

## Song of Killeadan

Antaine Ó Reachtabhra  
(1784-1835)

Anois teacht an Earraigh beidh an lá dúl chun shíneadh,  
Is tar eis na féil Bríde ardóigh mé mo sheol.  
Go Coillte Mach rachad ní stopfaidh me choíche  
Go seasfaidh mé síos i lár Chondae Mhaigh Eo.  
Fágaim le huacht é go n-éiríonn mo chroí-se  
Mar a éiríonn an ghaoth nó mar a scaipeann an ceo  
Nuair a smaoiním ar Cheara nó ar Ghaileang taobh thíos de  
Ar Sceathach an Mhíle nó ar phlánaí Mhaigh Eo;

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## Songs Ascribed to Raftery Douglas Hyde

When a stone is thrown into water the water is moved. The stone falls to the bottom and lies there, but long after its fall the movement of the water remains, and the wave that the stone has raised is perceived upon the top. This wave swims out from the centre like a great ring until it reaches the bank.

It occurred to me, while collecting Raftery's poems, that occasionally a poet falls from Heaven into the world like a stone into water. The poet is snatched from us by death, his body falls into the earth, but the movement which he has aroused remains, and his poems raise a little, quiet, gentle wave upon the water of life which floats far out from the poet's own native place. And so it chanced that I met the wave that Anthony O'Raftery had raised, some eighty miles from his native place and some forty years after his body being laid in the old churchyard of Killeenin. I had risen out of a fine frosty day in winter, my little dog at heel and gun on shoulder, and it was not long I had gone until I heard the old man at the door of his cottage and he singing sweetly to himself.

Now, on the coming of spring, the day will be a-stretching.  
Now, on the coming of Brigit's Eve [1], it is, that I shall raise my music ;  
Since I took it into my head I shall never stop  
Until I stand in the west in the miftet of the county of Mayo !  
I solemnly [2] declare it, that my heart rises up,  
Even as the wind is lifted, or as the mist is dispersed,  
When I think upon Carra and upon Balla to the north of it [3],  
Upon the Bush of the Mile and upon the planet of Mayo.

The words pleased me greatly. I moved over to the old man, and “ Would you learn me that song ?” says I. He taught it to me, and I went home, and with me a great part of “ The County Mayo ” [4] by heart. That was my first meeting with the wave that Raftery left behind him. I did not hear his name at that time, and I did not know for many years afterwards that it was he who had composed the piece which had pleased me so well.

I was, another day, fifteen years after this, handling and poking amongst the old Irish MSS. that are in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, and what should I meet there but a

manuscript book in which were some of Raftery's poems, and amongst them my old friend "County Mayo," and it was then that I learned that Raftery was its author, and that many another sweet song he had composed as well as it.

I was another day, a long time after this, near Blackrock, in the county Dublin, and I strolling on the road by myself. There was a blind man on the side of the road and he asking alms. I gave them to him and went on. But after my having gone about twenty perch it came into my head, of one snap, that that blind man was like an Irish speaker, that he had the face and mouth of an Irish speaker on him, and "why," said I to myself, "did you not speak to him in Irish?" No sooner did the thought come into my head than I returned back to the blind man and spoke to him in Irish. He answered me with melody and taste in the same language, and I remained for a long time talking to him. Seaghan O'Mainnin was his name. He was from the county of Galway. He had been a groom in his youth, and he had lost the sight of his eyes in leaping a scunce on horseback, a branch had struck him and blinded him. He told me a lot about Raftery [5]. He said to me, "If you are ever in a little town called Craughwell, in the county Galway, there is a house on the side of the road and a farmer of the name of Diarmuid O'Cluanain living in it. It is in that house that Raftery died, and he knew, seven years before that, what was the place and the house, and the day and the hour that it was fated for him to die." I remembered all the blind man told me, but I never thought that I should be in Craughwell. It happened, however, that I did find myself in the south of the county, and the thing the blind man told me came into my memory. I went as far as Craughwell, found out Diarmuid O'Cluanain, and saw the house in which the poet died. The old man told me that such and such a man had his poems written in a book. I went in pursuit of them, but I was told that the book had been taken to America. I went to the house of the Calanans then, that was in the neighbourhood, for I heard that they had a book in which were Raftery's poems and the poems of their own uncle. The Calanans were fine and generous and hospitable, and asked me to spend the night with them, but they said that this book was gone to America also, and I had to return without it.

It was not long after that until Lady Gregory went in pursuit of a book that she heard was in the neighbourhood, and she found it in the possession of an old stone-cutter near Killeenan. This book was written very well in Irish characters by some nameless person, apparently about fifty years ago. She got a loan of the book and lent it to me, and I copied out of it seventeen songs. There were in it twenty-two poems by Raftery, and three or four by other people. After that I went to look for the book I had seen in the Academy more than ten years before. I first went to the index of the MSS. in the Academy, but there was not even the name of Raftery in the index of the Irish books there, nor was the first line of any of his poems to be found amongst the index of first lines. I spent two days from morning till night going through the books before I found it. There are more than twenty poems by Raftery in this MS., which is well written, in Irish characters, in an old man's handwriting, a doctor's, perhaps, for I found this line written on one of the leaves—

tollere nodosam nescit medicina podagram,

and there is a picture of Raftery's head drawn in a rough and ready way, with pen and ink, upon another page, and a couple of words in English underneath, giving the date of his death: "Anthony Rafferty, Irish Minstrel, died October, 1835. Aet 51." I wrote out from this MS. what poems were not in the other book, and I made a comparison with great care between the copies that were common both to this and the stone-cutter's MS. I collected the other poems as follows : —

I got eight poems from my friend Owen O'Neachtain in Galway. I believe that he got most of them from a man of the Comynses near that city. I got five other songs from Father Clement O'Looney, from the Abbey in Loughrea, who had written them down from the mouth of an old man about twenty years before. After that I got the loan of a MS. from my friend Mr. Glynn, Town Clerk of Tuam, in which he had written down out of a MS. belonging to one of the Kellys, and from the mouths of different people, a great number of the poems that I had already. I went through this MS. with great care, and it was useful to me to correct the other versions by. There were in it only two songs and a couple of ranns that I had not got before. I got the long poem, the "History of the Bush," from my friend Mr. Meehan first of all, and I corrected it from Glynn's MS. I got the "Cholera Morbus" from the same man. I got the "Cuis da pleidh" (the "Cause a-pleading") from a MS. that one of the Hessians wrote phonetically in Roman letters in or about the year 1834. I got the loan of this MS. of Hessian's from my friend Mr. Glynn. I got the "Hunt of Marcus O'Callain" from the same source, and from Glynn's book. I wrote down the song of "Mary Hynes" from the mouth of Mr. Thomas Hynes, of Cilltartan, who was himself related to the handsome girl who was the subject of it. I wrote the most of "Raftery and the Death" from the mouth of the same man. I got "Killeadan" or "County Mayo" from Thady Connlan, a herd of the MacManus family, of Killeadan, who was born and bred in the same townland as Raftery himself [6]. I got the most of "Anach Cuain" from my late friend F. O'Connor, who heard it from an old woman in Anacih Cuain itself. I got "Loughrea" from James O'Mulloy, of Drumgriffin, who heard it from his father, and I got other poems from other people. In this way I have put together, as well as I have been able, whatever I have found as the result of long hunting, of the songs and poems of Raftery, and of the songs attributed to him.

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When Raftery was young he used to be often at the Big House in Killeaden, and Frank Taafe's mother had a wish for him, because she understood that it was no common boy that was in him. But not so with Bridget, the cook who was in the Big House. She grudged him every bite and every sup she had to give him. She did not like, nor did the other servants like, that the old mistress should be so favourable to a wandering stroller like Raftery. It chanced that Bridget the cook died at a time that Raftery was away from home, and when he came back to Killeaden he heard it. "Where is she buried?" said he to the mistress, when they were coming out of the chapel together. The old lady brought him over to the grave. Raftery went on his two knees, took off his hat, and said this rann: —

I order thee, Flag,  
Not to let Bridget out ;  
She curtailed our drink.  
And she disgraced our house.

And now, Bridget, since thou hast happened beneath the  
tomb,  
Drought eternal on thyself, and thirst !

Raftery used always to have his own settled opinion, and he was not a man that would follow others' opinions without weighing them. Patrick O h-Aoidh, or Hughes, of Clare-morris, told me a little story about him when he was a gossoon, which proves how bold he was. There was a man in it called Connor Lyden, near Killeaden, and he had three bonhams [7] to sell. He drove them into Coilltemach [8], and a certain man bought one of them for eight shillings, and promised that he would give Conor the money in a couple of days. A month went by, and Conor had not received the money. He said then to his son to take sugaun with him and to go to the house of the man who had the bonham, on a Sunday, when he would be

at Mass, and to bring the bonham home with him. The son did so, and as he was returning he met a number of gossoons on the road, and they pitching buttons. Young Raftery was amongst them. The other lads allowed the gossoon to drive the bonham with him, but not so Raftery. He cried out that it was neither right nor just to let the bonham home with him, because it was not the same bonham that was in it now, but a better and a fatter bonham who had received food and nurture for a month at the other man's expense. He thought to lay hold of the sугan, but young Lyden ran away from him. Raftery followed him, and was coming up with him, for if he was blind itself he was very souple. When the other boy saw that, he stood silently, without moving, by the side of the road, and allowed Raftery to run far past him. Raftery stood up and put an ear on himself (listened intently), and when he did not hear anything he cried out, "Hurrish! Hurrish!" The pig answered him. He heard it, ran to it, seized the rope, and never stopped until he had put the bonham back in the sty from which it came.

In the end he drew upon himself the anger of Frank Taafe. There was a great feast going on at the Big House, and the drink was getting scarce, and a servant was sent riding to go to the town to bring out more. The servant asked Raftery to come with him. They leapt upon two horses, and off with them, Choice horses Frank Taafe used to have, and a great regard he had for them, too. The servant thought that even if Raftery was blind there was no fear of him, because the two horses would go together, and he himself would be near him ; and as for Raftery nothing in the world would daunt him. Accordingly they were off at full gallop through the night, but in some way they separated from one another. Raftery's horse came to a sudden turning in the road, and it going at its full speed. It could not turn in time, but went of a leap into a boghole and was drowned. With difficulty Raftery escaped, but I did not hear that he was even hurt. Mr. Hughes tells me that this was the reason of his leaving Killeaden, because Frank Taafe was dreadfully angry when he heard that his fine horse was drowned, and he banished the poor poet out of Killeaden altogether.

Some say that it was after this he composed the song of Killeaden to make peace with Frank Taafe, and that he did not come himself to him with it, but taught it to a poor man who used to be travelling the country, buying rags, that he might repeat it for the people of the Big House. But others say that he made a bet with a certain other poet from Galway (I heard the name, but I forget it) that he would praise his own county better than the other man would praise the county Galway, and that they left the decision to Frank Taafe. It was Raftery who first recited his song, and when he had it spoken the other man called out, and anger on him, "Bad luck to you, Raftery, you have left nothing at all for the county Galway!" and he did not repeat his own poem. They say also that Frank Taafe was very dissatisfied because his own name did not come in earlier in the song, but was kept back till the last line, and because Raftery did not call him "Esquire," but just Frank Taafe, after the Gaelic fashion. The English mind was abroad even at that time in the county Mayo, and Frank coveted something that was more suited to his honour, in his own opinion, than the old, honest, kindly forms of the Gael. Some even say that he awarded the wager to the county Galway poet. Others that he said to Raftery, "I'd give you ten pounds, Raftery, only that you brought in my name so awkwardly." This song is very famous in the county Mayo. A sort of English version was made of it by some one \*, and, alas ! it is in its worthless English dress the young people have it, but the old people have it in Irish ; and, with the help of God, it is in Irish everyone will have it in future,

\* Dear knows, like the wind that disperses off vapours.  
My heart it does rise and my sperrits do flow.  
When I think on Loch Carra or Castleburke there benaith it,  
Or sweet Tower Hill in the county Mee-o.

Tower Hill is that place that greatly invarious (?)

For secamor, beech, ash, hazel, and dale, etc.

Literally : Now coming on the Spring, the day will be for stretching (lengthening), And after the Eve of Brigit (1st of February) I shall hoist my sail ; Since I have put it into my head I shall not ever stop, Until I stand below in the middle of the county Mayo ; In the Plain-of-the-children-of-Maurice (Claremorris), I shall be the first night, And in Balla down from it I shall be drinking ; To Coilltemach (“ Kiltimagh ”) I shall go until I make a visit of a month there. Within two miles of the town of the Big House (Killeaden House?) ; aliter, Ballinamore.

This is a very poor imitation of the original metre, for it has not Raftery's internal assonantal rhymes.

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Killeaden,

Or

County Mayo.

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Towards the Eve of St. Brigit the days will be GROWING ,  
The cock will be CROWING and a home-wind shall blow,  
And I never shall stop but shall ever be GOING  
Till I find myself ROVING through the county May-o.  
The first night in Claremorris I hope to put OVER,  
And in Balla BELOW IT the cruiskeens shall flow ;  
In Coilltemach then I'll be living in CLOVER,  
Near the place where my HOME IS and the House that I know.

I solemnly aver it, that my heart rises up,  
Even as the wind rises or as the mist disperses,  
When I think upon Carra and upon Gallon down from it,  
Upon the Mile-Bush [9] or upon the Plains of Mayo [10].  
Killeaden (is) the village in which everything grows ;  
There are blackberries and raspberries in it, and fruit of every kind ;  
And if I were only to be standing in the middle of my people.  
The age would go from me and I should be young again.

There be's wheat there and oats, growth of barley and of flax ;  
Eye in the ear ( ?) there, bread of flour, and meat ;  
People who make “ poteen ” selling it there without a licence,  
The great nobles of the country there playing and drinking.  
There is planting and plowing there, and top-dressing without manure ;  
There is many a thing there of which I have not spoken yet,  
Kilns and mills working and never resting,  
“ Sorra ” talk there is about a penny of rent nor anything of the kind.

There is every sort of timber that it were fit to put down there ;  
    There is sicaniore and beech in it, hazel, fir, and ash,  
        Box and holly, yew, birch, and rowan-berry.  
    And the green-oak, of which is made boat and ship and mast ;  
The log-wood, mahogany, and every timber no matter how expensive,  
And the fior-mhaide (?) [11] which would make every musical instrument ;  
    Oltoir (?) and white hawthorn a-cutting and a-hewing,  
And the rod there that would make basket, creels, and lods [11].

There is the cuokoo and the thrush answering each other there,  
    The blackbird and the ceirseach hatching over against them.  
The goldfinch, the wood-cock, and the linnet in a cage there,  
    The snipe leaping up, and the swan from Home,  
    The eagle out of Achill and the raven out of Kesh Corran,  
    The falcon from Loch Erne and the lark from the bog.  
And if you were to be there in the morning before rise of sun.  
Sure you would hear every bird of them a-singing in the grove.

There is the mare there and the foal, beside one another,  
    The team-of-six and the plow, the plowman and the seed,  
    The lambs there in the morning numerously bleating,  
    There he's sheep and herds, and the woman has a child.  
There is no sickness, no disease, no plague, no death there,  
    But priests and clerics praying to the saints ;  
    The goat has kids, the sow has bonhams,  
And the milch-cow is lowing as she goes towards the woman.

    The water is in the lake, and the rivers filled.  
    The weirs are constructed, and the nets in working-order,  
    The pike and the trout and the eel lying there.  
    The crab and the periwinkle, the mackerel and seal ;  
    The salmon and the ballach resting there at night,  
And the liubhan (little eel, or lamprey ?) voyaging thither from the great sea ;  
    The tortoise and the lobster and the grey turbot.  
    The gurnets and fish are there as plenty as turf.

    The fawn and the deer and every kind of game is there.  
The red-dog (fox) a-leaping, the badger and the yellow miol (i.e., the hare).  
    The music of the hounds, and the horns a-blowing,  
    And with the rise of the sun you would lift up your heart.  
There are gentlemen on steeds and horsemen being tried,  
    Hunting all through other until comes the night,  
    (Then) cellar until morning again a-rending.  
    Drink for the hundreds and beds to lie down.  
The orphan and the widow get assistance and redemption,

A way to get food and clothes, and land without rent ;  
Poor scholars get writing and schooling and learning there,  
And the people who ask alms are drawing and Journeying thither.  
It overcame the world for all its good qualities,  
And Raftery has awarded it the branch, over all that he ever saw ;  
The end of the talk is this : Long life to Frank Taafe in it,  
The descendant of the Lynch of hospitality, who never spared the hunt.

[1] The first of February

[2] Literally : “ I leave it by testament,” a common Irish expression.

[3] Literally: “ Down from it.” The Irish say “ down” for the North, and “ up ” for the South. The North of Ireland is iochtar na hEireann i.e. the bottom of Ireland. The South is the top. They say the wind is shifting down, i.e., to the North.

[4] This is also known as the “ Song of Killeadan.”

[5] Turning to English he said something that struck me so that I wrote it down on the back of an envelope. Here are the exact words : “ Raftery was an inspired man, and that's all about it, and every word of it correct just as if it was coming out of a dictionary ! ”

[6] He wrote down this song in phonetic spelling for my friend Miss MacManus, the novelist.

[7] i.e., "young pigs."

[8] This correct spelling of the present ridiculous “ Kiltimagh ” ought to be revived.

[9] The Mile-Bush is within a mile of Castlebar. Four of General Humbert's soldiers were killed there in '98 at the “ Races of Castlebar. ”

[10] Mr. Hughes tells me that this, which I took to be the Planet or Star of Mayo, means the Plains of Mayo, and nothing else. These Plains extend over more than half the parish of Mayo. The Plains of Ellestron are twelve miles off.

[11] Literally “ True stick.” I do not know what is meant by it. Other versions give “ arra-wood, ” “ tane-wood, ” “ thelford.” Mr. Hughes says “ tare-wood, ” i.e., the wood of which butter barrels were made, which barrels in that country are called “ tares.”

[12] An old basket-maker tells me that cisean is any basket, cis is about the same as a creel, and Lod is a huge basket containing over ten stoue (of potatoes?). The Irish name for a basket-maker is Caoladoir, which is not found in any dictionary.

Songs Ascribed to Raftery, Douglas Hyde

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