronology. In it he endeavours

by elaborate calculations to reconcile the differences in the dates of the Irish records, founding his own system upon three ancient poems, which deal with the synchronisms of the Kings of Ireland. This work, diffuse and uncritical as it is, was the first History of Ireland to find its way into the hands of the English public. It is dedicated to James, Duke of York, and the English Royal family of the Stuarts is therein traced up to the early monarchs of Ireland. He introduces events from religious and foreign history, and his chronology follows the usual tedious Irish system of beginning with Sacred and Roman History and passing on thence to the affairs of his own country.

He is said to have written also an “Ogygia Christiana,” but this is not forthcoming ; there also remains a chronographical description of West Connacht from his hand. He suffered in his own person all the miseries inflicted on the country during the Cromwellian period. Though he was a minor at the time, he was deprived of his paternal estate at Moycullen, and the Act of Settlement of 1662 did not restore his property. By two law-suits, in 1653 and 1677, he recovered a small part, but the heavy taxation and general poverty of the country made it of little use to him. When Edward Lhuyd, of Oxford, visited him in 1700 he found him in a miserable condition of distress. He describes him as “affable and learned,” but says that “the late revolutions in Ireland had reduced him to great poverty and destroyed his books and papers.” In April, 1709, Sir Thomas Molyneux saw him living in a miserable condition at Parke, some three hours west of Galway. “I expected,” he says, “to have seen here some old Irish manuscripts, but his ill-fortune had stripped him of these as well as his other goods, so that he has now nothing left but some pieces of his own writing, and a few old books of history, printed.” He was then in his eightieth year. He died on April 8th, 1718, and was buried at Parke. He was married and had one son and some daughters. The son died an officer in the Austrian service.

The O’Clerys. The learned family of the O’Clerys belonged originally to the south-eastern portion of Co. Galway, but they were driven from their home after the Anglo-Norman invasion. One of them, named Cormac, came, sometime before 1382, to Donegal, and married the daughter of the hereditary “Ollamh” of the O’Donnell’s, by whom he had a son. It is from this ancestor that *Lugaidh (Lewy) O’Clery* and his two sons were descended. *Lugaidh* was chief bard of Tirconnell about the beginning of the seventeenth century, and he died before 1632. He took part in the celebrated bardic contest called *Iomarbháidh na bhfileadh*, or the “Contention of the Bards,” himself contributing four poems, amounting to 1,520 verses. But his most important work is his *Life of Hugh Roe O’Donnell*, which was written down from his dictation by his sons, *Cucogry* or *Peregrine* and *Cairbre O’Clery*. The original manuscript, written in a beautifully clear hand, is in the Royal Irish Academy.

Cucogry (or Peregrine) O’Clery (d. 1664), son of *Lugaidh*, was born at Kilbarron, Co. Donegal. He owned land from the Earl of Annandale, but was dispossessed of it in 1632 after an inquisition taken at Lifford, his little property being forfeit to the Crown because he was a “meere Irishman, and not of English or British descent or surname.” He was obliged to migrate to Co. Mayo, carrying with him his manuscripts and books, which in his will, written in Irish and preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, he styles affectionately “the property the most dear to me that ever I possessed in this world.” He bequeathed them to his sons, *Dermot* and *John*, before his death in 1664, and they were passed on as a sacred inheritance from father to son, until they came down to *Patrick (or John ?) O’Clery*, who brought them to Dublin in 1817.

The joint work of these two scribes, father and son, is their *Life of Hugh Roe O’Donnell, Prince of Tyrconnell (1572-1602)*. This very interesting piece of contemporary history relates in a spirited manner and with plentiful detail the adventurous life of the last of the independent princes of Tyrconnell. *Lugaidh O’Clery* must himself have witnessed many of the stirring

scenes which he so graphically describes, and his work was naturally in large part incorporated into the Annals of the Four Masters for the years with which it deals. The Life of Red Hugh is of the deepest interest ; as a youth he was twice confined in Dublin Castle, and with other young princes of the North he made his escape across the Dublin mountains. Once he was recaptured and more severely confined ; the second time the youths made their way in the depth of winter and in blinding snow, without food and with insufficient clothing, to Glenmalure, where they had friends. Art O'Neill succumbed to the cold, and Hugh Roe himself lost two of his toes through frost-bite. His subsequent determined stand against the English, his remarkable power in combining the native chiefs, and the success that attended their arms, are matters of general knowledge ; had it not been for the defection of Nial Garbh "Neill the Rough," it seemed at one moment as though the English forces would be driven out of the West and North. After the fatal battle of Kinsale, O'Donnell set out for Spain to try and induce the King to send further troops, but he died there, it is said by poison, on September 10th, 1602. He was not yet thirty years of age when he died.

The life of Hugh Roe affords a good example of the familiarity of the whole nation with the old legends, down to the time of its dispersal, and of the persistence of the native tradition. Here in a modern historical tract the country bears its old mythological names, just as it does in the semi-legendary tales of the Early Kings. A district in Galway is spoken of as "the ancient province of Sreng, son of Srengan" (*i.e.*, one of the chiefs of the Firbolgs) ; Ulster is called "the province of Conor mac Nessa ;" the strand near Dundalk is Tragh Baile mic Buain. Art Kavenagh is a "certain famous hero of the Lagenians (Leinstermen) of the race of Cathair mór," and Morann, son of Maen, whose mythical collar was supposed to tighten round the neck of anyone who uttered a falsehood, is quoted as author of the proverb : "There has not been found, nor will there be found, a more truthful judge than the battlefield."

In spite of the rigorously historic nature of the work, the author indulges in an occasional lapse into the old rhetorical style of description. In the report of the gloom that prevailed among the Irish when Hugh Roe was recaptured by the Council, he says, "There were many princesses and great ladies and noble white-breasted maidens sorrowing and lamenting on his account. There were many high-born nobles clapping their hands and weeping in secret for him, etc." The account of the Battle of the Curlew Mountains, in which Sir Conyers Clifford was mortally wounded and the English forces driven back, might have been taken direct from the Battle of Magh Rath ; it exhibits the same lists of alliterative adjectives and the same high-flown method of description. So also in the description of Hugh O'Donnell, father of the hero, the old man is compared in a pompous passage to Lugaidh, son of Cian (*i.e.*, Lugh Lamhfada), and Troilus, son of Priam ; to the "hound of the artificer" (*i.e.*, Cuchulain) and to Achilles, son of Peleus ; with other classical and Gaelic heroes.

In spite of the patriotic ardour of the piece, justice is done to those among the English leaders who showed a fair spirit towards their adversaries. Sir Conyers Clifford's death is lamented as warmly by the Irish as by his own party, and the author speaks of him as "a knight famous by repute, noble by blood, and a man who bestowed jewels and wealth." In relating his fall in battle it is generously added : "Great was the grief for him who fell there, sad was the fate that befel him, and the Irish of the province were not pleased at his death, for he never told them a lie and he was a bestower of treasures and wealth among them." Not only in this biography but generally in the annals there is shown a desire for fairness and a freedom from recrimination which compares favourably not only with the mediæval English reports of the Irish leaders, but with much modern history on both sides.

But the most remarkable member of this family of scholars was *Michael O'Clery* (1575-1643), a distant cousin of Cucogry, who was perhaps the most voluminous writer and compiler that Ireland has ever produced. He was born in 1575 at Kilbarron on Donegal Bay, and was baptized Tadhg ; he was commonly known as Tadhg an tSleibhe, or "Teigue of the Mountain," until on his entrance into the Franciscan Order he took the name of Michael. His elder brother, Maelmuire, who afterwards became his ecclesiastical superior, took the name of Bernardin. It is under these names that we find the brothers entered in the inscription pre-facing the *Annals of the Four Masters*, of whom Michael was head and chief, while Bernardin was superior or guardian of the Monastery of Donegal during the time that the *Annals* were being compiled within its walls. Michael, like his contemporary, Keating, received his early education in East Munster, and he was already esteemed one of the first Irish antiquarians of his day when he entered the Franciscan convent at Louvain, at that time the refuge of many Irishmen of learning. The guardian of the convent, Aedh mac an Bhaired, or Hugh Ward, also a native of Donegal, was himself an ardent enthusiast for Irish studies, and he recognised the learning of Michael O'Clery. About the year 1620 he sent him to collect all the lives of the early Irish Saints that he could find, with other material bearing on the early religious history of the country. For fifteen years O'Clery wandered about in Ireland collecting and transcribing all the important literature relating to the early traditions of the country which he could procure. In the preface which his friend and contemporary, Father John Colgan, attached to the edition of the "Lives of the Saints," published at Louvain in 1645, for the materials of which he was so largely indebted to O'Clery's labours, O'Clery is said to have "laboured with indefatigable industry for about fifteen years : in the mean-time copying many lives of saints from very ancient documents in the language of the country, genealogies, three or four different and ancient martyrologies, and many other monuments of great antiquity which he transmitted hither. At length, by the charge of the superiors deputed to this work, he devoted his mind to clearing and arranging, in a better method and order, the other sacred and profane histories of his country, from which, with the assistance of three other distinguished antiquarians whom he employed as colleagues, he compiled, or with more truth (since they had been composed by ancient authors), he cleared up, digested and composed three tracts of remote antiquity, by comparing many ancient documents." The three tracts here spoken of are (1) the *Reim Rioghraidhe*, or "Royal List" of the Kings and Saints of Ireland, with their pedigrees and the dues accruing to the former from their subjects and from dependent states ; (2) the *Martyrologium Sanctorum Hiberniæ*, a complete calendar of the Irish Saints, with their genealogies and some quotations in verse ; and (3) the *Leabhar Gabhála*, or Book of Invasions, giving an account of the early semi-mythical conquests of Ireland from the time of the Flood, and bringing down the history to the year 1171. The first of these was finished with the assistance of his three able co-editors in the "Annals of the Four Masters," at Athlone, in 1630. The *Leabhar Gabhála* was written immediately afterwards (1630-31), at the Convent of Lisgoole, Co. Fermanagh, with the aid of the same scholars and under the encouragement of Brian Maguire, Lord Enniskillen, who lent him his own scribe to aid in the work.

In January of the following year, 1632, we find O'Clery settled in the Franciscan Monastery of Donegal, engaged on the great work of his life, the compilation of the *Annals of the Four Masters* ; and in the same year in which this vast undertaking was completed (1636) he produced his *Martyrologium*, which was doubtless the result of his earliest studies in Irish antiquities. In 1643 we find him back at Louvain, where he printed a glossary of difficult Irish words, entitled *Focloir no Sanasán Nuadh*, dedicated to the Bishop of Elphin, a book which was already rare in 1686. O'Clery's heavy labours closed at Louvain in 1643. He died as he had lived, poor and modest, a scribe who laboured unweariedly to rescue from oblivion the records of his native land, whose chiefs and saints he praises who never praised himself, and whose sorrows and ruin he mourned who never dreamed of mourning his own poverty and struggles. If O'Clery did little work which can be called original, we owe to him the

preservation of much valuable material which would otherwise have been irreparably lost to us.

It will be necessary to give a separate account of some of his compilations.

Leabhar Gabhála, or Book of the Conquest of Ireland, commonly called the “ Book of Invasions.” This book seems to have been known in very early times in Ireland, and from it Keating and the Annalists drew the material for their accounts of the early semi-mythical settlements of the followers of Partholan and of Neimheadh, and of the coming of their successors, the Tuatha De Danann and the Milesians, to the country. We find a fragment of it, one page only, standing at the beginning of the Book of the Dun (L.U.) and a larger portion, in prose and verse, occupies the opening folios of the Book of Leinster. No doubt, the whole tract was once to be found in the Book of the Dun, for O’Clery, in his preface to the reader, mentions a copy of it as one of the authorities from which he wrote. He says : “ These are the books of Conquest we had at hand when writing this Invasion of Ireland. The Book of Bally Mulconry, which Maurice, son of Paidín O’Mulconry copied from the Book of the Dun Cow. The Book of Bally O’Clery, written in the time of Maelsechlainn the Great, son of Donnell. The Book of the People of Dugenan of Seancuach, known as the Book of Glendalough. The Book of the Uacongbháil. Together with other books of conquest and history besides.”

There is considerable variation in the manner in which the old writers opened their story. A brief re-capitulation of the earlier chapters of the Book of Genesis prepares the way in the Book of Leinster for the introduction of a hero named Gaedel Glas, who is said to have formed the Gaelic tongue out of the seventy-two languages then spoken in the world, an explanation which satisfactorily accounts for any difficulties that may be met with by students of Irish. It then proceeds with the account of the arrival of Cessair, grand-daughter of Noah, who fled to Ireland to escape the Deluge, and with the settlements in the usual order, carrying the history down to the coming of Christianity to Ireland, with a brief supplementary list of the later kings, concluding at the date of the writer in the time of King Dermot mac Morrrough of Leinster, 1166. O’Clery, however, decides in his opening paragraph that the Biblical part of the story is best discussed by theologians, and dismissing summarily the history of the first four ages of the world, he proceeds directly to the history of the invasions of Ireland. His version ends with the reign of Maelsechlainn the Great, “ the last King of Ireland within her unopposed,” at which point one, at least, of his authorities deserted him. It is uncertain whether the book which he calls the Book of Glendalough is the Book of Leinster or not ; some of the poems quoted from it, and many of the prose pieces, are undoubtedly the same as those quoted in the Book of Leinster, but it is possible that they were both copied from another MS. This recension, by Michael O’Clery, finished in 1631 in the Convent of Donegal, was made with great care and with the assistance of those learned historians who afterwards aided him in the compilation of the Annals of the Four Masters. O’Clery does not profess to write the *Leabhar Gabhála*, but to “ purge, compile and transcribe” the “ ancient honourable chronicles,” so-called ; he considers it a necessary preparation for his future annalistic work. It is the most important version existing, and from it most of the modern copies are transcribed with more or less accuracy. It is signed by the guardian of the Convent of Lisgoole and by O’Clery's fellow-workers, who testify each in his turn to the care and labour bestowed upon the work by “ the poor brother, Michael O’Clery, and by the company of men helping him.” In it are numerous long poems by Eochaidh O’Flynn (d. 984), Tanaidhe O’Mulconry (d. 1136), Flann Mainistreach (d. 1056), and Giolla Keevin (Caoimhghin) (d. 1072), in which the prose matter is repeated in obscure verse. [7]

Reim Rioghraidhe, or Succession of the Kings. This ancient list of the pedigrees of the Kings was also transcribed and corrected by the energy of Michael O’Clery and his coadjutors, who laboured so long together. It was finished on the 4th of November, 1630, in the

Convent of Athlone, as is stated in the dedication to Torloch mac Cochlain, who provided the financial support required to carry out the undertaking. It was regarded as a preparatory labour to the compilation of the *Leabhar Gabhála*, and it was intended to include the pedigrees of the Saints, and to show their connection with the families of the Kings, but this latter portion of the work was only partially accomplished. The original MS. is at Brussels, having been transferred thither, with many of the other manuscripts originally belonging to Colgan at Louvain, from its earlier resting-place at the College of St. Isidore, at Rome. In a copy transcribed by Richard Tipper in 1728, and now in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, is found an additional preface, added in 1644, the year after O'Clery's death, by another Franciscan friar, Paul O'Colla, writing in the house of Conall Mageoghegan of Westmeath, the translator of the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*. This preface attempts to give a list of the authorities from which O'Clery and his companions compiled their work, but it is not accurate. O'Curry is evidently mistaken in ascribing this preface to O'Clery himself.

The *Martyrology of Donegal* was so-called because it was "begun and finished" in the Franciscan Convent of Donegal, 19th April, 1630. O'Clery tells us that he had been for ten years engaged in its compilation. Two autograph copies are among the Colgan manuscripts at Brussels, the shorter of the two having been written by the author in Douay in 1629, a year before the complete copy was finished. The Donegal copy has no preface. O'Clery gives as his authorities the *Felire of Angus*; the *Martyrology of Tallaght*; the *Calendar of Cashel* (not now existing); and the *Martyrology of Maelmuire O'Gorman* (composed 1167), taken from the *Felire* or *Martyrology of Tallaght*. O'Clery's compilation is peculiarly valuable from the number of legends of saints, poems and hymns that it contains. It records the names of a large number of Scottish Saints.

[1] *Silva Gadelica*, i., p. 102; ii., p. 109.

[2] *Ibid* i., p. 172; ii., p. 192.

[3] "So the two brothers and their murdered man, rode past fair Florence," etc. Stanza xxvii.

[4] *Fragments of Annals*, edited by J. O'Donovan for the Irish Archæological Society, 1860.

[5] The title of this work is "The Branches of Relationship and the Genealogical Ramifications of every Colony that took possession of Ireland . . . together with a Sanctilogium and a catalogue of the Monarchs of Ireland, etc., compiled by Dubhaltach mac Fírbisigh of Lecan, 1650." The autograph is in the possession of the Earl of Roden.

[6] The original edition was published in 1685. It was imperfectly translated into English by Rev. James Hely in 1793. In 1775 Dr. Charles O'Connor published a vindication of O'Flaherty's work in twenty-one Chapters, the last of which was left unfinished.

[7] *Peregrine or Cucogry O'Clery's beautiful autograph copy* is in the Library of the R. I. Academy. The publication of this work is in contemplation by the Irish Texts Society.

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