

Of Mac Liag, and his works

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LECTURE VI.

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On the manners and customs of the ancient Irish : a series of lectures (1873)

(III.) Education, and Literature ; (continued). *Of Mac Liag, and his works* [circa a.d. 1000]. The History of the " Wars of the Danes". Life of *Brian Boromha* ; by *Mac Liag*. Poems by *Mac Liag*. Of Poems of this writer not described by O'Reilly. Of the history of *Carn Conaill*. Of *Mac Coisé*, and his Poems.

We come now to *Mac Liag*, the chief historical Poet of Erin, in his time, who died in the year 1015. This remarkable man was a native of South Connacht, and had in his early professional career been attached to the court of *Tadhg* O'Kelly, the hereditary prince of *Ui Mainé*, an extensive territory of south-eastern Connacht, bordering on the River Shannon ; (a chieftain whose family is now represented in direct line of descent, by my esteemed friend, Denis Henry Kelly, Esq., of Castle Kelly, in the county of Roscommon).

On the death of Mahon, King of Munster, the elder brother of *Brian Boromha*, in the year 974, he was succeeded by the immortal *Brian* himself, who was then in the forty-eighth year of his age, having been born in the year 925.

Whether it was on his accession to the throne of Munster, in the year 974, or to the throne of all Erin, in the year 1002, that *Mac Liag* became attached to *Brian*, I am not able to say ; but I believe it was at the latter period, and that it was then also that *Brian* raised him to the chair of the monarch's *Ollamh*, or chief Poet of Erin, after which he lived in the monarch's residence of *Ceann Coradh* (at Killaloe, in the present county of Clare) [1]

Edward O'Reilly, in his *Irish Writers*, at the year 1015, gives a list of seven pieces, prose and verse, which he ascribes to *Mac Liag*.

1st, — A book of the History and Annals of the wars and battles of Erin; but which, notwithstanding its title, was, he says, confined to an account of the battles of Munster during the time of *Brian Boromha*. O'Reilly says that he had a copy of this book in his own possession, made by John Mac Solly, of Stackallen in the county of Meath, in the year 1710. Now, it happens that this identical book is at present in the Royal Irish Academy, (under the class-mark of 13. 5, in the original collection of the Academy) ; but the book of the Wars of Munster, of which O'Reilly speaks, forms but a single tract, making but fourteen pages of the volume ; and there is not a word in it to show that this tract was compiled by *Mac Liag*. Indeed, on the contrary, there is internal evidence to show that it was written long after *Mac Liag's* death, and that it is no more than a well-known popular abstract of the Battle of Clontarf, taken chiefly from the more important tract known as the " Wars of the Danes and Gaedhil", of which so much has been said in the course of my former Lectures. [2]

Mac Liag then was certainly not the compiler of the particular tract which O'Reilly without any authority ascribes to him. It is not, however, so certain that he was not the author of the more important tract of the " Wars of the Danes" itself, in which the career of his great patron Brian is so faithfully and so copiously recorded, and in which the terrible battle of Clontarf,

where the power of the Danish invaders was for ever annihilated, is described in such graphic and minute detail that even some Danish words spoken on the battle-field are preserved in it. We know indeed from *Mac Liag* himself, that he was not present at the battle of Clontarf ; but we know that his intimate friend, and fellow-poet and historian, *Errard Mac Coisé*, of whom we shall presently have to speak, was present in the train of the treacherous Malachy, King of Meath ; and we also know that *Mac Liag* actually received from *Mac Coisé* a detailed account of the battle, a fact which is to be learned from a poem which I shall have presently to describe. We may suppose, then, that *Mac Liag* had this tract on the Wars of the Danes written, from the first coming in of the Danes, down to the battle of Clontarf ; and that, not having been himself present at that battle, he sought from *Mac Coisé* the details of it, which the latter, as an eye-witness of the scene, must have been so capable of furnishing to him.

The second piece attributed to *Mac Liag*, described by O'Reilly, was a Life of *Brian Boromha* ; an extract from which, he states, had been given by General Vallancey, in the first edition of his Irish Grammar. Of this Life of *Brian Boromha*, I have never been able to see, or ascertain the existence of, any entire copy ; but fortunately a very small fragment (the very last leaf of it) remains in the well known hand of the last great Irish scholar, *Dubhaltach Mac Firbisigh* ; and this copy must have been written by him before the year 1650, as he changed the character of his handwriting in or about that year. This single small leaf, which was discovered by me some years ago, was merely laid in between two folios of the *Leabhar Buidhe Lecain* (H. 2. 16, T.C.D.). But although this is an old piece of composition, it is quite certain, I think, that it could not have been written by *Mac Liag*. Indeed, from this little fragment, it would appear to have been a later semi-religious life of the great warrior, — something more in the nature of a sermon on his life and death than a historical biography. This is, however, but a mere inference from the little that remains of it.

3rd, — The third piece described by O'Reilly, and attributed by him to *Mac Liag*, is a poem of forty stanzas, or one hundred and sixty lines, giving the names of the twelve sons of *Cas*, (from whom the Dalcassians of Thomond derive their tribe designation), and the different families which descended from each, down to the sons of *Brian Boromha*, in whose time the poem was evidently written. This poem begins :

“ Twelve sons that sprung from *Cas*.” [3]

It is more than probable that *Mac Liag* was the author of this poem ; but though there are copies of it preserved in the Books of Ballymote and *Lecain*, they are not accompanied by any author's name ; nor does O'Reilly give any authority for his statement.

4th, — The fourth piece of *Mac Liag* described by O'Reilly, is a poem of eight stanzas, giving the names of the twelve sons of *Ceineidigh* (Kennedy), the father of *Brian Boromha*, and the manner of the death of each. This poem begins :

“ The twelve sons of brave *Ceineidigh*.” [4]

There are copies of this poem preserved in the Books of Ballymote and *Lecain*. It is in the latter only that it is ascribed to *Mac Liag*.

5th, — The fifth piece of *Mac Liag* described by O'Reilly, is a poem of eleven stanzas, written on the fall of *Brian Boromha*, with his eldest son *Murchadh*, and the flower of the warriors of Munster and Connacht, at the battle of Clontarf, in the year 1014 ; and on the consequent desolate state of the fallen monarch's palace at *Ceann Coradh*. This poem begins :

“ O *Ceann Coradh!* where is *Brian*?
Or where is the splendour that was upon thee?
Where are the nobles and the sons of kings,
With whom we drank wine in thy halls ?” [5]

The concluding stanza of this plaintive poem shows plainly enough who the author was. It runs as follows ;

“ Woe that I live after *Brian* !
I am *Mac Liag* from the lake :
To invite me into his treasury,
He would come an hundred times, O *Ceann Coradh* !” [6]

An imperfect copy of this poem, with an English translation, was published by my late lamented friend, James Hardiman, in his *Irish Minstrelsy* ; and a full versification of it, by the late James Clarence Mangan, from a literal prose translation of mine, was published in the *Irish Penny Journal*, No. 28 (Saturday, January 9, 1841).

6th, — The sixth piece attributed to *Mac Liag* by O’Reilly, but which he does not describe, and of the first line of which he gives an incorrect version in text and translation, is a poem of twenty-six stanzas, beginning :

“ From the east has come the news of *Brian*’s fall,
Alas ! that I am in this world after him ;
Thou messenger, who comest from the east,
Tell me, has *Murchadh* been slain too?” [7]

The messenger here addressed by *Mac Liag* was *Urard, Errard, or Errad Mac Coisé*, poet and historian to *Maelseachlainn*, or Malachy the Second, King of Meath.

Malachy, with a thousand of the chosen warriors of Meath, marched to Clontarf along with *Brian* to aid him ; but when the battle commenced, he and his division fell out of the ranks, and remained idle spectators of the bloody fight till its termination. *Mac Coisé* the poet, who accompanied his patron on the occasion, had the best possible opportunity of witnessing the details of the battle ; and as his person was held sacred and inviolable by both natives and foreigners, we may suppose that he availed himself of that circumstance to mix with the combatants as much as was consistent with his safety from the accidents of a battle-field, so as to collect all the detailed information that could be useful to his task of recording a full account of the great scene at which he assisted.

At what place or time after the battle *Mac Coisé* visited his friend *Mac Liag*, and related to him the particulars of the great overthrow of the Danes, and the sad news of the fall of *Brian*, of *Murchadh*, and of the flower of the Dalcassian army, does not appear ; but it is most probable that it was at *Ceann Coradh* ; and it must have been immediately after the battle, since *Mac Liag* himself, as I shall soon show, visited the scene of the conflict so early as before the interment of the slain had been concluded.

It is very probable that on the occasion of this visit *Mac Liag* was able to collect a great many additional details of the battle from the survivors of both parties, and that on his return home, either by himself or assisted by *Mac Coisé*, he compiled from the beginning this

“ History of the Wars of the Danes”, or else added to the part which he had already compiled the account of the Battle of Clontarf as collected by *Mac Coisé* and himself.

But to return to the dialogue between the two poets. *Mac Coisé*, in the fourth and fifth stanzas of this poem, bears testimony to the bravery and nobleness of *Brian* ; and in the exaggeration of his feelings, goes so far as even to assert that so great a sacrifice as his had not been offered on the altar of Justice, Truth, and Religion, since the Great Sacrifice on Calvary itself. *Mac Liag*, then, in the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth stanzas, continues his inquiries as to whether *Murchadh* and many other leaders whom he names, had really fallen. And in answer to these questions, *Mac Coisé*, at the eleventh stanza, gives the names of several of the chiefs who fell, and describes the position in which they lay dead on the battle-field. At the eighteenth stanza he launches out into exclamations of despairing grief ; and he then continues to the end to review the most important incidents in *Brian's* life and reign. This interesting poem concludes with the following curious stanza :

“ There were found at *St. Feichin's* frigid bed,
Wells of overflowing blood,
The sign of kingly *Brian's* death,
In the western border land of Erinn”. [8]

The place mentioned here as *Saint Feichin's* bed is the ancient abbey of Cong, in the county of Mayo, which was founded by *Saint Feichin*, who died in the year 664 ; but of the legend of the bloody wells, and their connection with the death of *Brian Boromha*, I have never met any other account.

7th, — The seventh and last piece which O'Reilly attributes to *Mac Liag*, is a poem of five stanzas, or twenty lines, beginning :

“ It is a long time to be without happiness,
Such as I never thought I should be ;
When I was at the splendid *Ceann Coradh*,
Little did I fear that any one should rob me”. [9]

O'Reilly states that : “ This poem was written by the author when he had retired to *Innsé Gall*, (the Hebrides), after the death of *Brian Boromha*, and in it bitterly laments his absence from *Ceann Coradh*, and his want of the pleasures he was there accustomed to enjoy”. He is mistaken as to the place at which *Mac Liag* is said to have written the poem, which was “ *Innsé an Ghaill Duibh*” (*i. e.* the Island of the Black Foreigner), in the Upper Shannon, and not *Innsé Gall*, the Hebrides — a region with which for the rest *Mac Liag* had no connection.

If *Mac Liag* was the author of this poem at all, it is the worst preserved, and the most corrupt and insipid, of all his poems with which I happen to be acquainted.

So much for those of *Mac Liag's* works mentioned in the list by O'Reilly ; but I have also to mention a few more undoubtedly genuine pieces of that celebrated bard's composition, which are not described by that collector.

The first of these pieces of *Mac Liag's* is one which O'Reilly had seen, though he has not described it, — a poem of thirty-three stanzas, or one hundred and thirty-two lines, which gives an account of why and when *Brian's* town and palace of *Ceann Coradh* had received the alias name of *Boromha*. The poet describes in this piece how he happened to have been at *Ceann Coradh*, on one occasion when *Brian's* tribute of cows from Leinster and Ulster was

being driven home ; that he went out from the court to look at them ; and that he returned again, and said to *Brian* : “ Here comes Erinn’s tribute of cows to thee : many a fat cow and fat hog on the plain before thee”. “ Be they ever so many”, said *Brian*, “ they shall all be thine, O noble poet !” Whereupon it was that *Mac Liag* gave the name of *Boromha* to the town and plain ; a name which literally means nothing more than a multitude of cows, either paid as tribute by, or carried off as prey from, an enemy. It is probable that it was upon this occasion also that *Brian* himself received the addition to his name of *Boromha*, or “ of the Tribute of Cows”, though the fact is not stated in this copy of *Mac Liag*’s poem.

The poet proceeds to give an account of the amount and kind of the tribute send to *Brian* to *Ceann Coradh* from the various tribute-paying provinces and territories of Erinn ; among which we find an item of one hundred and fifty butts of wine from the Danes of Dublin, and one of a tun of wine per day from the Danes of Limerick. He then describes the order in which the royal and noble guests of *Brian* sat around him in the great hall of *Ceann Coradh*. *Brian* himself, we are told, sat at the head, with the King of Connacht on his right hand, and the King of Ulster (Ulidia or West Ulster) on his left, and the King of *Tir-Eoghan* opposite to him. At the door-post, nearest to *Brian*, sat the King of Leinster, and at the other post of the open door sat *Donnchadh* (Donogh), son of *Brian*, and *Maelseachlainn* (Malachy) the King of Meath. *Murchadh* (Morogh), *Brian*’s eldest son, sat in front of his father, with his back to him ; with *Aenghus*, the son of *Carrach*, a valiant prince of Meath, on his right hand, and the King of *Tir Conaill* on his left. This position of *Murchadh* would seem to imply that *Brian* occupied a seat elevated above the rest of the seats in the hall. *Tadhg*, son of *Brian*, and *Tadhg* O’Kelly, King of *Ui Mainé*, sat at the end or side opposite to the door, on *Brian*’s right hand ; and *Maelruanaigh*, chief of *Ui Fiachra* (in South Connacht), sat on *Tadhg*’s right hand. Such, then, was the arrangement, so far as this poem goes ; — a poem of which, I am sorry to say, I know but of one copy, and that a bad one, made by Edward O’Reilly, now in the library of the Royal Irish Academy. It begins :

“ *Boromha* ! home of the kings !
 City of the renowned warriors of Munster !
 Since *Brian* the illustrious has sprung up,
 The noble chief of free-born clans”. [10]

2nd, — The second piece by *Mac Liag*, not described by O’Reilly, is a poem of twenty-five stanzas, or one hundred lines, on the origin and history of an ancient sepulchral heap of stones, called *Carn Chonaill*, situated in the present county of Galway. This poem begins :

“ Know ye the history from which”, etc. [11]

The history of *Carn Chonaill* is shortly this. After the defeat of the *Firbolgs* by the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, in the great battle of the southern *Magh Tuiredh* (as described in a former Lecture), [12] they fled the country, and a part of them took refuge in the Hebrides, where they remained until driven out by the Picts ; upon which they returned to Erinn, in the reign of *Cairbré Nia-fear* (a short time before the Incarnation). At this time they were known as the Sons of *Umór* (*Clann Umoir*), and were led by their native chief *Aengus*, the son of *Umór*. On their arrival in Erinn, they went directly to Tara, and besought the King, *Cairbré*, to give them some rich lands in Meath, for which they were willing to pay him a fair rent. The King complied with their request ; but obliged them to give him securities for their good conduct and integrity. They vouched to him, then, as pledges, the celebrated warriors *Ceat Mac Magach*, of Connacht, *Ross Mac Deaghaidh*, of Munster, and *Cuchulainn* and *Conall Cearnach*, of Ulster. The Umorians, however, soon found that the burthens which the avaricious king laid on them were too heavy ; and they therefore resolved secretly to fly from

Cairbré rule, and to pass into Connacht, where they had contrived to conciliate the favour of *Ailill* and *Medhbh*, the King and Queen of that province. They set out, accordingly, by night, with all their property ; crossed the Shannon in safety, and were allowed to settle themselves in the southern parts of Connacht, more particularly in the present counties of Galway and Clare, the latter forming at that time part of Connacht.

Aengus, the chief of the *Clann Umoir*, settled himself in the islands of Arann, and built the noble stone fortress which bears his name to this day, *Dun Aengus*, in the Great Island of Arran ; *Cutra*, the son of *Umor*, settled at *Loch Cutra* (now called Lough-Cooter, in the present county of Galway) ; *Conall*, son of *Umor*, in *Aidhné* in the same district ; *Adhar*, son of *Umor*, at *Magh Adhair*, the celebrated place of inauguration of the Dalcassian chiefs (in the present county of Clare) ; *Dael*, son of *Umor*, at *Daelach*, to the north of Ennistimon (in the same county) ; and so on as to the several other chiefs of the party.

In the meantime the King of Tara demanded of his securities their pledge, and the four warriors passed into Connacht, to take the sons of *Umor* ; but the answer which they received was, an offer of combat to each. The combatants met ; and *Cing*, the son of *Umor*, fell by the hand of *Rossa Mac Deadhaidh*, the Munster security ; *Cimé*, the son of *Umor*, by *Conall Cearnach* ; *Iargas*, the son of *Umor*, by *Cet Mac Magach* ; and *Conall Cael* (“ the slender”), son of *Aengus*, the chief, by *Cuchulainn* ; and it was over this young chief that his father and friends raised the heap of stones, which from him took the name of *Carn Chonaill*. Such is the history of that Carn, as related by *Mac Liag* in this poem.

There are copies of this curious poem preserved in the Books of Leinster, Ballymote, and *Lecain* ; and in all these copies in the concluding stanza *Mac Liag* avows himself as the author.

3rd, — The third piece of *Mac Liag*'s which O'Reilly omits, is one which he had not seen ; it is a poem of forty-four stanzas, or one hundred and seventy-six lines, in praise of *Tadhg* O'Kelly, chief of *Ui Mainé*, which begins:

“ The blessing of *Abruin* be upon *Brighit*,
In my house is no small number of her gifts ;
But *Abruin* ! I say without anger,
That my friend excels your friend.

“ *Tadhg* the prosperous is my friend,
On whom poems by qualified bards are made ;
He is the bravest man to guide a ship ;
He is the distributor of small spoils”. [13]

(The poet does not mean to assert in this last line, that the spoils which O'Kelly was accustomed to distribute were small, or of little value ; but that His patron's soul was so great that the richest spoils and preys were but trifles in his eyes.)

It would appear from the opening of this poem, that *Mac Liag* addressed it to his own wife *Abruin* ; who, it would also appear, had recently received some important marks of favour from O'Kelly's wife *Brighit*, to whom he makes acknowledgment, but hinting at the same time that as O'Kelly was a better friend to the poet than O'Kelly's wife to the poet's wife, it was fairly to be expected that O'Kelly's next exercise of his bounty in favour of his bard would be liberal in proportion.

It appears also that at some previous period the poet's homestead had been plundered of its cows, by a party from Westmeath ; and that the plunderers were followed across the Shannon by *Tadhg O'Kelly*, with his household troops, and many of the other chiefs of *Ui Mainé*, who recovered and restored them.

The names of the chiefs of *Ui Mainé* who took part in this enterprise are given in the poem, and the two concluding stanzas contain a handsome apostrophe to *Brian Boromha*, his son *Murchadh*, and his nephew *Conaing* ; indicating that the poem was written before the fatal battle of Clontarf, in which these three warriors, as well as O'Kelly himself, lost their lives in the defence of their country.

4th, — The fourth piece of *Mac Liag's* which O'Reilly had not seen, is a poem of sixty-eight stanzas, or two hundred and seventy-two lines, in praise of *Tadhg O'Kelly* and some of his allies on the east side of the Shannon ; such as the chief of north *Eilé* (in Tipperary), and the chiefs of Delvin, and Teffia, (in Westmeath). This poem is something in the nature of a call to arms ; in which all the chiefs of *Ui Mainé*, as well as their friends in South Connacht and on the east of the Shannon, are called upon by their respective names, to burnish their shields and prepare for battle. Many of the successful battles, preys, and plunders of *Tadhg O'Kelly* are given ; and the poem ends with a call on *Brian Boromha* and his son *Murchadh* to burnish their shields and stand as usual to the defence of their country. This most curious and historical poem begins :

“ Let the King of *Gaela's* shield be burnished ;
Bring dazzling flashes from its face ;
Nine score and one shields that have been
Abandoned to the shield I now see”. [14]

O'Kelly is here spoken of as King of *Gaela*, merely because the word *Gaela*, which was a minor chieftaincy in the territory of *Ui Mainé* (situate in the present barony of Leitrim, in the county of Galway), suited the measure of his verse.

5th, — The fifth piece of *Mac Liag's* which O'Reilly had not seen, is a poem of unknown length, as, unfortunately, only the first fifty-four stanzas, or two hundred and sixteen lines, of it remain accessible to modern investigators. This fragment, as well as the two poems of *Mac Liag's*, which have been last described, are preserved in a few folios of the ancient Book of *Ui Mainé*, now in the British Museum ; a volume which was compiled by *Seaan Mór O' Duilhagáin*, chief poet and historian to the princely house of O'Kelly, chiefs of *Ui Mainé*, who died in the year 1372. This ancient book, by some chance, passed into the hands of the late Sir William Betham, who sold it to the Duke of Buckingham for one hundred and fifty pounds ; and at the sale of the magnificent library of Stowe, in London, in the year 1849, it passed by private sale, along with the other valuable collections of the Stowe Irish Manuscripts, into the possession of Lord Ashburnham. In his possession all Irish MSS. are concealed, as I had occasion to observe with sorrow before, with a churlish jealousy greatly at variance with what might have been supposed to be the intellectual cultivation of the owner, and in a spirit very hostile, indeed, to the general desire of the present age to facilitate the efforts now being made throughout the whole of Europe to investigate all such sources as can be deemed likely to throw new light on the migrations of men, and the march of civilization, in times long gone by. How or when the few folios now in the British Museum were parted from the original book, I cannot say ; but they passed into that noble institution some twenty-four years ago, among the collection of Irish MSS. sold to it by the late James Hardiman. The fragment in the Museum contains these poems of *Mac Liag* and some other pieces, and breaks off from the original book just where the present poem stops, where the chasm appears

to be a comparatively recent one ; so that there is every reason to hope that the concluding part of this most curious poem, and several others of the same authors, remain still in the book itself, though it is to be feared it is doomed never to be made accessible in our time. This poem begins :

“ Heavily, — yet lightly, — have I come to Dublin,
To the Court of *Amlaibh* of the golden shields ;
From Dublin of the swords and the graves,
Swiftly, yet slowly, shall be my departure.
“ O men of Dublin of the bells !
Including abbots and bishops,
Raise not the earth over *Tadhg* [O’Kelly],
Until I have bestowed upon him a last look.
“ Ye sons of Harold ! ye reddeners of spears !
Ye remnant of Denmark’s heroic bands !
Ui Mainé chief is of no foreign growth,
Or a remnant of an ignoble spurious race”. [15]

The poet then goes on to lament that O’Kelly had not taken the advice of his maternal uncle, *Maelseachlainn* (Malachy), the deposed monarch, (then King of Meath), who pressed him to abandon *Brian* and the Munstermen before entering the battle, offering him more substantial marks of his royal favour and consideration than he could expect to receive from *Brian* ; all of which overtures the noble O’Kelly rejected with scorn, sealing with his life on the bloody field of Clontarf his fidelity to his honour, to his friend, and to his country. *Maelseachlainn*’s overtures to *Tadhg* O’Kelly (who was his sister’s son) are fully described here ; and they form the most complete evidence of the treachery of the King of Meath at Clontarf that has ever yet come to light.

After this the poet goes on to declare that he will not live after *Brian* and *Tadhg*. He then proceeds to bid adieu to various places in Connacht and Munster ; after which he mentions several of the battles, plunders, and preys, won by *Tadhg* O’Kelly, and portions of the spoils of which were always bestowed upon himself. He then recounts a characteristic story concerning a meeting of the provincial kings and nobles of Erin which, on a certain occasion, assembled at *Brian*’s court at *Ceann Coradh* ; among whom were *Maelseachlainn*, King of Meath ; *Aedh* O’Neill, King of Ulster ; *Tadhg* O’Kelly, King of *Ui Mainé* , and several others. It happened, we are told, on this occasion, that while the henchmen of *Brian* and of *Tadhg* O’Kelly were burnishing the shields of their respective masters, a dispute arose between them, as to the claims of precedence respectively of the noble owners of the two shields. The dispute ran so high that at last *Tadhg*’s page raised his arm and struck *Brian*’s page a violent blow with his fist on the mouth, from which the blood flowed freely over the richly ornamented dress he wore.

Here, however, the poem breaks off abruptly : the remainder of it is, unfortunately, in the possession of Lord Ashburnham. Were it in that of any real lover of literature, he would surely send the fragment, and the old Book of *Ui Mainé* which contains it, over here, to be at least transcribed, so as to be made available for the important purposes of our antiquarian researches. But it is idle to expect so much of public spirit or scholarlike feeling at the hands of such a collector as the nobleman just referred to. It is probable that the Book of *Ui Mainé* contains many more of the poems of *Mac Liag* and his contemporaries ; but we can only surmise about them for the present.

[1] It is to be remembered that no monarch of Erin held his residence at Tara, the ancient seat of the monarchy, ever since the death of *Diarmait*, the son of *Fergus Cerrbheóil*, in the year 558, in whose reign the hill and palace were cursed by *Saint Ruadan of Lothra* (in Ormond) ; so that, after the desertion of the ancient city, the monarch, of whichever of the different native families he happened to be a member, fixed his residence wherever he pleased, but generally if not invariably within his immediate provincial territory. And it was so with Brian, who fixed his residence on the plain of Killaloe, in the immediate neighbourhood of his own ancestral residence of *Grianan Lachtna*, — the ruins of which are still to be seen, on the south shoulder of the Hill of *Craig Liath*, about a mile north-west of Killaloe.

[2] See *Lectures on the MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, p. 232.

[3] original : — Da mhac dég do chin ó Chas.

[4] original :— Da mhac dég Ceineidigh chaigh.

[5] original : — A Chinn Choradh caidhi Brian ;
no có caidhi in reiamh do bhí ort,
caidhi maithe no meic righ,
Ga n-ibhmír fín ad port?

[6] original : — Is Mairg atá beó gan Brian,
Is mairi Mac Liag o'n linn ;
dom toghairm go tigh na séd,
go thigeadh fó chéd, a chinn.

[7] original : — On Oir tainic tuitim Bhriain
Mairg atá an domhan na dhiaigh
a techtaire tic anoir
indis duinn marbhadh Mhurchoidh.

[8] original: — Fríth in iomdhoigh Fheichin Fhuair,
tobair na bh'-fhuil robhair bruaigh,
comhartha báir Bhriain na m-beann
I g-crich airthair na h-Eireann.

[9] original :— Fada bheith gan aibhnear,
mar n'ar fhailear go bráth bheith,
mar do bhíos a g-Ceann-Choradh chaimh,
níor omhan liom aon dam creach.

[10] original :— boromha baile na righ,
port na Muimhnech, sochla an síth,
ó do eirigh Brian breghdha
cenn sochair gach saoir fhenedha.

[11] original : — Findaidh in reanchar dia tá.

[12] See *Lectures on the MS. Materials of Ancient Irish History*, p. 245.

[13] original :— bennacht Abruin ar Bright,
fuil anm thigh rím nách anait,
do chuaid, a Abruin, gan bara,
mo chara tar do charait.
Cara dhamhra Tadhg toirteach,
da n-déntar dan bard n-dletheach,
isé is fearr icht im artrach
isé marbhthach na minchreach.

[14] original : — Sciath righ Geala, glantar hí
creabha cailce fór a clíu ;
sciath ar nei fichtibh sciath
do faghadh 'gon sciath adchiú.

[15] original : — Learg, amlearg, sind gu Ath Cliath
co dun Amhlaibh na n-ór sciath
o ath cliath na land 'sna lecht
is dian is mall mo imthecht.
A lucht atha cliath na clog
eidir abaidh is easbog
na cuiri uir tar Tadhg toir
co tairg duinn a dechsain.
A shil arailt, ruadhas rand,
a iarsma laechraidh lochland,
ní gall do maigh, ó Maine
ní rand dair na deasgáine.

On the manners and customs of the ancient Irish : a series of lectures (1873)

Author : O'Curry, Eugene, 1796-1862 ; Sullivan, W. K. (William Kirby), 1821-1890

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