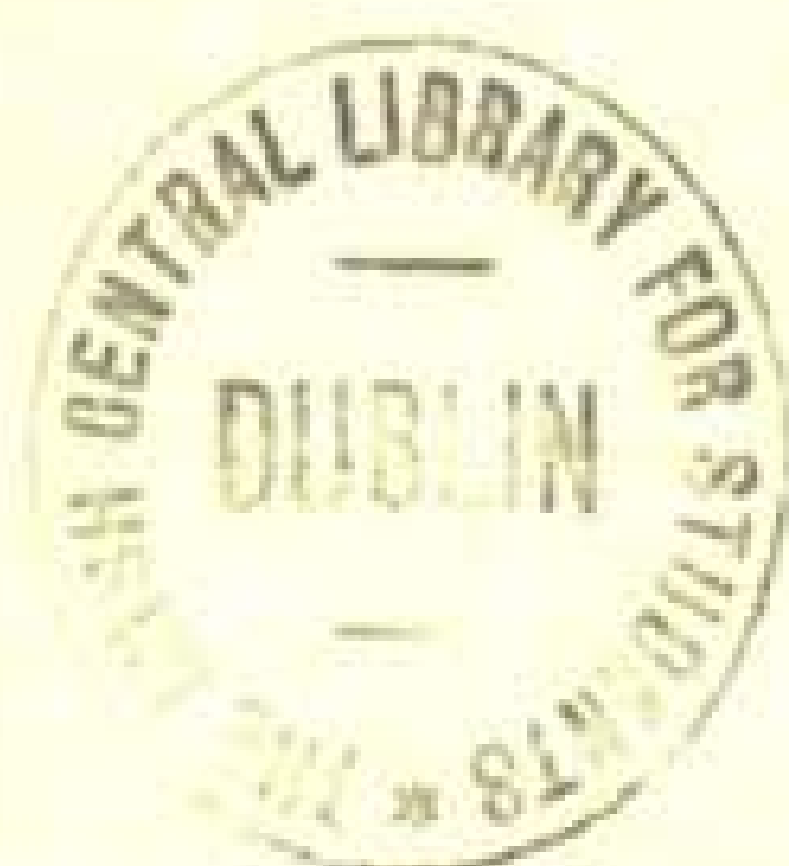


THE DIOCESE OF KILMORE  
Its History and Antiquities









MOST REV. DR. FINEGAN, LORD BISHOP OF KILMORE.

*(Died January 26th, 1937.)*

# The Diocese of Kilmore

## Its History and Antiquities

BY

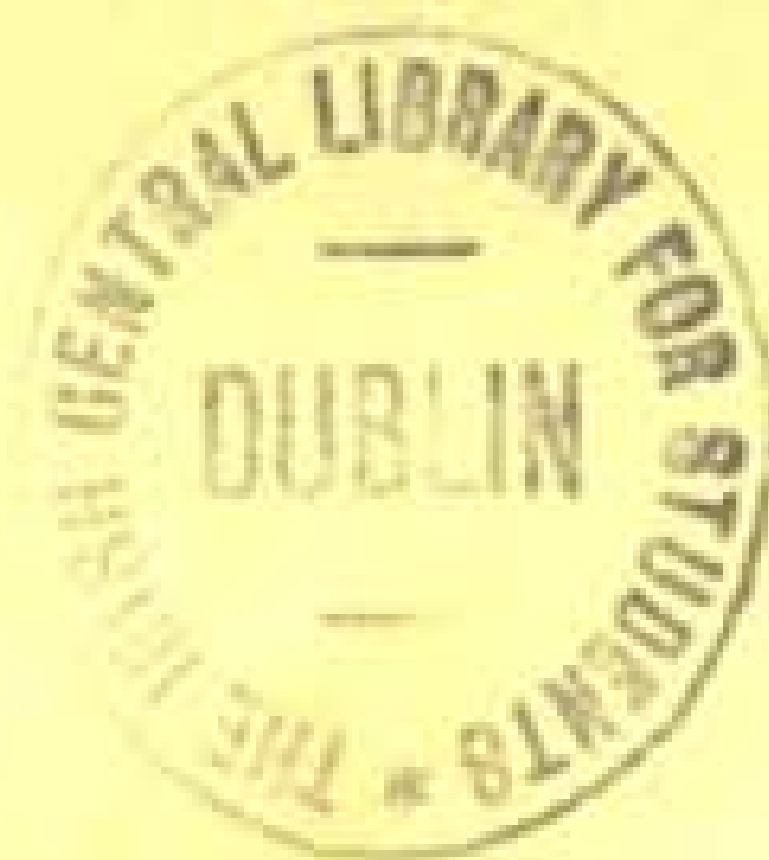
PHILIP O'CONNELL, M.Sc., F.R.S.A.I.

*With a Foreword*

BY

THE LATE MOST REV. DR. FINEGAN

LORD BISHOP OF KILMORE



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To His Eminence  
**William Cardinal O'Connell**

Archbishop of Boston  
and  
Dean of the American Hierarchy

This Volume is  
**Gratefully Dedicated**  
by  
**The Author**







THE AUTHOR

OF THE HISTORY

OF THE UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

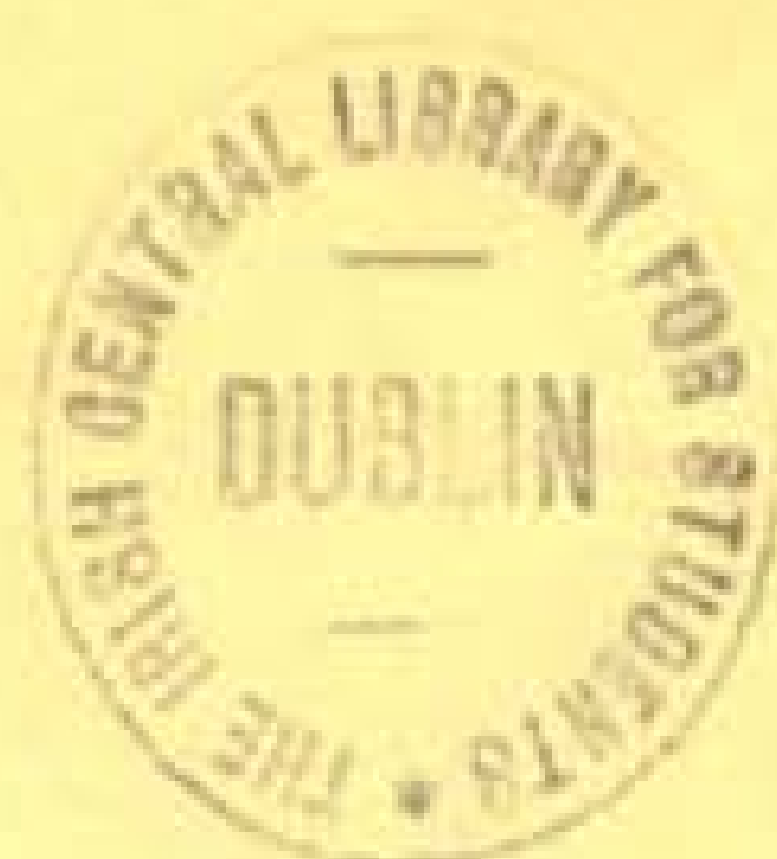
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## FOREWORD

THE author of the *History of the Diocese of Kilmore* has been for many years a prominent member of the Breiffne Archaeological Society, to which he has contributed many interesting and instructive papers. In writing the history of his native diocese he has, as far as circumstances permitted, sought and carefully examined the available documentary evidence. He has, too, examined and sifted much local tradition. On disputed questions he has given an honest and carefully-formed opinion; but where direct evidence was wanting he has not put it forward as final. The work, I hope, will be found of much interest to natives of the diocese at home and abroad as well as to others. It will, I trust, be found to be a useful local contribution to the general history of the Irish Church.

It is but right to gratefully mention that the author was favoured by encouragement and substantial help from his cousin, His Eminence Cardinal O'Connell, Archbishop of Boston, who in other ways has shown his interest in the native diocese of his parents.

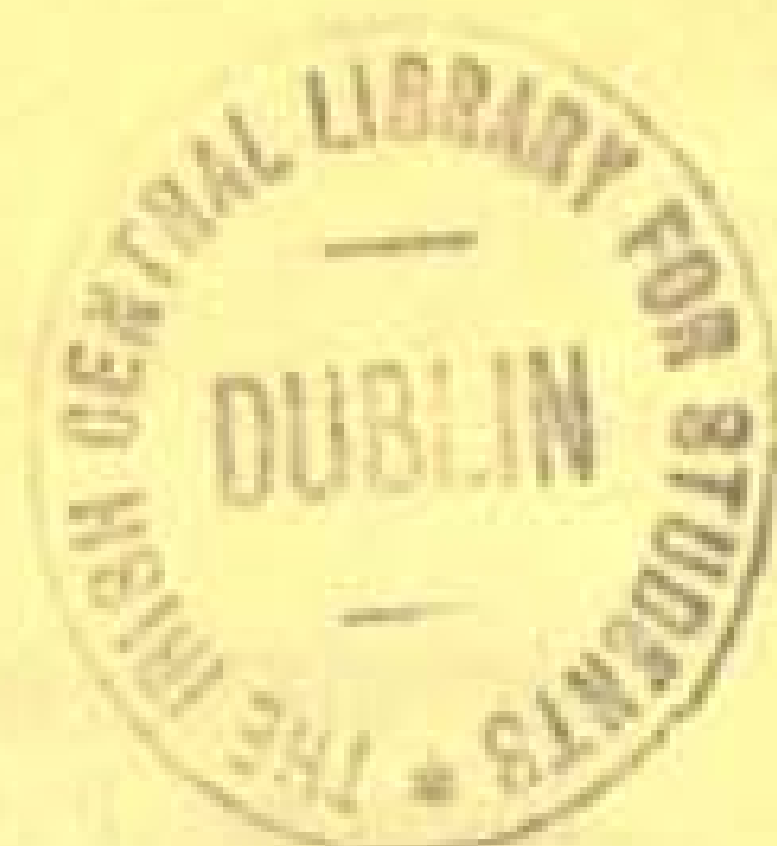
When the work was ready, the destruction of the type by fire in the printing works of Messrs. Browne and Nolan, Ltd., in August, 1935, delayed publication.

✠ PATRICK FINEGAN,

*Bishop of Kilmore.*

*July 31st, 1936.*





## INTRODUCTION

THE present volume aims at presenting a comprehensive account of the origin and development of the ancient diocese of the Ui-Briuin, and including a general survey of the early history and topography of the territory of Breiffne, the medieval *Tirbriuinensis*, coincident, very approximately, with the present County of Cavan, together with the northern section of the County of Leitrim—that part of it which extends from Loch Allen to the Atlantic seaboard—and with which the diocese is practically co-extensive. Breiffne, the patrimony of the Ui-Briuin, presents some remarkable characteristics and contrasts : a region abounding in the rude stone monuments of Neolithic races : rich in Celtic tradition and fertile with early Christian associations : its mountains towering in their wild and rugged grandeur and its fertile valleys teeming with the wild luxuriance of nature : its lakes, diversified and singularly picturesque, studded with innumerable wooded islands, many of them containing the sites of early ecclesiastical foundations—a region presenting a great variety of historical associations with the Ireland of pre-Celtic and early Celtic times.

In a series of articles on the histories of some Kilmore parishes, including biographical sketches of some distinguished Breiffne personages, contributed at the request of my friend, the late Father Joseph B. Meehan, P.P., M.R.I.A., to the *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, I had already discussed some aspects of the history of the diocese, and drawn attention to the very extensive and as yet only partially explored historical field which it presented. Later on when the editorship of the *Journal*



devolved on me, after the lamented death of its founder, Father Meehan, I frequently received inquiries from widely separated sources concerning the history of the diocese, its clans, place-names, patrons, medieval abbeys, and kindred matters, information which was rarely available in any published work, and the collection of which, if such was to be attempted in a systematic and satisfactory manner would, in most cases, necessitate prolonged research. The need for a diocesan history, authoritative and fully documented, soon became apparent, and the present volume is intended to supply, at least in part, that deficiency. The standard historical works of reference treat only very inadequately of Kilmore and its contributions to Church and State. To supplement the information contained in the present volume I have contributed some articles of diocesan interest, chiefly biographical, to the revised edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York), now in course of preparation under the scholarly editorship of Rev. John J. Wynne, S.J.

The intensive revival of Gaelic, and the recognition of its literary values in the Universities of Europe and America, has stimulated interest in regional history. This development of Irish historical studies has received very substantial encouragement by reason of the fact that in recent times many fresh sources of our history have been made accessible; these include the Papal Annates, containing very valuable information relating to the Irish dioceses in medieval times, and the abundant collections of manuscript materials preserved in libraries in Ireland as well as in England and on the Continent. The recent publications of the Irish Manuscripts Commission, including the several volumes of the *Analecta Hibernica*, have contributed in good measure to our knowledge of early and medieval times. It is clear that the





present position for a thorough exploration of our early and medieval history is, therefore, much more advantageous than that occupied by the earlier writers whose sources were often meagre and imperfect.

The story of pre-historic Breiffne, before the advent of the Ui-Briuin, is closely interwoven with the history of the early Invasions. Bordering on the western seaboard, the mountainous region of West Breiffne has many associations with those early colonisations. Evidences of Breiffne's Neolithic population groups abound in the several dolmens and stone circles of the maritime region bounded by the Rivers Drowse and Duff, west of Bundoran, and extending inland to the dolmens in the district of Loch Muinreamhair (Loch Ramor), near the borders of Co. Meath. In the Bronze Age the numerous lakes of Breiffne provided excellent shelter and security for the lake-dwellings—*Crannóga*—introduced by the colonists who had been expelled from their homelands in the region of the River Danube by the conquering armies of ancient Rome. That the Breiffne region should have been shown to contain at least eighty-four of these lacustrine sites—that is, more than one-third of the total number, 221, known to exist in Ireland—is positive evidence of the existence of large population groups in the Bronze Age. Only a comparatively small number of those lacustrine sites have as yet been explored, and several new discoveries have been made during the past few years: further investigations of these sites will certainly lead to discoveries of prime importance, ethnological as well as archaeological.

The economic importance of the territory of ancient Breiffne, by reason of its great mineral wealth, appears to have gained recognition in Continental countries in the Early Iron Age which commenced approximately about the period 400 B.C. The advent of the

successive races of early colonists—known by various names, Nemedh, Fir Bolg, Tuatha De Danann, Milesians, etc., but most probably belonging to a common stock in the mountainous regions of Central Europe—cannot be regarded as having been wholly fortuitous: obviously they had been attracted by reason of the plentiful supplies of iron and other mineral deposits in the hilly district extending from Sliabh-an-Iaraind westward to the ocean. Colourful traditions relating to the early metallurgical processes are still current in the region of Sliabh-an-Iaraind; and it is very significant that these legendary descriptions should indicate an Iron Age rather than a Bronze Age origin. The metallurgy of iron is essentially different from that of bronze; and the traditional accounts are strictly in accordance with metallurgical principles.

The memorials of the Early Iron Age, that period of *intensive industrial activity* in Breiffne, are indelibly stamped on the face of the landscape, e.g., in place nomenclature, and for the satisfactory interpretation of the successive phases of our history an intimate knowledge of local topography is essential. Hence I have emphasised the importance of regional geography, studied with the aid of carefully prepared maps, as an adjunct of history. The historical geography of early Breiffne, which I have detailed as far as is required to illustrate the various periods under review, is intended to serve as the background against which the principal events of our pre-history and our proto-history will appear in clear perspective.

The presence within the territory of the idol, Cromm Cruaich of Magh Sleacht, a shrine at which the regal lines of Tara's royal rulers came to worship, must have enhanced the prestige of pre-Christian Breiffne and invested it with a sacred symbolism. Why the Breiffne region should have been originally



selected to be the site of this great national shrine of paganism, this great metropolitan temple of Cromm, raises a question at once both perplexing and interesting—a question for which we may only seek the answer in the vast and misty deep of our pre-history. The only satisfactory explanation as yet advanced, and based on archaeology and philology, is that propounded by Mr. J. P. Dalton who shows that the pre-Celtic colony now usually referred to in historical literature as the *Wiros*—a people who rose to power in Central Europe some centuries before the advent of the Celts—introduced the worship of Cromm. The *Wiros* were essentially a lake-dwelling race, and it is reasonable to assume that they were attracted to the region of the present Breiffne on account of its suitability—by reason of its many lakes—for the construction of lake-habitations—*Crannóga*—similar to those already in use in their homeland of Central Europe. Those bronze-sword *Wiros*, to whom we may ascribe the introduction of the worship of Cromm, appear to have arrived in Ireland towards the close of the Bronze Age.

It is worthy of note that a wooden idol, the first object of its kind yet discovered in Ireland, was found some years ago—in a bog under three or four feet of peat—at Ralaghan, Shercock.\* The figure, nearly four feet in height and made of yew, is now in the National Museum. This is an important link with the Breiffne of pagan times; but the exact significance of the figure still remains obscure.

With the epoch-making victory of St. Patrick over the citadel of paganism at Magh Sleacht, we enter on the history of Christian Breiffne. The visit of St. Patrick to Magh Sleacht was an event of paramount importance in our history, and its significance is fully attested both by history and tradition across the long span of fifteen centuries. I have endeavoured

\* *Antiquity*, vol. iv, p. 487: 1930.

to reconstruct, as far as the facts of history and tradition make this possible, the itinerary of St. Patrick in Breiffne, and have identified some of the place-names mentioned in the *Vita Tripartita* and other early writings. The definition of the topography of the historic territory of Magh Sleacht, and the location of the actual site of Cromm's shrine, is discussed at some length. Certain writers on Patrician history have searched for the location of the shrine at places which are actually outside the boundaries of Magh Sleacht : their conclusions are based, therefore, on incorrect assumptions. The classic investigations of Mr. J. P. Dalton, to whose learned papers I have frequently referred, have definitely established the site of Cromm's temple. My own investigations (in August, 1933) in Magh Sleacht, still the home of vivid tradition, with an examination of the physical geography of the district, and a comparison of the seventeenth-century maps with those of the present day, have led to conclusions which are in absolute agreement with those so ably presented in Mr. Dalton's thesis.

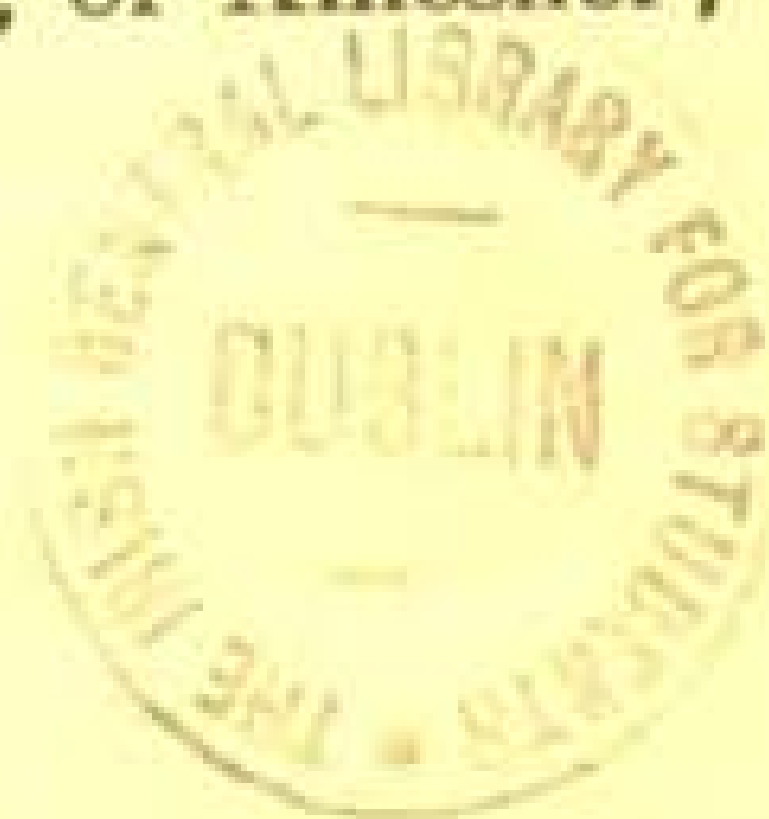
St. Patrick's visit to Magh Bolg of East Breiffne has not hitherto been described by Patrician historians, nor has the significance of the local legend been generally recognised. The entry in the *Vita Tripartita* shows that the local Patrician legend is not quite devoid of historical corroboration.

The rise of the Ui-Briuin race to lordship over Breiffne, after the sixth century, with the gradual but inevitable elimination of the earlier races—e.g., the Masraighe of Magh Sleacht and the Gailenga of East Breiffne (located partly in the present Barony of Clankee)—commences a new chapter in the history and expansion of Breiffne. The influence of Christianity on the Ui-Briuin people may be inferred from the large number of ecclesiastical foundations which



“ A comprehending inquirer [observes Professor Eoin MacNeill] cannot fail to recognise that the writing or the study of Irish history is a vain conceit unless the history of Ireland is understood to comprise in a very ample measure the history of religion in Ireland.” Otherwise the interpretation of the facts of history, and the assessment of their values, if not actually incorrect, will be unbalanced, and as such will certainly be defective and misleading. The ordinary text-books of secular history generally ignore the religion and the culture of the people. Cobbet in his well-known work, *The Protestant Reformation*, says of the histories of England of his time that the greater part of them are little better than romances. “ They treat [he writes] of battles, negotiations, intrigues of court . . . ; they contain the gossip and scandal of former times, and very little else.” This disregard for historical equilibrium, which is characteristic of so many text-books which purport to present our political and economic history, has its origin in what His Holiness Pope Pius XI has condemned as “ the pagan worship of the State.”

The history of the Ui-Briuin in the centuries immediately succeeding the introduction of Christianity centres on such great names as those of St. Moaedhóg, of Templeport; St. Feidhlimidh, of Kilmore; St. Colman, of Slanore; St. Dallan, of Kildallan; St. Laighne, of Killinagh; St. Bricin, of Tuaim Drecauin; St. Cillian, of Mullagh, apostle and martyr of Franconia in Germany, and many others—e.g., St. Fincheall, of Disert Fincheall; St. Laisir, of Killesher;





St. Curcach, of Cloonlogher; St. Mochonna, of Annagh; St. Osnat, of Killasnat; Bishop Siric, of Magh Bolg; Bishop Fionnchadh, of Cill Fhorga (Killargue), who lived in the early eighth century; St. Forga, who was evidently the founder of Cill Fhorga but whose name does not appear to have found a place in any of our martyrologies—the details of whose lives have become obscured in the mists of antiquity. Of the *Seven Bishops of Druimair-bhealaigh* (Drumreilly) or of the *Seven Bishops of Aelmagh*, even their very names have not been preserved. Only meagre details of the life of St. Feidhlimidh have been recorded by the hagiologists; but his name, through popular canonisation, has always occupied a place of special veneration in Breiffne tradition. Pilgrimages to his holy well at Kilmore continued until the seventeenth century when the venerable cathedral, fragrant with Catholic memories, passed away from Catholic hands and Catholic practices.

Following the lines of the historical development of the diocese I have outlined, in brief, the tribal origin of the medieval diocesan title, *Tirbriuinensis*. From the accounts of the Irish diocesan system of the twelfth century, as recorded in the Acts of the Synods of Rathbreasail (1111) and Ceanannus (1152), and to discover some satisfactory explanation for the omission of the Ui-Briuin diocese from the contemporary lists, I have outlined the diocesan system for the provinces of Ulster and Connacht as proposed in the Rathbreasail scheme. The recognition of the several factors in the complex and unstable political system which then existed is a necessary preliminary to a clear understanding of the diocesan system as then formulated. The political circumstances then obtaining must have wielded a very great influence in the allocation of Sees and in the determination of diocesan limits.

Our sole authority for the details of the topography of the Rathbreasail scheme is Dr. Geoffrey Keating—the Irish Herodotus—who extracted the information from the *Book of Cluain Eidhneach*, a work which has disappeared since Keating's time and cannot now be traced. Fortunately the important section relating to the diocesan boundaries is preserved by Keating and is now an invaluable record of early diocesan topography.

That the Synods of Rathbreasail and Fiadh-Mic-Aenghusa were really identical may be inferred from a collation of the entries relating to those great ecclesiastical councils in the *Annals of Inisfallen*, *Annals of Loch Cé*, the *Chronicon Scotorum*, and the several other sources. It is true that Keating assumes that they were distinct conventions; and a confusion of dates—a weakness in some of Keating's writings—has induced later writers to adopt without question his conclusions. Some of those errors may have been introduced by Keating's copyists; at any rate, the sources which would have enabled him to decide the question were not accessible to the great historian. The various references when collated lead to the following conclusion: that the Synod having first met at Fiadh-Mic-Aenghusa, which was near the famous Hill of Uisneach, Co. Westmeath, there was an adjournment followed later on by a resumption at Rathbreasail, which lay in the territory of Eile and north-east of Cashel, the capital of Munster. This procedure was in strict accordance with the national character of the Synod representative as it was of the entire country. Keating, very significantly, refers to it as *Comóradl Coiréceann*, i.e., a National Council.

Those synods, concerned with the preparation of schemes of ecclesiastical organisation, were events of the greatest importance in the history of twelfth-century Ireland. Except for some minor alterations



and amalgamations, the Rathbreasail diocesan scheme has been substantially retained down to the present day. The Acts of the Synod with the question of its chronology and a detailed examination of the topography of the scheme still awaits the exhaustive analysis which its importance would demand. I have already referred to Father MacErlean's informative paper in the *Archivium Hibernicum* on the topography of the scheme.

In the Middle Ages Breiffne possessed within its territory some important monastic foundations, centres of religion and education and richly endowed by the native chieftains. Drumlane with its Round Tower—the only structure of its class now surviving in the diocese—reflects even in its ruins some of the glories of its past. The Premonstratensian Priory on Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair must have been a splendid edifice in those days: its elaborately carved doorway, now at Kilmore, bears testimony to the high degree of skill attained in the sculptor's art as practised in medieval Breiffne. Seven centuries have now passed since, in 1237, the Canons Regular of St. Norbert came to Holy Trinity Island.

The Franciscan monastery of Cavan was the nucleus of the present town over which its ivied tower still stands sentinel. This venerable sanctuary, the burial-place of many great ecclesiastics and military leaders—men whose brilliant attainments and splendid services to Church and State illumine the pages of our history—is redolent with Catholic traditions and fragrant with Catholic memories. In the sixteenth century this monastery provided some illustrious Irish Franciscan Provincials who laboured zealously to counteract the malignant influences of the Religious Revolt. Father Patrick O'Maolain was elected Provincial in 1540, and again in 1555; Father Richard Brady, a very distinguished man who was afterwards Bishop of

Kilmore, was first elected Provincial in 1570 ; Father John O'Gowan, 1577 ; Father Eoghan O'Duffy, 1580 ; Father Cormac O'Gowan, 1590 ; Father Eoghan O'Duffy was a celebrated preacher, and his heroic efforts to stem the tide of the Elizabethan heresy have earned for him an undying fame.

The destruction of the sculptured monuments with the obliteration of the medieval tombs at Kilmore, Cavan, Drumlane and elsewhere, has resulted in the disappearance of all the splendid memorials that once adorned these ancient sanctuaries : the loss is now irreparable. In the seventeenth century successive waves of vandalism swept over the country, but especially here in Ulster, following the Jacobean Plantations, and later on during the Cromwellian usurpation, the hand of the iconoclast struck with a vengeance. The sculptured memorials of ancient and medieval Breiffne have, with few exceptions, been swept away. Concerning the fate of the miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin of Kilmore, mentioned in the manuscript work of Archdeacon John Lynch, no particulars have been discovered : most probably it, too, was destroyed. On the fourteenth-century Diocesan Seal (see illustration) is depicted a representation of the Virgin and Child ; and we may reasonably conclude that this figure on the seal is intended to represent the statue of Our Lady of Kilmore. That both the seal and the statue should be referred to the fourteenth century supports this conclusion.

TRIALLAM TIMCEALL NA BREIFNE—let us wander through Breiffne—to adapt the popular phrase of John O'Dugan (*obit* 1372), the poet, antiquary and historian of Ui-Maine, whose *Irish Topographical Poems*, composed in the early fourteenth century, preserve many historical details concerning the territories of the medieval Irish clans. The truth



of the great topographer's *dictum* is still manifest after the passage of over five centuries. Imperfect knowledge of diocesan topography has been chiefly responsible for the curious errors of Sir James Ware and other writers. Relying mainly on the information often meagre and unreliable obtainable from the limited resources to which they had access, and practically limited to the imperfect collections in the libraries of the time, they ignored the rich stores of historical information available in the traditions of the people, or recorded in the semi-obliterated monumental inscriptions lying generally neglected and forgotten beside the crumbling ruins of our early ecclesiastical foundations. Many of those historians were unacquainted with the language of the people, a fact which placed them at a serious disadvantage and made their progress still more difficult. Nevertheless, they utilised many manuscripts which have since been lost, and we owe a great deal to their industry and their interest in Irish history at a time when its study was not fashionable.

A systematic and comprehensive historical survey of the diocese was a necessary preliminary to the commencement of a diocesan history, and the field being practically uncharted I found it necessary to devise my own plans which I will now briefly indicate. I utilised my summer vacations—the only time which I had available—to visit every part of the extensive territory extending from the banks of the River Bonnet at Dromahaire eastward to Drumgoon on the borders of ancient Oirghialla, and from my own native parish of Lurgan on the shores of Loch Ramor northwestward to the Bay of Donegal. The ruins of the ancient and medieval churches and monasteries were closely examined and their special features observed: monumental inscriptions, many of them almost illegible or in positions which rendered their



examination a matter of considerable difficulty, were located, and where possible deciphered: searches were made to determine the locations of Termon Crosses, which had been reputed to have existed in early times: ogham inscriptions, where reported to exist, were traced and examined: boundaries of ancient territories were investigated, and the various physical features, e.g., lakes, hills, rivers, which determined these boundaries were traced: traditional sites of early churches and oratories were carefully explored: Mass-rocks, those links with the penal generations, were located in the secluded valleys and on the rocky mountain sides, and the local traditions concerning them were recorded: popular traditions were collected from Gaelic speakers—historical sources without the aid of which our record would be lacking both in interest and vitality: local place-names were investigated and obsolete forms recovered: items of folklore relating to local customs, games, festive gatherings, etc., and illustrating early medical practices, e.g., the vapour baths and peat mud baths dating from very early times, were collected providing interesting sidelights on the social life of ancient Breiffne: variations in dialect, grammatical peculiarities, idioms and proverbs, were noted: parochial registers of the eighteenth century—practically the sole remaining diocesan records for that period—were consulted: inscriptions on old chalices were copied: *Wills* and other legal documents were examined and in many cases these proved to be the sources of valuable genealogical data. In brief, I consulted every source which was likely to yield information pertaining to the history of the diocese, considered carefully every item of historical evidence whether manuscript or traditional, and made an effort to repair the neglect of centuries and to rescue from oblivion these diocesan memorials, sacred to the

memory of our forefathers, which the passage of the years and the neglect and apathy of modern times inevitably renders more obscure. Until the history of every Irish diocese is similarly collected the history of Ireland will remain incomplete; but the magnitude of the task should not be under-rated. *Exemplum enim dedi vobis*—if I may adopt the apt quotation selected many years ago by my kinsman the late Rev. James Mooney, P.P., Knockbride, and inscribed by him above the portals when, in 1851, he erected a parochial residence, the first to be raised in the diocese after the Great Starvation of 1847.

Having amassed my materials, too bulky to be compressed within the limits of a single volume, I collated the information obtained from the several sources which I had consulted. In every case the evidence was carefully weighed in the historical balance, and everything that was not authoritative was either rejected or accepted tentatively. It is my opinion that if history, in the broadest sense of the term, is to be established on a logical and scientific basis rather than treated as a system founded largely on mere conjecture, the essential equilibrium between the facts of the historical record and those preserved in the great repository of tradition must be carefully maintained. One is the complement of the other, and the writer who fails to utilise fully both sources will only succeed in producing a colourless record. In Breiffne local tradition, retained through the medium of Gaelic, still remains unusually vivid, and reflects the Gaelic culture which has preserved its continuity from early Christian times.

The method of presentation is entirely my own, and is intended to make the work adaptable to the requirements of the general reader while providing our schools and colleges with the fundamentals of our history. History as a school subject has hitherto



received only very inadequate treatment; in this matter, however, the schools had only little option as the history of Ireland was made subordinate to that of other countries in which our people had little interest. There was a general absence of perspective, and in the text-books of the so-called "generalised" history, the history of Ireland, its religion, language and culture was, if referred to at all, only treated with undisguised contempt. The result was a distorted version of history. The subtle and pernicious influence of Whatelyism, with all that it connoted, had for long exercised a malignant influence on the Irish school system: its policy is being happily reversed in our own time. The Ciceronian *dictum* on history—"never to dare say anything false, and never dare withhold anything true"—would appear to have lost its force in the non-Catholic universities which dominated Irish education in the last century.

I have emphasised that in the study of regional history it is essential that the ancient principalities, rather than the more modern counties, should be adopted as the historical units: the counties are generally artificial divisions based merely on political expediency, and in many cases of sixteenth-century origin. The dioceses, as I have shown, correspond very closely with the older historical divisions, and are, therefore, the natural historical units. County histories, as such, lack the necessary historical background, and the principle must be regarded as scientifically unsound.

The anglicised forms of many of our Breiffne place-names with their many variations, representing neither correct orthography nor correct pronunciation, makes it quite impossible to adopt any uniform system of spelling. Chiefly through the influence of maps and geographical text-books issued during the last century, and serving the interests of an educational system



hostile to the Gaelic language, these anglicised forms have become generally established: the original Gaelic forms are now being gradually restored. The forms recorded in the *State Papers* present a bewildering variety; but these forms arbitrary though they may appear have at least one important interest for us: they are mainly the phonetic renderings entered by Government officials of the time who were not acquainted with Gaelic. In the text I have given the Gaelic forms of the principal place-names, but space does not permit of an exhaustive treatment.

The identification of many of the place-names occurring in the medieval records, e.g., in the *Armagh Registers* and in the *Calendars of Papal Letters*, is rendered more difficult since, in many instances, the original Gaelic names have long since become obsolete. Their archaic forms tend to conceal still further their identities. In the location of obsolete place-names and in ascertaining the sites of some of the medieval churches, I have consulted those rare seventeenth-century maps, the Jacobean Plantation Map of 1609, and Sir William Petty's *Down Survey* of 1654. Defective orientation and the omission of the road system of the period detract, however, from the values of these maps.

An extended discussion on the toponymy of Breiffne, interesting and instructive though it would prove, does not come within the scope of the present volume. The several place-names with their Gaelic forms restored assume a new and fuller significance reflecting the past history of our people. They recall, *inter alia*, the names of some long-forgotten personages of whom no historical records have survived: describe the physical features of the landscape with the quality of the soil, the prevailing minerals and the principal crops—the predominating interests of an agricultural people: illustrate the history of the fauna and flora:

furnish glimpses of the civilisation of the successive races who possessed the land: determine the sites of early ecclesiastical foundations, the records of which have long since perished: preserve the names of local patrons, e.g., St. Forga of Killargue, who may not have found a place in the pages of hagiology. Our place-names are, therefore, veritable repositories of facts illustrating the successive stages of our early history, the links connecting past with present times. The scientific study of regional topography must, therefore, be regarded as the indispensable adjunct of history. I have explained that the names of mountains, rivers, and lakes, being less susceptible to change, are generally the oldest of our place-names, and for that reason difficult to interpret. Some of these names, the derivations of which still continue to puzzle our etymologists, may not be of Celtic origin, but rather the survivals of the languages of the long vanished races of the pre-Celtic period.

The foundations for the systematic study of Irish topography were established just a century ago by Dr. John O'Donovan in his *Ordnance Survey Letters*; but unfortunately the great topographer was not permitted to complete his projected scheme. These *Letters*, the originals of which are preserved in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, consist chiefly of a series of rough and often hastily compiled notes, queries, extracts from the Annals, and general observations. That these notes should be incomplete and frequently inaccurate is no reflexion on the excellent work accomplished by O'Donovan. I have frequently emphasised that the sections dealing with the Counties of Cavan and Leitrim are very imperfect, and that the information afforded is not always reliable. It was the intention of O'Donovan later on to subject these notes to a drastic revision, to amplify them, and to utilise them as the basis for a series of



regional histories—a scheme which never materialised. O'Donovan's scheme did not harmonise with the new educational system, anti-Catholic as well as anti-national, which was then being imposed on the Irish people; and the Government of the day effectively frustrated the plan by the withdrawal of financial assistance.

The *Ordnance Survey Letters* for Cavan and Leitrim were compiled in the summer of 1836 while Gaelic was still the living language of the people, and O'Donovan's notes, even in their incomplete and unrevised condition, are when read critically useful historical guides: they preserve many details of local history and tradition which have since passed out of popular memory, and would otherwise have become irrecoverably lost. At a later period, when compiling his monumental edition of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, O'Donovan duly rectified many of the errors of his earlier writings. The *Letters* cannot, therefore, be accepted as representing O'Donovan's more mature and final decisions on questions of Irish topography.

The economic conditions obtaining in the seventeenth century may be gleaned from the voluminous Commonwealth Grants for the period 1654–60. Elsewhere I have dealt with some of those Grants, with the native owners in 1641, and with the arbitrary and intolerable domination of the Cromwellian usurpers and their descendants. A more detailed study of the changes in land ownership in Breiffne which took place in the seventeenth century must be reserved for another occasion. The economic history of Breiffne is concerned essentially with the fortunes of the landowners. After the Cromwellian confiscations the native landowners—those who had survived the Jacobean Plantations—were dispossessed, and those who preferred to remain in the neighbourhood of their former estates existed merely as “tenants-at-will,” a term



connoting a semi-servile state, a precarious and intolerable existence, on the barren fringes of their own lands. Driven into the boglands and allowed to live only on the barren wastes, we find them enumerated in the Hearth Tax Rolls of 1664. With the history of the Cromwellian usurpers and their descendants I am not concerned: it is a sordid and squalid record to which I will extend the charity of silence.

In tracing the episcopal succession from the twelfth century I have given brief biographical accounts of the episcopal rulers of Kilmore from the time of the Synod of Rathbreasail. That long and distinguished line is embellished with many noble names—great prelates who in their generations shed lustre on the Church. Bishop Tuathal O'Connachtaigh assisted at the historic Synod of Ceanannus (Kells) in 1152. The name of Bishop Andrew MacBrady ranks high among the cathedral builders of the fifteenth century. Bishop Thomas MacBrady, who consecrated the church of Dromahaire, is eulogised by the annalists as a *luminous lamp* in his generation. Bishop Richard Brady, O.F.M., was an uncompromising opponent of the Elizabethan heresy. From his boyhood days, spent in the Franciscan monastery of Cavan, where he afterwards occupied the responsible position of Provincial of the Order, until borne down with age and infirmity and driven from his diocese he sank into the grave at Multifarnam, he proved himself a worthy scion of the princely Breiffne family to which he belonged. The religious revolt of the sixteenth century, when the State usurped the authority of the Church, found the diocese well organised and prepared to resist the assaults of schism and heresy. In Kilmore the conquests of the new evangelism were few and unsubstantial. Not until after the Jacobean Plantations in the early seventeenth century and the

resulting dispersal of the native owners did the new religion secure a foothold in Breiffne—but not among the native population.

In the history of the Confederation period there is no more illustrious personality than that of Primate Hugh O'Reilly, a prelate who displayed extraordinary abilities and was the originator of that great national movement. A wise, prudent and far-seeing statesman, he was a firm supporter of the policy of Rinuccini, and a leader whose advice, had it been generally accepted, might have altered the course of our history. Breiffne adhered firmly to the policy advocated by the Papal Nuncio and the Primate, and throughout this period the soldiers of Breiffne covered themselves with glory in the armies of the Confederation. When Cromwell was devastating Munster it was an army composed chiefly of Breiffne soldiers from Cavan and Monaghan, and led by Major-General Hugh O'Neill, nephew of Owen Roe, ably assisted by Captain Maolmordha O'Reilly—grandson of Sir John—that hurled back the Cromwellian forces from the walls of Clonmel, where "never was seen so hot a storm of so long continuance, and so gallantly defended, neither in England nor in Ireland." But the Anglo-Irish held aloof until it was too late: a few years later they found themselves included with the Old Irish in the confiscation schemes.

The Primate died a fugitive on Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair. On that dark day in the early fifties of the seventeenth century when, surreptitiously and in an unmarked grave, the Primate was laid to rest beside his ancestors in Cavan monastery, the religious and national outlook was dismal in the extreme. Puritanism with fire and sword was blazing its trail of annihilation, and our forefathers driven into the moorlands and mountain fastnesses of Breiffne were living in the shadow of the dread Cromwellian edict,



"To Hell or to Connacht," that sentence of national death then resounding through the land. On the mountain sides and in the inaccessible glens the scattered remnants of our people awaited the passing of the Puritan reign of terror. Those who were captured were, if not massacred, sold into slavery on the sugar plantations of the West Indies or on the blazing cottonfields of the Barbadoes: their number remains one of the secrets of history. In that hour of national disaster it was realised, when too late, that the rejection of the Primate's policy had precipitated the worst calamity in the history of the country: Cromwell's direful malediction would appear by an inscrutable decree of Providence to have been the dread penalty of that rejection.

The biographer whose pen would depict the Primate, the scholar, and the statesman against the sombre background of the seventeenth century in Ireland would render a signal service to Irish history. The materials for such a biographical study are ample and now readily accessible. The recent publication of the *Commentarius Rinuccinianus*, the great compilation of Fathers O'Connell and O'Farrell, provides from contemporary sources original materials illustrating in detail the activities of the principals of the Confederation. It is worthy of record that the Primate should have advocated the adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in Ireland a century before it obtained English legal sanction.

The Primate's genealogy is given as follows in the *O'Reilly Pedigree*\*:—

Ceitre mic Maolmórdha mic Aodha, Cahir, Eamonn, Aodh an Príomh-faíró, agus Domhnall.  
[The four sons of Maolmordha son of Aodh were: Cahir, Eamonn, Aodh (i.e., Hugh) the Primate, and Domhnall.]

\* MS. H. 1. 15. T.C.D. (p. 850).



Aodh, father of the Maolmordha here mentioned, was a brother of the chieftain Maolmordha who ruled over Breiffne from 1535 until his death in 1565.

Some writers have ascribed the date of the Primate's death to 1652; Renehan has 1651, while other accounts have 1653. This confusion of dates evidently had its origin in the Old Style and New Style systems of computation. As I have shown, the evidence in favour of 1652 is so strong that this date may be accepted without further question. In support of this my attention has been drawn to the following paragraph in MS. 23 D 9, pp. 296-7, in the hand of Séan Mac Solaidh, of Stackallen, near Slane, Co. Meath\*:

Eamonn Domhnall Ferghail & Aodh .i. an sagart do bhí [ina] príomh fhaidh aimsir fhada go bhfuair bás a gCloich Uachtar an 9 lá do Jan. san bhliadhain 1652 nua-stíl clann Mhaolmhordha mic Aodha mic Seain m Cathail. [Eamonn, Domhnall, Ferghail, and Aodh (i.e., Hugh) the priest, who was for a long period Primate, until he died at Loch Uachtar on the 9th of January, 1652, New Style: sons of Maolmordha, son of Aodh, son of Sean, son of Cathal.]

The enumeration of the sons of Maolmordha in MS. 23 D 9 differs slightly from that of MS. H. 1. 15; but neither list may be interpreted as exhaustive.

The copy of the O'Reilly-MacBrady Pedigree, MS. H. 1. 15, usually known as the *O'Reilly Pedigree*, and which, according to O'Donovan, was originally compiled in Latin at Louvain by Boethius Oge MacEgan and Patrick Hackett, is in the hand of the Meath scribe, Tadhg Ó Neachtain (1700-1750). The section dealing with the O'Reilly Genealogies is dated 1735. A summary of the principal sections of the manuscript is given by Gwynn, *Catalogue of Irish MSS. in T.C.D.*

\* Pól Breathnach, I.B.L., xxxiii, 91.

We have it on the authority of O'Donovan—*Annals of the Four Masters*—vols. iv. and vi., notes—that a copy of the *O'Reilly Pedigree* was in the possession of his friend and patron, Myles John O'Reilly, of Heath House, Maryborough; but this copy cannot now be traced. The O'Neachtain version appears to be the only copy which has survived, but it is defective in many particulars. Fortunately, however, there survives in the nineteenth-century manuscript, 23 M 5, compiled by Sean O'Cleirigh, another version of the earlier copy.

In 1786 a genealogy of the O'Reilly family was compiled by Chevalier Thomas O'Gorman (*circa* 1725-1808) for Count Alexander O'Reilly, a native of Baltrasna, near Oldcastle, Co. Meath, who distinguished himself in the army of Spain where he rose to the rank of Generalissimo. The genealogy was compiled, as O'Donovan informs us, "for the purpose of proving the nobility of blood of his family," and was a preliminary to the marriage of the Count's eldest son with the Countess Buenavista. The full title of the genealogy, which is in Latin, is: *Genealogia Antiquissima et Illustrissima o' Reilliorum Familiae*. The vellum document, together with an English translation, was forwarded to the Count by his cousin, Dowell O'Reilly, of the Heath House, father of Myles John already mentioned. The Count deposited the Latin document in the archives of Spain and retained the translation (I.B.L., XXII, 115: O'Donovan, F.M., VI, 2246). According to O'Donovan another copy of the English translation was deposited in the Office of Arms in the Bermingham Tower, Dublin Castle. The same authority informs us that he had in his possession (in 1851) a transcript made from this copy by Edward O'Reilly (*obit* 1829), the eminent Gaelic scholar, author of *Irish Writers*, *The Irish Dictionary*, etc. The present location of this transcript seems to be unknown.



Among the manuscripts of Chevalier O'Gorman in the library of the Royal Irish Academy is an English volume, classified as MS. 24 D 7, entitled *The Genealogy and Spreading Branches of the House of O'Reilly*. The scribes of this volume were Peadar Ó Connail, Francis O'Reilly, and Tadhg Ó Flannagáin. O'Gorman, who was a native of Kilmihil, Co. Clare, was attached to the Irish Brigade in France where he secured large vineyards as a marriage dowry. He appears to have been a professional pedigree compiler, and according to Dr. Crone he exported wines to Ireland and imported pedigrees to France. He received a sum of one thousand guineas for the O'Reilly genealogy. The French Revolution swept away his estates, and he returned to spend the remainder of his life in his native Clare. Evidently he secured the assistance of the scribes just mentioned in compiling the O'Reilly genealogy. Internal evidence indicates that MS. 24 D 7 is a redaction of MS. H. 1. 15, O'Gorman, and in later times O'Donovan, had access to numerous MSS. which have since been lost, or at least cannot be now traced. Edward O'Reilly's copy of O'Gorman's treatise would, if discovered, most likely add very considerably to our knowledge of the Breiffne genealogies.

For a period of fifty-nine years after the death of Bishop MacSwiney in 1669 the diocese was administered by Vicars-General. The Primate, Dr. Oliver Plunket—now Blessed Oliver—arrived in Dublin in March, 1670, and despite the difficulties of the times made an exhaustive visitation of the Ulster dioceses. In a later visitation, in 1675, he reported that the diocese of Kilmore had then about twenty-six parish priests and two houses of Franciscans. Of the thirty-nine Kilmore parish priests whose names are entered on the Registry of 1704, no fewer than twelve had received ordination at the Primate's hands.



The Primate was a native of Loughcrew, near the southern borders of Kilmore, and his kinsmen held considerable property in Lurgan parish adjoining Co. Meath. His mother's people, the Dillons, also owned property in Co. Cavan, including Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair.

As the 1704 clergy list is now available only as a very rare pamphlet I have reproduced it with some necessary emendations. Primate Plunket thoroughly reorganised the Ulster dioceses, and the extent of his labours in Kilmore is not recognised so universally as it deserves to be. Now that the Cause of his Canonisation is progressing so favourably, and while our people await the final verdict of the Church, the history of his labours in Kilmore will have a particular interest. It has well been remarked that only for his tremendous labours the work of St. Patrick might have vanished, and the great American and Australian Catholic Churches might never have been.

The lives and trials of the Bishops during the eighteenth century provide some realistic glimpses of the wretched conditions—so graphically described by the German historian, Von Raumer—under which the Ulster Catholics existed throughout that dark and dreary century of retrogression. Bishop MacDonagh died an exile in Lisbon: his successor, Dr. Richardson, was a great organiser and experienced great difficulties. The adventurous career of Bishop Andrew Campbell, travelling in the disguise of a Highland piper, finds few parallels in history.

The *Relationes Status*, preserved in the Roman archives, afford invaluable information concerning the affairs of the diocese at the various periods. The eighteenth-century *Wills*, quaint documents which were preserved in the Public Record Office, Dublin, will now be studied with interest. From these documents the plain fact emerges that as late as 1769 a

Catholic Bishop had no legal existence : previous to 1798 the Kilmore documents convey no indication of episcopal rank. In 1759 we have in English State documents the duly-considered judgment of Chancellor Bowes that the law of England " does not presume a Papist to exist in the Kingdom, nor can they [i.e., the Catholics] as much as breathe here without the connivance of the Government." In the light of this fanatical declaration the occasionally ambiguous phraseology of the episcopal *Wills* must be interpreted.

The history of Catholic education in the diocese, how in spite of suppression and proscription and all the carefully devised machinations of the Penal Code, Catholic schools were effectively maintained, must be reserved for another occasion. Readers of Montalembert will recall his pathetic reference to Ireland as *la Pologne de la mer*. The system of what came to be known as the " Hedge Schools," with its creditably high educational standards, shone brightly through the gloom of the Penal night : it was the popular challenge to the insidious proselytism of the State schools which, like the notorious Charter Schools, received ample governmental grants. In the eighteenth century the classical tradition in Kilmore was very strong. Elsewhere I have referred to the classical school of Moybolge, conducted by Father John Garrigan, P.P., during the first quarter of the century. It may come as a revelation to learn that as late as 1750—*Relatio Status* of Dr. Richardson—there was as yet no provision for non-Catholic education in the diocese. That " Charity Schools," to educate the children of " Popish-Irish natives, clothing and teaching them the 3 R's and the Established Church religion," had been in existence for some time previously we may infer from an annual report, dated 1723, issued by Henry Newman, Secretary to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and referring to such a



school as then existing in the parish of Kilmore (*Rawlinson Manuscripts*, D. 839). But the Charity Schools were a miserable failure. The specious reason advanced for the non-provision of schools to serve the non-Catholic population was stated to have been that the new landowners, all non-Catholics, considered such institutions to be not worth the expense—a subtle generalisation which had the great merit of being sufficiently vague and non-committal as to be practically irrefutable. Such was the neglected condition of education among the non-Catholic population in Kilmore a century after the Cromwellian confiscations and the propagation of the fiery gospel of Puritanism. From about the Commonwealth period until 1831 Hedge Schools flourished in every parish, and in many instances these schools were attended by non-Catholic pupils as well, a fact which generally tended towards the mitigation of the Penal enactments. The non-Catholics evidently appreciated the education imparted in those schools, and the local magistrates who were charged with the enforcement of the Penal statutes usually found it convenient to ignore the existence of such schools. Among the pupils at a classical school in Kilmainhamwood, conducted by the Rev. Terence O'Reilly during the first quarter of the last century, were the sons of the local Protestant rector.

Candidates for the priesthood who had received their education in those classical schools distinguished themselves afterwards in the seminaries of Europe and Canada: their names are inscribed on the rolls of Salamanca, Seville, Paris, Louvain, and other Continental colleges. Many Kilmore students during the last century graduated in the Grand Seminary of Montreal, *inter alios*, Rev. Peter O'Connell (an uncle of the present writer), who received his early education at the well-known classical school in Virginia. It was at a Hedge School on the Cavan-Meath border



that Rev. Dr. Michael Muldoon, Vicar-Apostolic of Texas, received the rudiments of his education in the period 1790-1800. It is stated, traditionally, that he completed his studies and was ordained at Seville. Many of the teachers who conducted those classical schools had studied on the Continent and used Latin as a second vernacular. The famous Dr. Milner, who was Bishop of the Midland District of England before Emancipation, pays the following tribute to the Irish students in foreign universities during the eighteenth century: they "carried off more than a due proportion of prizes and professorships by sheer merit of superior talents and learning, and a much greater proportion than fell to the lot of all other foreigners put together."

The brilliant Sheridans reflected the classical tradition of Co. Cavan. Dr. Thomas Sheridan (1687-1738), brilliant but eccentric, was called the Quintilian of his day, and was considered to have been the ablest classical teacher in the three kingdoms. He wrote a Latin grammar which was used as the standard text-book in the universities for a century after his time.

After 1821 we can gather from official returns more detailed information concerning the Kilmore schools. The system then obtaining was thoroughly efficient, and seems to have been carefully organised although dependent entirely on voluntary contributions for its maintenance. The official returns of 1824 show that there were then in Ireland 11,823 schools attended by 561,000 pupils. Over 8,000 of these schools were under Catholic management: 7,600 of them are described as conducted by men-teachers—private individuals who were willing to take the risks involved—and were essentially Hedge Schools. But the history of the Kilmore schools has yet to be compiled.

In the thirties and forties of the last century the proselytising movement, locally known as the "Second Reformation," supported by ascendancy wealth and influence, and utilising to the utmost the powerful agencies of eviction and starvation, advanced in full territorial strength to a formidable onslaught on the ancient Faith; but the gains were few and unsubstantial. The literature of this movement was prolific, but far more remarkable for its quantity than for its quality. It was an age of pamphleteering, and bundles of the controversial tracts, crude polemics, then distributed may now be examined in the Halliday Collection of Pamphlets in the Royal Irish Academy.

The spectre of hunger then stalked the land. The Great Starvation of 1846-47—incorrectly known as the Great Famine—is a poignant chapter in the history of the diocese which still remains to be written. Some excellent volumes dealing with the general history of that period have appeared, but regional studies would be very desirable. Throughout the diocese the failure of the potato crop was severely felt. Statistics show, however, that although the potato crop had failed—and the failure does not appear to have been so great as is popularly believed—there still remained corn in abundance which if utilised would have ensured against starvation. The closing of the ports and the conservation of the grain supplies was the policy advocated by O'Connell: the English Government of the time replied that such a course would "interfere with the natural course of trade"! The people starved while the corn was exported to pay the exorbitant rents demanded by absentee landlords. It was a paradox: a famine in the midst of plenty. Help came from foreign countries—the Sultan of Turkey sent a generous contribution—but the relentless exactions of absenteeism made



starvation inevitable. The very full accounts of the horrors of the Great Starvation still vividly recalled by popular tradition may be amplified from the Reports which are available in the Halliday Collection and other contemporary sources. In his recent work, *A Shorter History of England* (1934), Mr. Hilaire Belloc shows that the Great Starvation of 1846-47 formed a turning-point in world history, and that its effects are still being felt throughout the world: the Irish people abroad, mindful of the memories of the artificial famine, found full scope for their political genius which was everywhere used against England.

The "Second Reformation" failed completely in its objects: the chagrin of its promoters at the negative results of their schemes found its vindictive expression in the wholesale evictions which followed with the ruthless expulsion of thousands of Catholic families from their homes. The general failure of this barbarous extermination plan, this recrudescence of Cromwellian policy, and the tenacity of the people's resistance in spite of the spectres of eviction and starvation is a heroic chapter in the history of the diocese which is yet unwritten.

The extent of Kilmore's contribution to the growth and development of the Church in America and Australia does not come within the scope of the present volume: those vast fields of history are as yet only very imperfectly explored. A mere list of those pioneers, ecclesiastics and laymen, who contributed to the expansion of Ireland's great spiritual empire abroad would be an extensive one. There exists ample evidence of considerable emigration from the Counties of Cavan and Leitrim to America in the eighteenth century. Some excerpts from the very voluminous *Passenger Lists*, preserved in New York, have been published by the American Irish Historical



Society ; but these important sources of information have never been fully examined.

Dr. John Timon, Bishop of Buffalo, born in 1797 at Conewago, Pennsylvania, was the son of James Timon (*Timmons* is the Breiffne form of the name), who emigrated from Co. Cavan, and most probably from the district of Cootehill, in 1796 or in the early months of 1797. Rev. Dr. Michael Muldoon, already referred to, was born (*circa* 1780) in the district of Kilmainhamwood and parish of Moybolge ; he spent his early years in Lurgan parish. He performed heroic pioneer work in Mexico, where some of his drastic reforms and the rigid enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline aroused the hostility of certain turbulent sections of the colonists there. The closing years of his life are enshrouded in mystery. There is documentary evidence to show that he was living in 1839, but I have not discovered any later reference to him. That he died shortly after 1839, somewhere in Old Mexico, is reasonable to infer ; and the family tradition that he was murdered appears to have been founded on fact.

Dr. Timon, when Superior of the Lazarists, laboured in the same missionary field. The achievements of those Breiffne missionaries, and the peculiar difficulties which confronted them, appear to have been misunderstood even by some recent Catholic historians in America. Suffice it to say that the records of the Cathedral of Monterey, which would have provided the fullest and most authentic information concerning the diocesan administration of Mexico during that critical period, were confiscated some years ago by the revolutionary Government of that country, and are not now accessible.

The Knights of Columbus Historical Commission, under the presidency of Rev. Paul J. Foik, C.S.C., Ph.D., with headquarters at Austin, Texas, is at

present collecting materials for a history, to be issued in several volumes, of the Irish missionaries in Mexico and their activities, a work which will, as I am assured by Rev. Dr. Foik, add substantially to our knowledge of a rather obscure period in which two, at least, of our Kilmore priests figured prominently. The investigations are at present proceeding.

One of the pioneers of Catholic journalism in America was Patrick Donahoe, who was born at Munnery, in the parish of Kilmore, on March 17th, 1811. His father, Terence, who was a farmer and linen weaver, emigrated to Boston, Mass., in 1821, and there Patrick was educated. In 1836, Patrick Donahoe with a Mr. Devereaux established the *Boston Pilot*, a newspaper which, purchased and refounded in 1911 by His Eminence Cardinal O'Connell, now occupies a leading position in the Catholic Press world of America. In 1878 he founded the popular *Donahoe's Magazine*. His death took place in 1901. It is of interest to add that John Boyle O'Reilly, whose ancestors belonged to Co. Cavan, edited the *Pilot* for many years.

Margaret Gaffney—*Margaret of New Orleans*—born in 1813 at Tully, parish of Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim, has a statue to her memory in New Orleans, said to have been the first statue raised to a woman in America. She was the daughter of William Gaffney and Margaret O'Rourke. Her parents emigrated in 1818, taking Margaret with them, and settled in Baltimore. A great plague swept away her parents in 1822, and Margaret, now an orphan, was reared by a Mrs. Richards. In 1835 she married Charles Haughery, who died at New Orleans in the following year. From that time until her death in 1882 she devoted her life to the care of the poor of the city, and did much to mitigate the sufferings of the Confederate prisoners of the Civil War.



Mrs. James Sadlier—*née* Mary Anne Madden—who wrote over sixty novels and earned a world-wide fame, was the daughter of Francis Madden and Mary Foy and was born in the town of Cootehill on December 31st, 1820. Leaving for America in 1844, she visited relatives in Canada where she met a well-known literary man, James Sadlier of the publishing firm of D. and J. Sadlier, New York. They were married in 1846, and resided for fourteen years in Montreal, where the firm had established a branch. In 1860 they returned to New York where Mrs. Sadlier edited the *New York Tablet*, and was recognised as one of the most brilliant Catholic journalists of the day. Her novels were among the "best sellers" of the time and were very widely read. She died at Montreal, a city teeming with Irish associations and the home of many an Irish exile, on April 5th, 1903. Her daughter, Dr. Anna T. Sadlier, of Ottawa, who has very kindly furnished me with biographical details, has inherited her mother's literary genius, and is herself the author of over forty books on varied subjects as well as of innumerable contributions to American and Canadian periodicals.

John Cardinal Farley (1842-1918), Archbishop of New York, was of Cavan ancestry. He was born at Newtown Hamilton, Co. Armagh, where his father, who belonged to Carnalynch, Killinkere parish, had resided for some years before emigrating with his family to America.

In Beagh, also in Killinkere parish, is the house now marked by a mural tablet (erected by the late Rev. J. B. Meehan, P.P.), which was the home of John Sheridan and Mary Moynagh (Mooney), the parents of General Philip H. Sheridan of American Civil War fame. The family emigrated to America about 1831; but whether the future General was born at Beagh or in America still remains a much



controverted question. My friend, the late Father Joseph B. Meehan, P.P., in his booklet on Sheridan—a work in which I collaborated—presents very clearly the claims of Beagh: *The Birthplace of General Philip H. Sheridan* (Dublin, Gill; New York, Kenedy, 1926). This interesting historical problem must, however, await a fuller and more extended investigation.

Rev. Michael J. MacGivney (1852–1890), the illustrious founder of the Knights of Columbus, was the son of Patrick MacGivney, of Kilnaleck, parish of Crosserlough, and Mary Lynch, of Castlerahan. Father MacGivney was born in Waterbury, Conn., where his parents had emigrated during the period of the Great Starvation in Ireland. His father had gone to America in 1847 and his mother a year or two later; they were married in Waterbury and made their home there. Father MacGivney's name ranks high among the makers of American history: it has recently been announced (*Columbia*, September, 1935) that the Waterbury Tercentenary Commission has arranged to erect a stone marker with inscription indicating the site of his birthplace.

The district of Kilnaleck was the birthplace of some well-known members of the American Hierarchy, *inter alios*, Dr. Patrick T. O'Reilly (1833–1892), first Bishop of Springfield; Dr. John Brady (1840–1890), Auxiliary Bishop of Boston; Dr. Thomas J. Conaty (1847–1915), the sixth Bishop of Los Angeles.

In the parish of Lurgan (district of Virginia) were born, *inter alios*, Dr. Philip J. Garrigan (1840–1919), Vice-Rector of the Catholic University of America at Washington, and later appointed the first Bishop of Sioux City; Dr. James O'Reilly (1858–1934), second Bishop of Fargo. The ancestors of the late Archbishop Corrigan (*obit* 1902) of New York belonged to the parish of Lurgan.

Dr. Thomas MacGovern (1832–1898), second Bishop

of Harrisburg, was born at Drumbar in the parish of Kinawley. Dr. James O'Reilly, who was appointed first Bishop of Wichita, and died in July, 1887, a short time before the arrival of the Papal Bulls for his consecration, was born in the district of Cavan on February 5th, 1847. He went to America about 1859, studied in the Salesianum at Milwaukee, and was ordained in 1874 by Bishop Fink, of Leavenworth (Records of St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin). Dr. Francis X. Gilfillan, Bishop of St. Joseph, Missouri, who died in 1933, was a native of Aghavas, Co. Leitrim, where he was born in 1872. The list could be extended to very great length.

The study of any of the standard works on American Catholic history, e.g., O'Donnell's *Catholic Hierarchy of the United States*; Duggan's *The Catholic Church in Connecticut*; the *Catholic Historical Review* (files); the *Journal of the American Irish Historical Society* (files); the *Biographical Cyclopedia* of Reuss—will reveal the extent of the labours of and the great influence exerted by Kilmore ecclesiastics in America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The published records are as yet very imperfect and incomplete, and this field of our history yet remains to be fully explored. A chronicle of the activities and achievements of our bishops and priests in Australia would, if compiled, be of the greatest interest and value: here again the vast historical field is unexplored. Mention of one name must suffice here: the first Bishop of Perth, where he founded the cathedral, was Dr. John Brady, who was born in the parish of Castletara, *circa* 1800. He was the first priest to celebrate Mass in Western Australia.

Emigration to America was not confined to the Catholic population. The descendants of some of Cavan's non-Catholic emigrants have secured niches in the temple of American literary fame. William



James, who emigrated from Ballyjamesduff in 1789, at the age of eighteen, possessed of only a small sum of money and a Latin grammar—evidence of the classical tradition—was the founder of the salt industry of Syracuse: he was the grandfather of the still more famous William James (1842-1910), Professor of Philosophy at Harvard, and of Henry James (1843-1916) the novelist. Professor William James, whose writings were strongly influenced by the teachings of the Swedish mystic, Swedenborg, was the author of many philosophical works including his well-known *Principles of Psychology* (1890). His *Talks to Teachers* (1902) is still widely read. In 1899 he visited Ireland, and his published letters show that he took a deep interest in this country.

The name of Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), whose erratic genius and strangely chequered career continues to furnish the materials for many commentaries and dissertations both in England and America, occupies an unique position in the world of American literature: his is a "living name" as protested Father Tabb against the narrow prejudice which would deny him a tablet in New York's Hall of Fame. Poe's progenitors (named Powell) belonged to Dring in the parish of Kildallan.

Many other names might be added to these lists to show that Breiffne ranks very high as the birth-place of Irish genius. The Counties of Cavan and Leitrim have in every century produced a remarkably large number of distinguished personages, and the available biographical materials would require a special volume. Space allows only the mere mention of some further names here. The O'Rourkes occupy a leading place in Leitrim history. In Cavan the O'Reillys, Sheridans, MacBradys, etc., figure in almost every department of human achievement. The Brookes, although not of Irish descent, had a national outlook,



and contributed in good measure to our literature both in Gaelic and English. A British Museum MS., *Togail na Tebe, the Thebaid of Statius*—published with a translation by the Cambridge University Press, 1923—was written, in 1487, in the barony of Tullyhaw, by a local scribe, Diarmaid Bacach Mac Partholan. Of the Gaelic writers of the eighteenth century some particulars are recorded by Edward O'Reilly in his *Irish Writers* with the periods during which they flourished. In the district of Mullagh lived some popular Gaelic poets of the early eighteenth century, *inter alios*, Charles MacCabe, a prominent harper and a close friend of O'Carolan, who died about 1739; Feardorcha O'Farrelly, a contemporary of MacCabe, died about 1736; John O'Farrelly (1721). Charlotte Brooke (*circa* 1750–1793) is best remembered for her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, which was first published in 1789; she was the daughter of Henry Brooke, of Mullagh, who founded the *Freeman's Journal* in 1763. Among the many Cavan writers mentioned by Edward O'Reilly are: Rev. Thomas O'Clery, P.P., Killann, who was living in 1704; John O'Reilly (1700), of Crosserlough; Charles Gilgunn (Mac Giolla Gunna), who died about 1756; Brian O'Clery, of Moybolge, who was living in 1730; Connor O'Corrigan (1700); Philip O'Reilly (1726); Fiachra MacBrady (1712), the Stradone schoolmaster; the facetious and whimsical Philip Brady (1712), etc. The ancestors of Peter Galligan (1792–1860), the well-known Meath scribe, belonged to the parish of Denn. Another Gaelic scholar, Rev. Paul O'Brien (1763–1820), Professor of Gaelic at Maynooth College, was born at Breakey, near Kilmainhamwood, and spent his youth there; the Diocese of Kilmore can, therefore, claim him. The list of Gaelic writers could be extended to great length, indicating that in Breiffne the lamp of Gaelic learning and culture shone brightly through the gloom of the eighteenth century.

Dr. Edmund MacGauran, Archbishop of Armagh, who was martyred on July 3rd, 1593, near Tulsk, Co. Roscommon, by the English forces led by the notorious Bingham, belonged to the Tullyhaw family. Father Patrick Brady, O.S.F., Guardian of the Convent of Monaghan, who *cum aliis sexdecem conventus fratribus*, was martyred in 1589, belonged, most probably, to Co. Cavan; his name is entered on the list of candidates for Canonisation which has been forwarded to Rome. Dr. Daniel O'Reilly, Bishop of Clogher from 1747 till his death in 1778, was born (*circa* 1700) in Lurgan parish. Rev. Charles P. Meehan (1812-1890), the Irish Franciscan historian and a classmate in Rome of Pope Leo XIII, was born in Dublin of Co. Leitrim parentage. Very Rev. Canon Hugh Brady, Rector of the University of Louvain where he died in 1669, belonged to the district of Castletara, the medieval *Cuil Brighdin*; he was a very distinguished man, and his record in that University reflects great credit on the county of his birth.

The O'Reillys, O'Rourkes, MacBradys, MacCabes, etc., distinguished themselves in the armies of France, Spain, Austria, Russia, and other Continental countries: a chronicle of their military achievements would fill an interesting volume. Field Marshal Thomas Brady (1752-1827), of the Austrian army, was born at Cootehill. Colonel James B. MacBrady (1732-1800), born at Dreenan in Kilmore parish, was another officer who served with distinction in the Austrian army. Colonel Patrick H. O'Rourke (1837-1863), of the American army, belonged to Cavan.

Some distinguished members of the Jesuit Order belonged to Co. Cavan: Rev. Philip O'Connell, S.J. (1827-1903), an effective pulpit orator, Rector of St. Ignatius College, Galway, and subsequently of the Sacred Heart College, Limerick, was a native of Laragh; Rev. Peter Finlay, S.J. (1851-1929), a world



famed theologian, was born at Cavan. In the parish of Lavey was born Rev. Dr. Hugh P. Smyth (1855-1927), pastor of St. Mary's Church, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A., a prolific writer on religious, philosophical and historical subjects. His *History of the Reformation* has passed through many editions, and is recognised as a standard work in American colleges. He lectured frequently at the North-Western University, and a series of his lectures has been published entitled *Testimony to the Truth*; another series entitled *The God of Our Fathers* has also passed through several editions. Rev. Dr. Michael Smith (*obit* 1723), a Doctor of the Sorbonne, was also a native of Lavey.

Dr. Thomas Fitzpatrick (1832-1900), physician, traveller, author, and linguist, was born in Virginia; his *Tours and Excursions on the Continent*, being selections from his diaries, was published, privately, in 1901 shortly after his death. A popular novelist and writer who exhibited great descriptive powers, flavoured occasionally with a temperamental cynicism, was Miss Hannah Lynch (died 1904), born in Dublin of Virginia parentage. Chevalier W. H. Grattan-Flood, Mus.D., K.S.G. (1859-1928), author of the diocesan history of Ferns and an authority on Irish music and musicians, was born at Lismore, Co. Waterford; but his father who belonged to Co. Leitrim was born, in 1832, at Five-mile-bourne, near Dromahaire.

James Lewis Farley (1823-1885), who was a popular author and an extensive traveller, was born of Cavan parentage. The name of Rev. Thomas Maguire (1792-1847), born in the parish of Kinawley, and a brilliant controversialist, reflects great credit on the diocese of Kilmore. Surgeon William Dease (*circa* 1750-1798) was born in Co. Cavan. The parents of Dr. John Curry (c. 1710-1780), the historian, belonged to Co. Cavan. A recent writer, whose early death

cut short a life of great literary promise, was Miss Josephine Wilson (1910-1935), born in the district of Ballyjamesduff, a contributor of articles and stories to the leading newspapers and magazines.

Since the days when the elder William James (1771-1832) emigrated from Ballyjamesduff to found the salt industry of Syracuse and to lay the foundations of the city of Albany, many Cavan names have figured prominently in American commercial life. Patrick MacGovern (died February, 1933), born in the district of Glengevlin, was the founder of Patrick MacGovern, Inc., subway builders. Nicholas F. Brady (1878-1930), one of the leading Catholic laymen in the United States, President of the New York Edison Company and Director of over fifty Corporations, was born in Albany, and was son of Anthony N. Brady (died 1913), who was, I have been informed, of Cavan origin. As I have prepared the materials for a comprehensive account of these and many other distinguished personages of Breiffne origin the list need not be extended to greater length here.

It now remains for me to thank the many kind friends whose generous co-operation has made possible the production of the present volume. To His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Finegan, I am specially indebted for his kind interest and appreciation and for his many helpful suggestions. His episcopate, marked by a great revival of Church building and restoration and the provision of new educational centres, has been one of intensive diocesan progress and development, comprising a new chapter in our diocesan history the compilation of which must remain for the future historian. His *magnum opus*, the crown of his episcopate, has been the purchase of the splendid site for the new Cathedral in the town of Cavan, a project which has aroused the enthusiasm,



and enlisted the financial support, of our people both in Kilmore and in every land where Breiffne exiles have found a home.

I deem it a sacred duty to record my indebtedness to the help and guidance of the late Father Joseph B. Meehan, P.P., M.R.I.A., Killinkere, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of history and literature made him an invaluable guide. His brilliant enthusiasm and untiring energy for historical research, coupled with a scrupulous adherence to accuracy in every detail, always invested the subject with a sustained interest. His vast library of rare and valuable works was always available to me, and of the many pleasant days spent in his genial company I will always retain the happiest recollections. His death which occurred at a comparatively early age deprived me of a good friend and the diocese of an indefatigable historian.

le congnam Dé tá a ainm leis na h-ainmliú ins na flaitéis iníu.

I am very deeply indebted to my valued friend, Right Rev. Msgr. Richard Brady, Doctor of Canon Law, Loretto Heights College, Colorado, U.S.A., for many useful extracts and for his kind assistance in the revision of the proof sheets. Monsignor Brady, who was born in the parish of Drumgoon, has had a very distinguished career, is one of the Pope's Domestic Prelates and Judge of the Ecclesiastical Court of the Diocese of Denver. Amid all the arduous duties of his exalted office he has found time to abstract for me from the Reports of the American Historical Association and from State Records, a very considerable number of original documents and letters relating to the labours and activities of Kilmore priests in America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He has also procured for me copies of the *Austin Papers*, a voluminous collection of documents preserved in the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas,

containing, *inter alia*, the correspondence of Irish priests in Texas in the period 1830-1840. During some of his vacation visits to his native parish I had the great pleasure of accompanying Monsignor Brady on some tours to places of historic interest in Breiffne and elsewhere.

For valuable criticisms and many useful references I am indebted to Mr. John P. Dalton, M.A., M.R.I.A., who has made an exhaustive study of the topography of early Ireland, and is a leading authority on the Ui-Briuin genealogies. His scholarly contributions to the Proceedings of the learned Societies have enriched our historical literature and elucidated many of the problems which, hitherto, had baffled some of the ablest essayists in exegesis.

I wish to thank the Very Rev. Dr. Gregory Cleary, O.F.M., for references to the early Franciscan foundations in Ulster; also the Very Rev. Ambrose Coleman, O.P., S.T.L., for some particulars of the eighteenth-century Dominican Bishops.

To Mr. J. Dominick Hackett, of New York, Editor of the *Journal of the American Irish Historical Society*, and Librarian, I am grateful for his interesting communications and practical suggestions. [While these pages were passing through the press the death was announced of Mr. Hackett at his home in Flushing. *Deannaict D   le n-a anam.*]

I must acknowledge the kindness of Rev. James A. Taaffe, S.J., Fordham University, New York, in having prepared for me a photograph of the Cooke Chalice now in his possession, and prized by him as a family heirloom of priceless value; his brother, Dr. Thomas Gaffney Taaffe, of New York, has kindly furnished me with the details of its interesting history. The Cooke chalice is now three centuries old, and was in use in Ireland—and most probably in the diocese



of Kilmore—during the worst period of the Cromwellian usurpation: it is, I am informed, the oldest with one exception now in America. It was discovered about the year 1750, under circumstances which invest it with a unique interest, in a cave at Crossdrum, Co. Meath, close to the Cavan border. Around the base is an inscription which reads: *Stephano Cooke et Elizabetha ejus uxore et Maria filia* 1635. The identities of the donors, Stephen and Elizabeth Cooke and Mary their daughter, have not so far been established, and pending further investigations I have reserved for another occasion an account of this interesting chalice which is a link with the Penal times.

To the clergy and laity of Kilmore, and to the bishops and priests belonging to the diocese and now labouring in foreign countries, as well as to all others who have so generously subscribed for copies, I am deeply indebted for their patronage and support. Special acknowledgments are due to Very Rev. P. V. Rudden, President, St. Patrick's College, Cavan; Rev. John O'Reilly, Adm., Cavan—now P.P., V.F., Oughteragh; Very Rev. M. Comey, P.P., D.D., V.F., Lurgan; Mr. John Tierney, The Hotel, Virginia; Rev. P. O'Reilly, P.P., Knockbride, and to many others to whom due acknowledgments have already been made.

It is now my pleasing duty to acknowledge that the collection of these materials and the compilation of these records illustrating the successive phases of our history—an undertaking of very considerable magnitude and involving extensive inquiries over a large area, together with the location and examination of manuscript materials in archives, libraries and private collections—was made possible through the munificence of His Eminence Cardinal O'Connell, whose deep interest in, and generous patronage of, everything pertaining to the diocese of Kilmore, and especially

to our ancestral parish of Lurgan, in the traditions of our fathers and in the records and memorials of our people, has encouraged these researches and substantially contributed towards the preservation of these records **DO CUM GLÓIRE DÉ AGUS ONÓRA NA h-ÉIREANN.**

**PHILIP O'CONNELL.**

**Lá féile Feiréilimíró**

**An 9<sup>ú</sup> Lá Luġnasa, 1936.**



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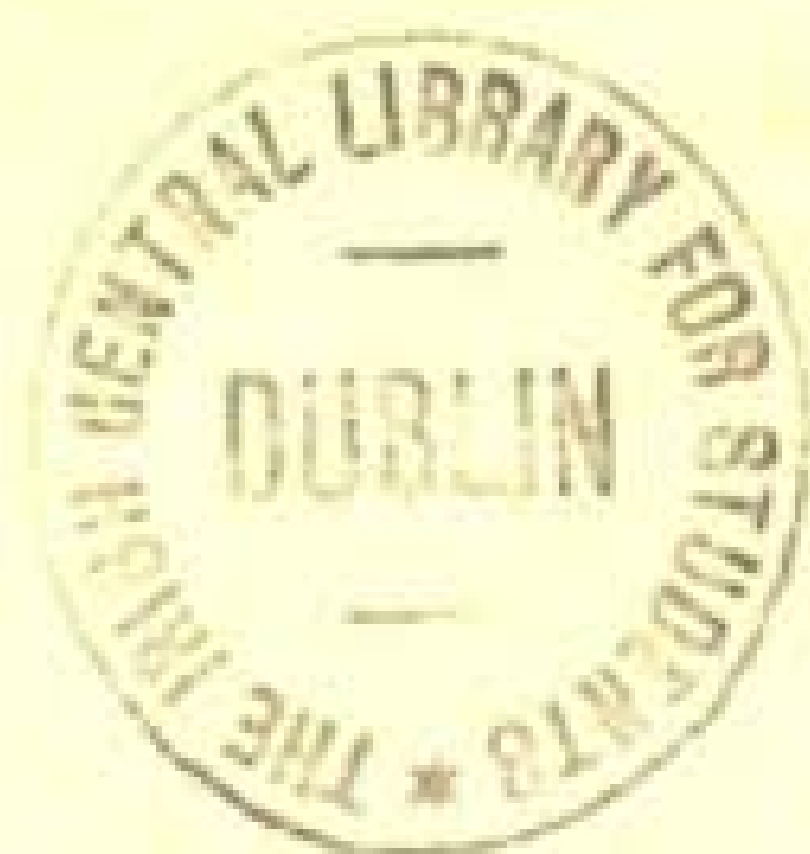
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KILMORE DIOCESAN SEAL—FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

*Impression]*

*[British Museum.*

## CHAPTER I

### TOPOGRAPHY OF BREIFFNE

THE Diocese of Kilmore is practically coterminous with the ancient kingdom of Breiffne, which extended from the north-west extremity of the present County Meath to the shores of Donegal Bay. West Breiffne was the patrimony of O'Ruairc (O'Rourke), while East Breiffne was under the regal sway of O'Raghallagh (O'Reilly). The River Graine, now the Woodford River, at Ballyconnell, was the boundary line separating East from West Breiffne. Both these ruling families belonged to the Ui Briuin race of Connacht, which early in the sixth century had achieved supremacy over Breiffne. Hence Breiffne became known by the synonymous titles of *Ui Briuin*, *Tir Briuin*, *Ui Briuin Breiffne*, and sometimes *The Two Breiffnes*. The territory is known by these various forms in our *Annals* and early ecclesiastical records. In pre-Christian times, before the rise of the Ui Briuin, a large section of East Breiffne was included in the kingdom of Meath, which, according to a manuscript in the Royal Irish Academy, extended to Drumlane.\*

Before the sixteenth century all Breiffne was included in the Province of Connacht. In 1584, Lord Deputy Perrott, in pursuance of a scheme which one of his predecessors, the Earl of Sussex, had already contemplated in 1562, formed East Breiffne into County Cavan, and West Breiffne into County Leitrim; the former was incorporated with the Province of

\* *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, pp. 1-9.



Ulster, and the latter was allowed remain in Connacht. In his Report to Queen Elizabeth, dated 1562, Sussex places " O'Rwrerke's " country in Connacht. " O'Raili's country [he subjoins] is taken to be within Connaught, but because it lieth fitter for another government, and bordereth upon the English Pale, I leave it out of the government of Connaught." \* The scheme was perfected by Perrott in 1584—a policy in which the Irish chieftains were compelled to acquiesce.

The boundaries of the Counties of Cavan and Leitrim underwent a further alteration in 1608, when Chichester's elaborate and carefully planned scheme for the Plantation of Ulster was being perfected.† Two baronies, viz., *Teallach Eachdhach* (Tullyhaw) and *Teallach Donnchadh* (Tullyhunco), which from very early times had been parcel of Breiffne O'Ruairc, were detached from Leitrim and added to Cavan. The present Counties of Cavan and Leitrim are, therefore, of comparatively recent formation.

This political partitioning of the ancient principality between the two provinces, a purely arbitrary proceeding, had the effect of obscuring the boundaries and configuration of the territory of Breiffne. But the maintenance of the Ui Briuin territory as the unit of episcopal administration down to the present day has preserved the older territorial boundaries intact. The ecclesiastical map of Ireland was not affected by these political changes of the sixteenth century, and the Diocese of Kilmore is geographically coextensive with the two Breiffne kingdoms.

*Breiffne O'Ruairc*, over which the O'Ruaircs held sway for many centuries, extended from the River Graine at Ballyconnell (the *Beul-atha-Chonail*, associated with Conall Cernach) westward to the Atlantic

\* *Carew Calendar*, 1562 : Cf. Falkiner, *Illustrations of Irish History and Topography*, p. 120.

† Harris' *Hibernica*; p. 153 ; Hill, *Plantation of Ulster*, p. 204.

Ocean. It included that portion of the present County Cavan stretching west from the River Graine, together with North Leitrim and sections of Sligo and Fermanagh. Furthermore, it is stated in the *Annals of Lough Cé* that the chieftains of Conmaicne—an ancient territory corresponding with the Leitrim portion of Ardagh Diocese—paid tribute to the O'Ruaircs.

The tribe-lands of the Conmaicne septs are frequently mentioned by the Annalists, and are called by various titles, viz., *Magh Rein*, *Conmaicne Magh Rein*, and *Muintir Eoluis*, the chieftains of which were the Mac Rannalls (Reynolds).<sup>\*</sup> This region is coterminous with that portion of County Leitrim which lies east of Loch Allen, and extended from Sliabh Cairbre, a mountain west of Ballinamuck, to the shores of Loch Allen. After the thirteenth century two Conmaicne septs, *Cinel Luachain* and *Magh Angaidhe*, became united politically with the Ui-Briuin Breiffne of O'Ruairc, and therefore became separated from Conmaicne Magh Rein. Cinel Luachain, the chieftains of which were the Mac Dorchaidhs, is represented by the present parish of Oughteragh,<sup>†</sup> around Ballinamore, while Magh Angaidhe is represented by the parish of Drumreilly.<sup>‡</sup> These two Conmaicne parishes became, therefore, absorbed into Kilmore diocese. In early times the principal seat of the O'Ruairc princes

<sup>\*</sup> *Magh Raġnaill cluaintear anois  
air muintir n-ádmóill n-eolais.  
("Mag Rannall's voice is now heard  
Over the active sons of Eolus.")*

O'Dugan, *Topographical Poems*. 1370.

<sup>†</sup> *Uachtar Achadh*, i.e., *the upper field*. It is identical with the *Ochter Achid* mentioned in Tirechan's annotations to the *Book of Armagh—Tripartite Life*, Rolls Series, vol. ii, p. 341. The festival of St. Fiadhabhair of "Uachtar-Achadh in Cinel Luachain" is entered at July 7 in the *Martyrology of Tallaght* and also in the *Martyrology of Donegal*. The Papal Annates of 1423 have "Watturacht alias de Kenealuachan"—*De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 230.

<sup>‡</sup> Later on I will refer to some early notices of this parish.



was at *Tuaim Seanchaidh*, now the moat of Toomonaghan, on the north side of Magh Angaidhe. Later on they erected castles at Dromahaire, Castlecar, and elsewhere.

In the surrender of Brian O'Ruairc of Dromahaire, "in O'Roirck's country," in 1585, he was found to be possessed of Monterolesse (Muintir Eoluis), Kynolowchan (Cinel Luachain), Dartrye (Rossinver), Montercheny (Muintir Chionaoith), Karrye (Cairbre), Largye (Killargy), Clinarwy (Cloonclare), and Kowlowllyn (Cloonlougher ?); also "the manors and town of Dromaheer, Letrym, the Newton *alias* Ballenwet, and Ballintogher." \* · This Brian O'Ruairc, who was a grandson of Eoghan, the founder of Dromahaire monastery, was afterwards executed in London for his action in harbouring in Dromahaire Castle the shipwrecked sailors of the illfated Armada.

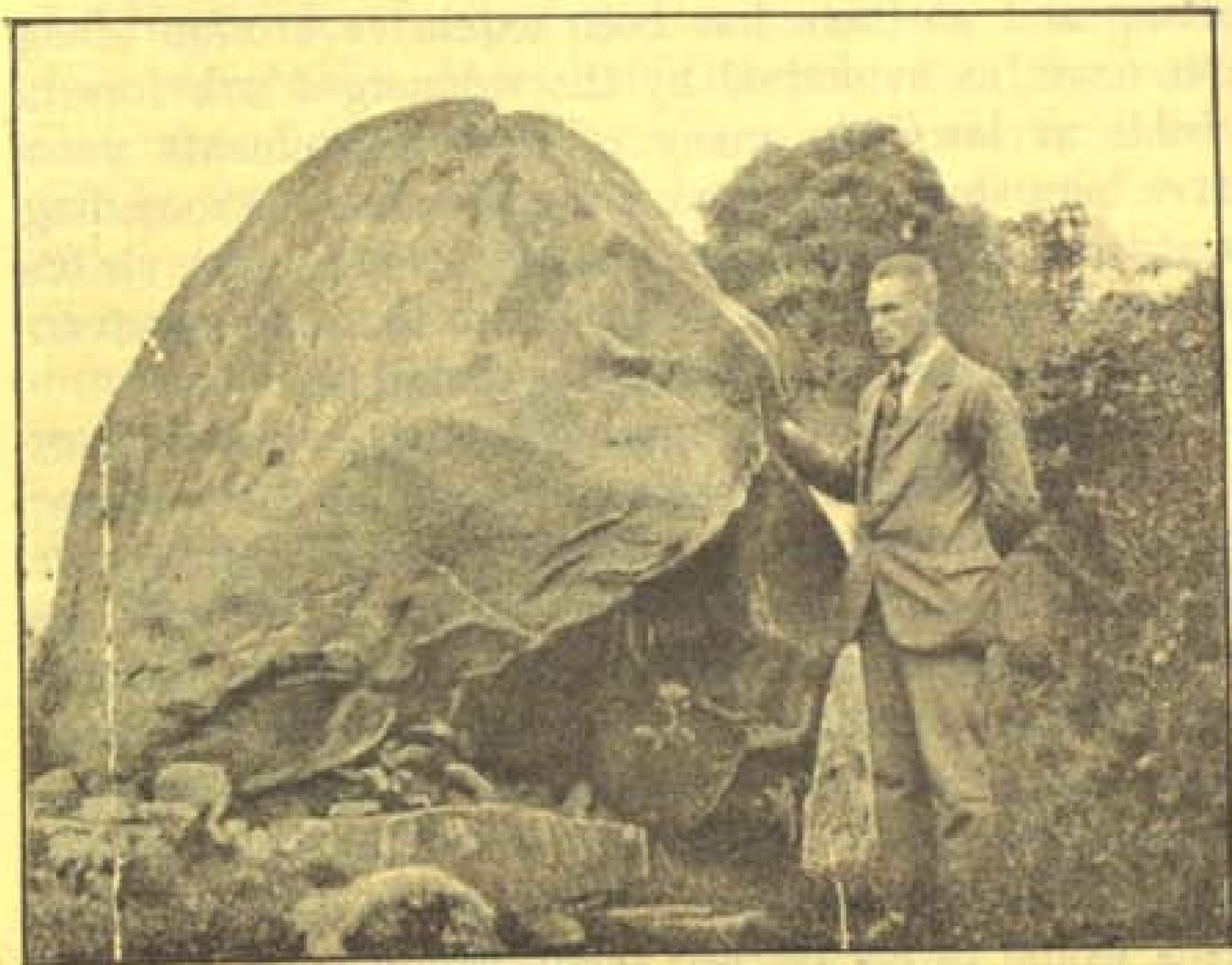
The etymology of the name *Breiffne* is not capable of any satisfactory explanation. The earliest form of the name which has come down to us is "Breibne"; the slaughter of the "men of Breibne" is recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*, *sub anno* 882. Other forms are Breifne, Brefne, or Brenny, and the name appears to be a survival of pre-Celtic times, enshrining the title of some eponymous ancestor of its pre-Celtic people. Bardic traditions to account for the name are not wanting, and the poet of the *Dinnsenchus* would derive it from Brefne, daughter of Beoan Mac Bethaig, who disputed the territory with Regan, the Fomorian chieftain. But the territorial title was already ancient before the tale had its genesis in the poet's imagination.

In Neolithic times very considerable areas of the lowlands of Breiffne must have been covered with wood, water or moorland. At this pre-historic period

\* *Fiants* of Elizabeth, dated June 2, 1585.



the inhabitants lived in the mountainous regions or along the seashore, where they subsisted chiefly on hunting and fishing. They were the builders of the dolmens,\* those rude stone monuments which exist



DOLMEN AT DUFFCASTLE  
(Crosserlough Parish)

in considerable numbers throughout Breiffne. These dolmens, as we should expect, are more plentiful in the hilly districts, and the mountain region of Tullyhaw, comprising the famous Magh Sleacht, contains the majority of those yet reported.† Many of

\* The word is derived from the Breton *dael maen*, i.e., stone table; these monuments are locally known by various titles, "Cromleacs," "Giants' Graves," "Druids' Altars," etc., all inaccurate and misleading terms. I have described some of the Breiffne dolmens in the *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. iii, pp. 174 *et seq.*

† The map in Borlase's *Dolmens of Ireland* is very imperfect. His estimate, 786 for all Ireland, falls far short of the mark. The existence of the great majority of the Breiffne dolmens was unknown to Borlase. Even on the modern Ordnance Survey Maps some of these monuments have escaped detection.

these monuments have been wantonly destroyed, even during the present century.

West of Bundoran, near the mouth of the Drowse, are to be seen many dolmens and rude stone circles.\* Some of these are close to the cliffs overlooking the ocean, and as there has been extensive erosion along this coast, as evidenced by the submerged oak forests visible at low tide, many of these monuments must have long since been buried in the sands. Proceeding westward from Tullaghan many dolmens are visible along the coast. These dolmens are the only survivals of Breiffne's earliest Neolithic population.

The distribution of the dolmens in the various districts of Breiffne suggests a method for determining, very approximately, the relative density of Breiffne's population groups in Neolithic times. The data for such a computation is as yet incomplete, as no reliable map of dolmen distribution has yet been compiled, a task which awaits an exhaustive archaeological survey. Again, it is obvious that the dolmens in mountainous regions, where tillage operations would rarely disturb them, would have a better chance of escaping the vandalism of modern civilisation. But from personal observations I have estimated that not less than seventy per cent. of the Breiffne dolmens are to be found in the hilly territory of West Breiffne. The Neolithic, or later Stone Age, ended in Ireland about 2000 B.C. The stone spearheads, occasionally unearthed, belong to this age. With the advent of the Bronze Age, which succeeded, the Neolithic races gradually disappeared.

Proceeding in chronological order from the pre-history to the proto-history of Breiffne we enter the region of myth and legend.† In our legendary

\* During a recent visit to this district, in August, 1933, I have noted several of these monuments. The Drowse, which rises in Loch Melvin, formed the boundary of the ancient Province of Ulster.

† *Vide* Rudolf Thurneysen, *Die Irische Helden und Koenigsage*.



history the various invasions Fir Bolg, Tuatha De Danann, Fomorians, Nemedians, and Milesians—driven from their homes on the Continent by the spreading armies of the Romans, then extending their dominion over Central Europe and to the shores of the North Sea—play a predominant role. Rejecting the improbable theory of D'Arbois de Jubainville, that the Tuatha De Danann and Fomorians were merely the rival beings of a supernatural order,\* we must assume that such races did actually reach our shores. We may safely follow the carefully reasoned arguments of Sir C. Ridgway, who refers all these traditional invasions of Ireland to the late La Tène period, that is to the century immediately preceding the Christian Era.† The Fomorians had a fortress on Toirinis, now Tory Island, and were essentially pirates. They had a settlement on the Breiffne seaboard, in the district between the rivers Duff and Drowse,‡ west of Bundoran, which was the base from which they extracted tribute from the inland populations. Even as late as the seventeenth century the country around Bundoran was known as *Magh Cetne na Fomoraigh*,§ which preserved the name of those early raiders. Traces of pre-historic peoples have occasionally been discovered in the sand hills of this region. The waterways of the River Erne formed the natural approach to Breiffne, and the comparative shelter of Donegal Bay was availed of by these hardy rovers of the sea.

The western seaboard of Breiffne, stretching west of Bundoran through north Leitrim towards the border of County Sligo, is rich in pre-historic memorials,

\* *The Irish Mythological Cycle* (translated by Best), p. 93.

† "The Date of the first Shaping of the Cuchullin Saga"—*Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. ii, pp. 135-136.

‡ The Drowse, or Drowes, divides Leitrim from Donegal. The Duff marks the boundary between Leitrim and Sligo, and flows into Donegal Bay, about four miles west of Bundoran.

§ *Vide* O'Clery, *Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell*, p. 152. *et passim*:—*where we find that Magh Cetne was west of the River Duff while "the country around Bundoran" between Erne & Drowes was called Magh Ene.*



and the ancient place names help to illustrate the pages of Breiffne's proto-history. In this field there is no doubt that future archaeological research will enhance our knowledge of Breiffne's early colonisers.

The lake-dwellings, or crannogs, of Breiffne seem to belong to a culture which even in the Bronze Age was highly developed in Central Europe.\* Some of our leading authorities incline to the belief that all our lake-dwellings belong to the Iron Age,† approximately 400 B.C.-400 A.D., but there is evidence that many of these structures must be ascribed to an earlier date.‡ The lake-dwellings of Ireland are grouped chiefly in Cavan, Leitrim, Fermanagh and the adjoining counties.§ The race of ancient lake-dwellers must have had their chief settlement in this region. In Loch Erne crannogs are very numerous. These crannogs must be attributed to a colony of lake-dwellers who introduced the art to Ireland, and whose principal settlement was in the Erne region. As far east as Loch Ramor in East Breiffne, crannogs, with stone moulds for casting bronze celts, have been located, indicating a Bronze Age rather than an Iron Age origin. In County Leitrim, as late as the sixteenth century, these lake-dwellings were utilised by the chieftains as places of residence.

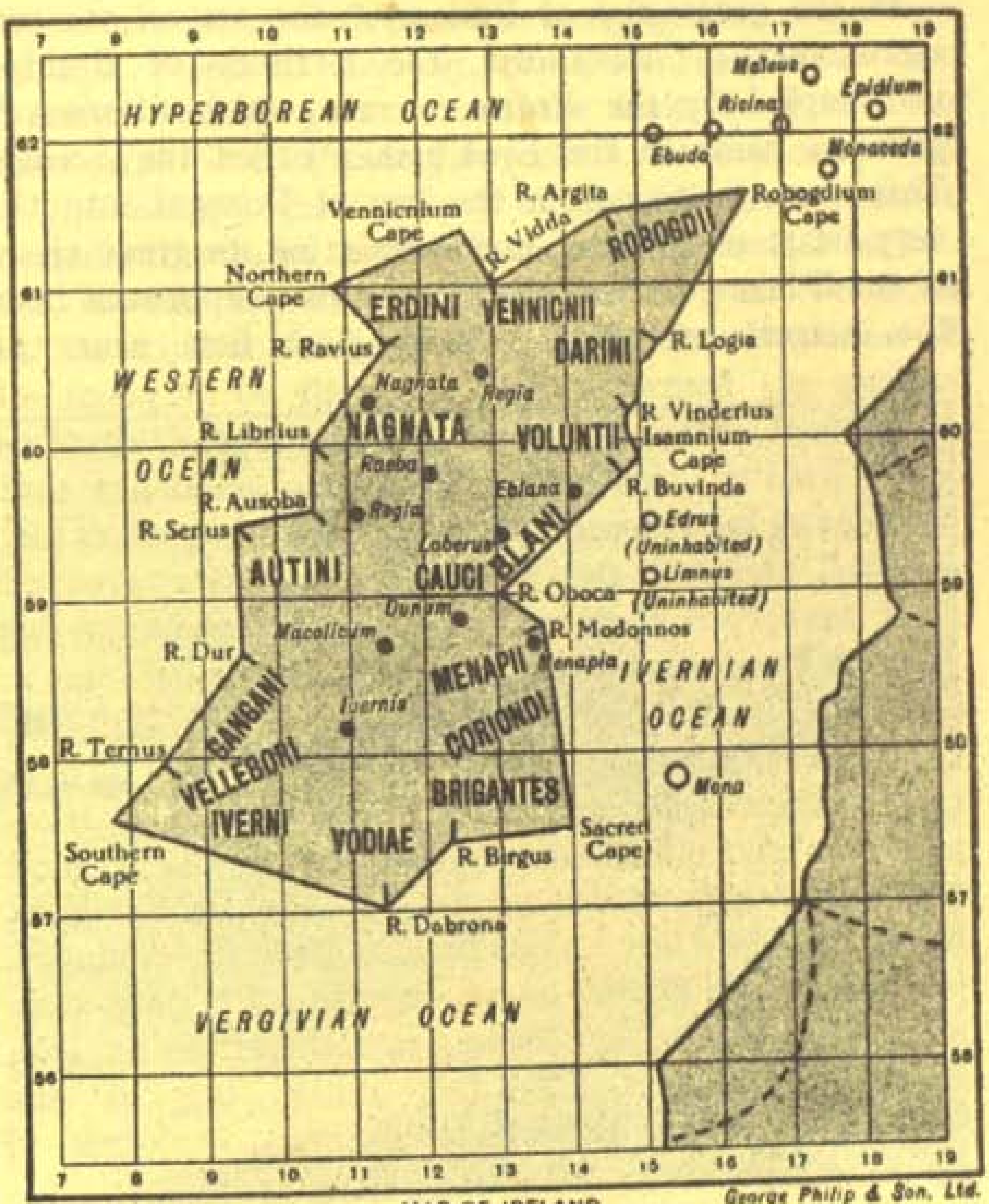
In the first century of the Christian Era Breiffne was a theatre of war between the contending races. The Fir Bolg and the Milesians were contending for supremacy. The dispossessed Fir Bolg invited the Milesian kings to a banquet at Mac Dareo's hostel, in Magh Cro of Breiffne, and murdered them there. The

\* *Vide* Munroe's *Lake Dwellings of Europe*.

† Macalister, *Ireland in Pre-Celtic Times*, p. 256.

‡ *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. ii, pp. 57, *et seq.*

§ A map showing the distribution of Irish lake-dwellings. See Col. Wood-Martin's *Lake Dwellings of Ireland*, p. 250.



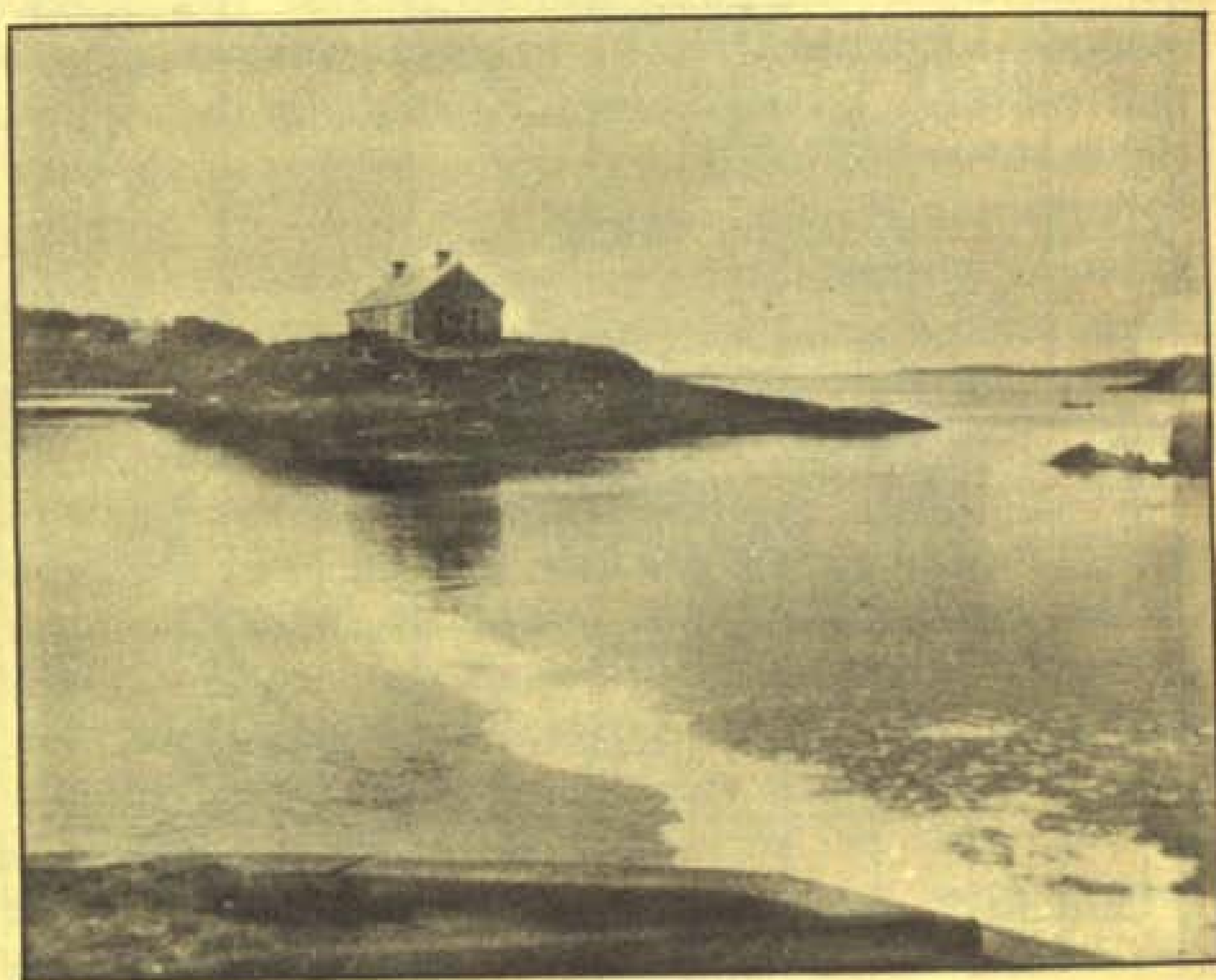
MAP OF IRELAND  
constructed from the  
Latitude and Longitude figures of  
**PTOLEMY**

PTOLEMY'S SECOND CENTURY MAP OF IRELAND

Milesians suffered another reverse, A.D. 56, at the battle of Magh Bolg, in East Breiffne, where they were practically annihilated. Twenty years later, A.D. 76, on the return of Tuathal Teachtmair (whose father, Fiacha Finnolaidh, was slain at Magh Bolg) the Milesian rule was restored.



In the geography of Ptolemy,\* the second century astronomer of Alexandria, the territory of Breiffne is occupied by the *Erdini*, a race which afterwards gave its name to the Erne,† then called the *Saimer*. This river, leading from the bay of Donegal into the very heart of Breiffne, and connecting its great chain of small lakes, formed the most natural approach from the Atlantic seaboard. Settling at first near the



Photo]

"The Winding Banks of Erne"  
INIS SAIMER AT BALLYSHANNON

[Mason

mouth of the Saimer, the *Erdini*, or *Ernai*, gradually extended their dominion inland. At *Inis Saimer*, near the mouth of the river, the fabled Partholan, whose jealousy is perpetuated in the place name of Glenade,

\* *Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia*, ed. Carolus Mullerus, vol. i, p. 77.

† A more picturesque explanation of the origin of the name, ascribing it to Erne, one of the maids of honour to Queen Medbh of Cruachan, is preserved in the Rennes *Dinnsenchus*, printed in *Revue Celtique*, vol. xv. p. 483.



in north Leitrim, is believed to have landed. A passage in the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick* refers to the "Sameir which goes out of the lochs of Erne into the sea." On Ptolemy's second century map the *Erdini* occupy the territory of the Saimer, a district considerably more extensive than the present Breiffne. On one side their territory joins that of the Vennicnii of Tir Conaill, and on the other the Nagnatae of Connacht.\* In fact the Saimer formed the nucleus of their tribal lands, but it was not until later times that the river became generally known by their name, and the original name Saimer † passed out of general use.

Those early colonists have left indelible imprints on the place nomenclature of Breiffne. Magh Bolg in East Breiffne recalls the great slaughter of A.D. 56. Both the Fir Bolg and Tuatha De Danann, living as they did during the La Tène period, would have been acquainted with the use of iron, and their advent to Breiffne was not wholly fortuitous, for the iron mines of Breiffne were then being utilised, and the mountain of *Sliabh an Iarainn* (i.e., the mountain of iron) was then the centre of an iron smelting industry. Traces of early mining may still be observed there.‡ In an early account of the battle of Magh Turadh the manufacture of javelins and lance-heads is described in detail. Goibniu (or

\* Ptolemy's list of tribal settlements of Ireland numbers sixteen, all of which are on the seaboard. The interior of the country is a blank, indicating that in the second century the population of Ireland was essentially maritime. It may be presumed that Ptolemy based his map on the earlier charts or tablets of the Phoenician, Marinus of Tyre.

† Still popularly known, through the words of a well-known Ulster marching song, as "Saimer's green vale."

‡ In Dr. Boate's *Naturall History of Ireland*, published in 1652, it is stated that iron was then being worked in Co. Leitrim. In 1695 a William Slacke and others commenced the erection of iron works at Ballinamore. Crofton, *Records of the Slacke Family in Ireland* (1902. Privately printed). In the columns of a newspaper of the time, the *Dublin Courant*, August 29–September 1, 1747, is the announcement of the forthcoming auction of the "Iron Works of Ballinamore in the County of Leitrim."

Gaibhlen), the De Danann smith, withdrew the red hot bar from the furnace, and having formed it on the anvil produced in quick time the finished article.\* Quite clearly this implies that the material in this case was iron rather than bronze, the metallurgical process for which, necessitating the use of a mould, would have been different. These traditions emphasise that these colonists belong to the La Tène period rather than to the Bronze Age, and that the remote antiquity ascribed to them by the *Annalists* can hardly be maintained. Sliabh an Iarainn was the source of the supply of iron for the weapons of the combatants of the first and second centuries, and this may account for the conflicts between the various races to secure possession of the Breiffne territory.† The legends of Conall Cernach imply that the ore was washed in the River Graine (Woodford River).

The Tuatha De Danann tradition is still widely recalled in the district of Glengevlin,‡ usually known as Glan, which according to popular folklore received its name from the famous cow, *Glas Gaibhlen*, evidently the cornucopia of Breiffne, which belonged to Gaibhlen, the armourer or smith of the Tuatha De Danann. This cow was supposed to have supplied the district with milk, and to have forced her way through the mountains forming the gorge of Beul an Bhealaigh, better known as Glan Gap. In the townland of Doire-na-tuan, is shown the site of Gaibhlen's forge. The Gap of Glan separates Sliabh an Iarainn from Cuilcagh.

In the literature of the *Táin* cycle, which belongs to the La Tène period, approximately 300 B.C. to 100 A.D., the figure of Conall Cernach, one of the

\* "Cath Maige Tured"—*Revue Celtique*, vol. xii.

† Cf. Thurneysen, *Irische Helden und Königsage*, p. 582.

‡ This is now the usual form of the name; it should be *Glas Gaibhlen*.



Red Branch Knights, dominates that great compendium of legendary lore. He is represented as the cousin and foster-brother of Cu Chullain, and, like the latter, is figured as the great hero of Ulster\*. Although his descendants are not brought into direct connection with Breiffne, yet he is stated to have killed Belcu, the Breiffne champion, and later on was himself killed at Ath na Mianna, beside Ballyconnell, which is named after him.

Conall Cernach is associated with Taltiu (Tailten), County Meath, of which he appears to have been a native. But the legends do not ascribe him any settled home. The Ulster epic, *Táin Bo Cuailnge*, reveals the enmity existing between Ulster and Connacht. Conall Cernach was the enemy of Connacht but, nevertheless, in his old age, visited Cruachan on the charity of Medb. By her treachery he murdered her husband Ailill, and she, throwing the blame on Conall, put him to flight. He fled from Cruachan across Magh Luirg (North-east Roscommon) and "Mag Slecht of Sen-Breifne."† Medb dispatched three desperadoes, the three *Ruadchoin*, in pursuit, and they overtook him at Ath na Mianna where they slew him.

It is generally accepted that Ath na Mianna was the older name of Ballyconnell—*Beul-atha-Chonaill*, i.e., the ford-mouth of Conall. The ford was on the River Graine (Woodford River), and the older name is long since obsolete. It signifies the "ford of the miners," where the "miners were washing ore in the river above him," evidently referring to the iron mining operations of those early times. The tradition connecting his death with this ford is quite positive, and the literary sources agree that he met his death here, on the confines of Magh Sleacht. Furthermore,

\* *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, vol. i, pp. 102-111.

† *Dinnsenchus of Magh Luirg*; Todd Lectures, x, p. 396.



on Ballyheady mountain, south of Ballyconnell, tradition points out his burial mound. In 1932, during excavations, traces of early burials were discovered at this mound.\* A recent writer points out that the place name, Tomkinroad, near Belturbet, most probably signifies the burial place (*tuaim*) of the Ruadchoin (or Red Heads) who murdered Conall. It has also been stated that Mian, a son of Conall, was the legendary engineer who constructed the defences of Ulster (the supposed Black Pig's Dyke) and after whom Tullyvin (Tulach Mhaoín) is named. Among the races claiming descent from Conall were the Ui Seagain of Meath, whose territory included Kilmainhamwood in East Breiffne.

Before the coming of St. Patrick the lesser tribes of Breiffne were gradually losing power, and the powerful Ui Briuin of Connacht were extending their dominions towards the south and east. The Masraighe of Magh Sleacht were still a formidable people, and the presence of Cromm Cruaich enhanced their prestige. The fact of Cromm's temple having been erected in the very centre of Breiffne affords very striking evidence of Breiffne's importance in the La Tène period.

The early part of the sixth century witnessed the consolidation of the Ui Briuin power and its extension over Breiffne. From the sixth to the tenth century important monasteries, like Drumlane, arose, and the definition of parishes and foundation of churches progressed. In the *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1258, we are told that the hostages of "all the Ui-Briuin from Ceanannus to Druim-cliabh" were given to Aedh O'Connor, King of Connacht. The ancient Diocese of Ceanannus included a large portion of East Meath, and has long since (about 1213) been merged in the

\* *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. III, No. 3, 1932-33.

Diocese of Meath. Druim-cliabh \* (Drumcliff), an ancient episcopal seat on the shores of Sligo Bay, is now incorporated with the Diocese of Elphin. The limits of these dioceses marked, and still mark, the boundaries, east and west, of Breiffne. The Diocese of Kilmore preserves the boundaries of the ancient Ui Briuin territory.

### TIRBRUNENSIS

In early times the Irish bishops generally adhered to the practice of adopting territorial titles. St. Patrick, in his system of episcopal government, fashioned the episcopal divisions in accordance with the civil divisions, that is, the petty kingdoms as then existing.† The *Leabhar Breac*, in a well-known sentence, clearly indicates this tradition of a tribal episcopate when it states that a bishop should be appointed (according to St. Patrick's testament) to rule over every chief tribe (or chief territory), which was in thorough agreement with the Catholic concept of Church government.

But the Irish episcopal system was not different from that obtaining in other countries at the same period. The Irish Church, from its infancy, was in the most intimate communication with Rome, and was, therefore, thoroughly conversant with the diocesan system obtaining throughout Christendom.

In the first place [writes Dr. MacCaffrey] the Church, as founded by Patrick, was an episcopal

\* Some remains of this foundation are to be seen beside the hamlet of the same name, in Co. Sligo, on the road leading from Bundoran to Sligo, near the base of the remarkable table mountain of Ben Bulbin. The base of a Round Tower—the only specimen of its class, I am informed, in Co. Sligo—is to be seen, also some interesting stone Crosses. The road was cut through the ancient cemetery and the buildings uprooted.

† *Vide* Todd's *St. Patrick* (Introduction); cf. Bury, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 375; Reeves' *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down and Connor*, pp. 126, *et seq.*



Church, differing but slightly in this respect from the Churches founded in the countries subject to the [Roman] empire. In these Churches the city (*civitas*) was the seat of the Christian bishop, though later on, in some districts, for example, in Asia Minor, even the smaller villages insisted on having their resident bishop. In Ireland, on the other hand, St. Patrick found no cities resembling those of the [Roman] Empire. The political organisation was by families, septs, clans, tribes and provinces; and the missionaries, conforming themselves to the political organisation, just as the Church had done in most other places, organised their Church on a tribal basis by appointing a bishop in each principal tribe. This is evident from a careful comparison of the establishments set up by Patrick, with the location of the tribes in the country, as we find it set out, for example, in the *Book of Rights* or in the *Topographical Poems*. . . .\*

There is no evidence to show that large episcopal dioceses were instituted by St. Patrick. We have it on the evidence of Tirechan that St. Patrick was the consecrator of 450 bishops. Other authorities place the number at 350, but at any rate it is certain that the number must have been very large. The *tuaths* or tribes in Ireland were very numerous, and assuming that each was assigned a bishop we can easily understand the reason why such large numbers were consecrated. As Professor Bury points out, the episcopal districts, or dioceses, were determined by the tribal divisions of the country, and there is no evidence to support the theory that St. Patrick's bishops had not episcopal districts † allotted to their pastoral charge.

\* *Irish Theological Quarterly*, July, 1908. *Caéain*, the Gaelic equivalent of *civitas*, was often applied to any important monastery. It is in this sense that T. W. Rolleston refers to the great monastery of Clonmacnoise on the banks of the Shannon where

"In a quiet watered land, a land of roses,  
Stands St. Ciaran's city fair."

† *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 377.

St. Patrick appointed the bishops in conformity with the political organisation which he found existing in the country. To each of the chief clans he gave a bishop, as can be seen from the fact that nearly all the Irish dioceses coincide with ancient clan territories. The chieftains granted certain lands and possessions for the support of the clergy and Church, and the ecclesiastical administration was vested in the family of the founder of the church.\* The reason for this is obvious. St. Patrick

found [subjoins Dr. MacCaffrey] the country organised on the basis of the clan, the sept, the tribe, the great tribe, and the province. Just as in political matters, the tribe resented the interference of a stranger, so, too, in religious matters, St. Patrick soon felt that the rule of a stranger was not calculated to promote the spread of Christianity within the tribe or sept or clan. Hence, though at first he was obliged in some cases to appoint bishops not belonging to the clan, yet he endeavoured to secure the education of some of the younger members, and so to provide for their spiritual rule by one of themselves. This was in perfect conformity with the Canon Law of the Church at the time.

St. Patrick's main object seems to have been to imitate the diocesan system which he had observed in the Roman dominions. But there were obvious difficulties in the way. The inhabitants of Gaul were grouped into cities or towns, whereas in Ireland the population was essentially a rural one.† On the Continent the missionaries found the towns and cities already prepared for them; in Ireland the ecclesiastical establishments had to be founded in some convenient place. Hence St. Patrick usually selected the neighbourhood of the chieftain's residence as the site for his church.

\* *Irish Theological Quarterly*, April, 1907.

† *Ibid.*, January, 1908.



There were no regular episcopal Sees, and consequently no assured episcopal lines before the Synod of Ceanannus (Kells) in 1152. It is true that an attempt had already been made at the Synod of Rathbreasail, A.D. 1111, to institute Sees, but the diocesan scheme there outlined never became operative. Before this time dioceses, in the strict sense of the word, did not exist; in the centuries following St. Patrick many bishops were attached to the monastic communities throughout every petty kingdom, but these episcopal stations can hardly be called Sees. The multiplication of bishops in the centuries preceding the Synod of Rathbreasail seems to have been due to the growth of monasticism, and was not peculiar to Ireland.\* This does not suggest, however, that diocesan administration was unknown in the Irish Church in the centuries before the synod was held; but the boundaries, varying as they did with the ebb and flow of the fortunes of the particular clan, were not definitely defined.† The bishop who had spiritual

\* Such bishops were called *Chorepiscopi*. Vide Todd's *St. Patrick*, p. 51. At the Synod of Ceanannus it was decided that *Chorepiscopi* should be allowed to die out gradually and their places be filled by Rural Deans. In this connection the Acts of the Diocesan Synod held at Newtown, near Trim, in 1216, by Simon Rochfort, Bishop of Meath, may be consulted—Wilkin's *Concilia*, vol. i, p. 547. A *Chorepiscopus* may be described as a non-provided bishop.

† Even in Gaul itself, in the days of St. Patrick, diocesan boundaries were not fixed absolutely, and there is evidence to show that in Germany until the year 750 the same condition of affairs prevailed. Hence the theory of the alleged eccentricity of the early Irish Church—a theory invented and fostered by certain schools of non-Catholic writers—is a fiction of modern times.

The development of diocesan government in the early Irish Church is a subject which has hardly received adequate historical examination. Further research may elucidate many points which are still somewhat obscure. For some informative papers on the subject see *The Irish Theological Quarterly*, April, 1907; January, 1908; July, 1908; July, 1909. A more recent discussion on the subject is furnished in *Irish Monasticism* by Rev. John Ryan, S.J., M.A. (Dublin, 1931). See also the *Life of St. Malachy*, by Rev. Ailbe J. Luddy, O.Cist. (Dublin, 1931). It is scarcely necessary to refer to the invaluable work of Dr. James F. Kenney—*Sources for the Early History of Ireland*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929.)

charge of the king's person and household (that is the ruler of the chief territory) would naturally have been denominated by the chroniclers bishop of the territory. This is really the meaning of the expressions "Bishop of Breiffne," "Bishop of Oirghialla," etc.

The early Bishops of Kilmore are styled by the Annalists "of Breiffne" or "of Ui-Briuin Breiffne." In Roman documents, before the fifteenth century, the diocese is named *Triburnensis*,\* indicating that its bishops in accordance with the established traditional custom of the time, took their titles from Breiffne territory.† Sir James Ware perpetrated a ludicrous blunder when he wrote that the bishops of Breiffne were titled *Triburnensis*, or bishops of *Triburna*, "because they are said to have had their residence in a little obscure village of that name."‡ Some recent historians, equally unacquainted with Breiffne's topography, have adopted Ware's error; and, furthermore, it is recorded in one of our most popular ecclesiastical histories, evidently as a deduction from Ware, that "the See [*Triburnensis*] was removed from Brevny to Kilmore in 1454."§ Ware's "obscure village" is a myth, and his error arose from his being unaware that Kilmore lies in the very heart of Breiffne—the country of the Ui-Briuin. Relying on similarity of name, the parish of Urney, a few miles north of Kilmore, has been erroneously equated with the ancient *Triburnia*. But the origins of these titles are quite distinct.||

\* Cf. Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta; De Annatis Hiberniae; Calendar of Papal Registers*, etc. There are slight variations in the spelling of the title in the various Roman documents due to the Latinisation of the Gaelic name.

† In at least one instance, viz., Ossory, the older territorial title still survives.

‡ Ware's *Bishops*. p. 225.

§ Archdeacon Malone, *Church History of Ireland*, vol. ii, p. 357.

|| Urney is usually understood to be a modernised form of *Urnaidhe* i.e., an oratory. But a passage in the *Leabhar Breac* copy of the *Felire of Oengus* (edited by Stokes) refers to the *Civitas Ernaidhe* of Sliabh Guaire. The *Ernaidhe*, as already shown, were one of the early



A study of the topography of ancient Breiffne makes it quite clear that the title *Triburnia* was applied to the entire district of Breiffne. The *Triburnensis* of the Roman documents appears in the State Records of 1306 as *Tirbrunensis* and *Thirbrunensis*. The Latin appellation was manifestly evolved from *Tir Briuin*, signifying the *Tir* (i.e., land, or country) of the *Ui-Briuin Breiffne*—or *Breifne*, as it is written in early documents. In our native literature Breiffne sometimes, though not often, receives the abbreviated form *Tir Briuin*.

For a few centuries following the Synod of Ceanannus the Irish bishops seem to have followed the traditional practice of using territorial titles. But we have evidence that although the title *Tirbrunensis* was in general use, yet *Kilmore*, as the title of the See, was, at least locally, in use as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century. In the *Exchequer Roll* we are given particulars of the levies or taxes imposed on Irish Church lands in 1306 in aid of the campaigns of Edward I. The following extract relating to Kiln.ore Diocese supplies some useful information.\*

#### DIOCESE TRIBURNENSIS

CHURCH	VALUE	TENTH
Rent and Revenues of the Bishop		s. d.
of Kilmore . . . . .	10 marks	13 4
The Abbot of Kenles† . . . . .	5 marks	6 8
The Prior of Faure‡ . . . . .	11 marks	14 8
The Prior of Drumlechan§ . . . . .	3 marks	4 0

racés inhabiting the region of the Erne in pre-Christian times. They were the *Erdini* of Ptolemy, and the Erne retains their name. I take it that the Urney of Kilmore is identical with the *Civitas Ernaidhe* of Sliabh Guaire. Elsewhere in Ireland Urney is derived from *Urnaidhe*, an oratory.

\* Sweetman's *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, vol. v, p. 213. "Irish Charters in the Book of Kells"—*Miscellany of the Irish Arch. Society*, p. 128.

‡ Fore, County Westmeath.

† Ceanannus (Kells), County Meath.  
§ Drumlane.

## DIOCESE TRIBURNENSIS

CHURCH	VALUE	TENTH
		s. d.
Master Stephen, Rector of Kedy*	2½ marks	3 4
Richard, Rector of Euga†	3 marks	4 0
Total Taxation of the Diocese		
Tirbrunensis . . . . .	£23	46 0

In this roll it will be observed that while the diocese is named *Triburnensis* (or *Tirbrunensis*) the episcopal ruler is titled *Bishop of Kilmore*. This is positive evidence that Kilmore was already the episcopal seat, long before St. Feidhlimidh's parish church was raised to cathedral status in 1454. From the above extract it will be observed that in 1306 large tracts of Church lands in Breiffne were belonging to the Abbeys of Ceanannus and Fore. The greater part of the diocese was spared the tax; this was due no doubt to the fact that Breiffne's rulers at that period were not interested in the foreign affairs or in the depleted exchequer of the English monarch.

From the sixteenth century the diocese is termed Kilmore (*Kilmorensis*) in Roman documents, and *Tirbruinensis* gradually fell into disuse.

The diocese includes nearly all the present County Cavan, with about half of County Leitrim and a small section of County Fermanagh. It has also a section of a parish, Moybolge and Kilmainhamwood, in County Meath, and another, Ballintrillick, in County

\* The rectory of Kedy—the name is preserved in the townland named Keadue, beside the town of Cavan—belonged to the parish of Urney. In fifteenth century records the name occurs under various forms, e.g., "Kedye," "Kede," "Keyde," etc.; see *De Annatis Hiberniae*, sub annis 1427, 1436, 1501, etc. A Papal document of 1501 refers to the "perpetual vicarage of the parish church of St. Brigid Uornay [Urney] alias Kede." The Episcopal Taxation of 1617 has "Keydie."

† *Recto Enga*—Annagh parish. In Papal documents of the fifteenth century it appears as "Enga"; cf. *De Annatis Hiberniae*, sub anno 1450.

15,970





Sligo. In East Cavan the parishes of Kilbride and Enniskeen are in Meath diocese; Ballymachugh, Drumlommon and Scrabby are in Ardagh. One townland, Leitrim, in the Barony of Castlerahan, is included in the parish of Loughan in Meath diocese. The explanation of these apparently irregular boundaries must be sought for in the extensions of the ancient territorial divisions with which the dioceses are co-terminous, and with which the arbitrary boundaries of the modern counties do not always coincide. Kilmore has forty-two parishes, but before the Reformation troubles the number of parochial units was more than twice as great. Most of the present day parishes are formed by the amalgamation of two or more older units. The ruins of the medieval churches, the ecclesiastical centres of these areas of parochial jurisdiction, are to be seen in every part of the diocese.

## CHAPTER II

## ST. FE DHLIMIDH—DIOCESAN PATRON

THE diocesan patron is St. Feidhlimidh,\* who is commonly accepted as having been the first Bishop of Kilmore. The notices of his life as recorded by the martyrologists are scanty and unsatisfactory, and from them we are unable to fix, with any reasonable degree of certainty, the exact period of his birth, but in assigning it to the early years of the sixth century we are on fairly sure ground. His parents belonged to the territory of Breiffne, and according to the *Leabhar Lecain*, his father's name was Carill or Carvill, a family whose chieftains ruled over the territory of *Cairbre Gabhra*†—which included the district around the old cathedral of Kilmore—from very early times. According to MacGeoghegan the Carvills changed their name to MacBrady in the thirteenth century. The mother of St. Feidhlimidh, Dediva by name, is said by some authorities to have been a granddaughter to Dubtach Ui Lugair, chief poet of Ireland, who was converted by St. Patrick at Tara. St. Diarmait, founder of the monastery of Inis Clothran,‡ in Loch Ree, is said to have been

\* *Féidlimíró*, pronounced "Feilimy." It has since early Christian times been popular as a Christian name in Breiffne, and throughout Ulster. A modern substitute for the name is *Felix*, which is supposed, incorrectly however, to be a translation of the Gaelic name. Felix was introduced from Latin sources, but Feidhlimidh and Felix are distinct names.

† An ancient territory including north-east Longford, and extending northwards as far as Loch Uachtair in Cavan.

‡ The island of Inis Clothran, surrounded by the expansive waters of the Shannon, is about a mile from the shore of Co. Longford. St. Diarmait's feast is on January 10. This island is sometimes called Seven Churches Island, and the sites of at least six early churches



a brother of St. Feidhlimidh and St. Femia, whose name occurs in our martyrologies under September 17, is said to have been his sister.



[Photo]

[Mason]

ST. DIARMAIT'S CHURCH, INIS CLOTHRAN, LOCH REE

Beyond the fact that St. Feidhlimidh was descended from one of Breiffne's ruling chieftains, we have no

are pointed out. The church of St. Diarmait is in a fair state of preservation and its square belfry and lancet windows indicate that in early times it must have been a very substantial structure. The island is believed to have been named after Clorina, a sister of the celebrated Queen Maeve who is said to have had a castle on the highest point of it. Several historical links bind Inis Clothran to Kilmore diocese. For an interesting account of the ruins and antiquities of the island see O'Donovan's *Ordnance Survey Letters, Roscommon* (1837), where a tracing will be found.

satisfactory account of his early years. The same uncertainty surrounds the date of his birth, but it must have been shortly after the year 500. None of his Acts are extant, but it is generally accepted that he established his monastic seat at Kilmore about the middle of the sixth century. Kilmore is a parish in the Barony of Clanmahon, County Cavan. The townland which gave the parish its title, transmitted later on to the diocese, was the site of St. Feidhlimidh's church and the residence of the bishops of the diocese from his time until the troubles of the sixteenth century made an established episcopal residence an impossibility.

It is stated, traditionally, that St. Feidhlimidh went from home at an early age, and retired to a secluded spot in the neighbourhood of the present Kilmore. The location of this scene of St. Feidhlimidh's retreat is worthy of investigation, and may now claim our attention.

A few miles from the present townland of Kilmore is Slanore,\* which was the site of a monastery at the time of St. Columbkille; the "Abbey Field" is still pointed out, where some traces of the old abbey have survived. St. Columbkille visited this place, as we learn from his biographer, Adamnan.† The latter relates that on one occasion while travelling through Ireland St. Columbkille had, as his charioteer, "Columbanus, son of Echuid, a holy man, and founder of a monastery called in the Irish tongue

\* The earliest form of the name, as found in Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba* and Colgan's *Life of St. Fechin*, is *Snám Luthir*—*Snamh Luthir*, i.e., the swimming place of Luthir, which became abbreviated to *Snalore* (see 1609 Plantation Map of Loughree Barony); by metathesis this was changed to *Slanore*, its present form. Luthir, who gave his name to this place, seems to have been a Breiffnian hero of pre-Christian times.

† *Life of St. Columba*, Reeves' edition, p. 173. The *Martyrology of Donegal* registers the name of St. Maelan of *Snamh Luthair* on May 27. On the same day a St. Cuintoc of the same place is entered, likewise St. Comaigh. These references show the importance of the monastery of *Snamh Luthair* in early Christian Ireland.



*Snamh-Luthir.*" This extract shows that the monastery of Slanore had been founded by Columbanus, son of Eochaidh (or Echuid), and was already in existence at the time of St. Colmcille's visit. This St. Columbanus (or Colman) was a contemporary of St. Fechin of Fore, who occasionally visited the monastery of Slanore. In his old age St. Columbanus became blind, but was miraculously cured by St. Fechin. In one of the early lives of St. Fechin the incident is thus related :—

On a certain day St. Fechin came to the place called Snam Luither, in the district of Cabre Gabhra, and meeting there St. Colman [Columbanus] the son of Eochaid, who had been for a long time blind, he applied to his eyes the water with which he had washed his hands, and the blessing of sight was immediately restored to the blind man.

St. Columbanus—in Gaelic *Colman* would be the usual form of his name—the founder of Slanore, died in 640 ; his feast is on September 9th. He was fifth in descent from King Laoghaire, who received St. Patrick at Tara ; \* his father, Eochaidh, was son of Ailill, son of Guaire, son of Lughaigh, who was son of Laoghaire.† St. Comaigh of Slanore—her festival is entered on May 27th—was the sister of St. Colman, the founder. We may assume that both Colman and his sister Comaigh, with many others whose names are unrecorded, await the Great Reveille in the sacred soil of the Abbey Field of Slanore.

In *The Life of St. Ruadhan of Lorrha*—the saint who by the romancing and uncritical historians of later times is unjustly accused of having cursed Tara ‡

\* O'Hanlon's *Lives of the Irish Saints*, September 9.

† *Martyrology of Donegal*.

‡ This story may be ranked among the great undying lies of history. Abounding in anachronisms, it has no historical basis, and is merely an invention of modern times. The myth has often been exploded. *Vide MacNeill's Phases of Irish History*, p. 233.

—it is related that the saint visited "the city of Snamh-Luthir in the district of Cairbre-gabhra," where he found the body of the king recently deceased being conveyed "to the city" on a chariot. Ruadhan prayed and the king was miraculously restored to life. This is the second miracle in connection with which the monastery of Snamh-Luthir is mentioned in our early records.

It may be accepted as established that the monastery of Slanore was founded by St. Colman under the patronage of St. Columbkille. But, furthermore, the *Martyrologies* have it that St. Colman had also a monastery at a place called "Donaghmore." It has been surmised, and the evidence which has been advanced is certainly very convincing, that the present townland of Tonymore, beside Kilmore, is identical with the ancient Donaghmore.\* I take it that Tonymore represents *Domnác mór*, i.e., the great church. As a rule, in our place names, *Domnác* indicates a religious foundation dating back to early Christian times. In fact we are told in the *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick* that all the churches called *Domhnach* were founded by St. Patrick himself; they were so-called, it is further stated, on account of their foundations having been laid on a Sunday. But the church of *Domnác mór*, to which we refer, must be ascribed to St. Columbkille rather than to St. Patrick. There are no Patrician traditions connected with it, but its links with St. Columbkille are very strong. Archdall, in his *Monasticon Hibernicum*, refers to a monastery called "Domnachmore" which existed somewhere in County Cavan, and he was unable to

\* *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. i, p. 166. The Gaelic *Domnác*, a church, is based on the Latin *Dominica*. Interchanges of hard and soft notes are not infrequent in place names: the substitution of "t" for "d" is an example which finds parallels elsewhere. On the early maps and in the *Inquisitions* the townland is entered as "Tonaghmore," which form represents correctly at least the body of the name.



identify it; but I have no hesitation in equating it with the present Tonymore.\* Archdall was unacquainted with the topography of Cavan, otherwise he would have sought to locate it in the neighbourhood of Kilmore.

In the sixteenth century Tonymore was termon land belonging to the bishopric of Kilmore. Slanore was also included in Kilmore's termon land. Evidently Tonymore and Slanore had remained Church property from very early times. All the available evidence goes to show that the townland of Tonymore was the site of an important ecclesiastical foundation which was a dependency of Slanore.

These facts help to elucidate some of the perplexing historical problems which confront us when we attempt to reconcile the details of the earlier years of the life of St. Feidhlimidh. Where was the secluded spot to which he retired to lead the life of a recluse? According to our hagiological literature St. Feidhlimidh was associated with a place called *Kilmore Duithruibh*. The identification, or location, of this place has exercised the ingenuity of many of our most competent historians, and their various conclusions, when not actually contradictory are, at least, most unsatisfactory. To add to the difficulty two Kilmores come into view as seats of monastic establishments—(1) *Cell Mor Duithruibh* and (2) *Cell Mor Enir*. Colgan (*Trias Thaumaturga*) identifies (1) with the Kilmore of County Cavan, and in this view he is supported by Archdall and other commentators. On the other hand, Archdeacon John Lynch, in his unpublished

\* The *Inquisitions*, both of 1590 and 1609, have "Tonaghmore," which is also the form of the name on the 1609 Plantation Map of Cavan. The *Down Survey* (1654) has "Townemore." The *Rawlinson MS. A. 237*, dated 1608, has the following entries under the barony of "Cavan alia Loughtee": "Kilmore contayning 6 polls lyeing neere the parish [church] of Kilmore . . . Tanaghmore contayning 3 polls lyeing neere the aforesaid church"—*Analecta Hibernica*, No. 3, pp. 205, 206.

work *De Praesulibus Hiberniae* \* does the same for (2). O'Donovan refers (1) to County Roscommon,† near the Shannon, and (2) to County Armagh, and in this conjecture he has the weighty support of Dr. Reeves.‡ Colgan, in another passage, locates the Kilmore Duithruibh of St. Feidhlimidh in the Province of Connacht. Both Reeves and O'Donovan agree in equating Kilmore Duithruibh—the forms of the name vary slightly in the different texts—with the present parish of Kilmore in County Roscommon.

The *Four Masters* record the death of a bishop and abbot of *Cill Mor Maighe Eimhire* in 765, and that of Dichuil, Bishop of *Cill Mor Inir* in 871. These places are evidently one and the same, viz., the *Cell Mor Enir* which Archdeacon Lynch would equate with the Kilmore of Breiffne.

The divergent views of these authorities are far from being helpful in elucidating the topographical problem of the location of St. Feidhlimidh's retreat. There are several places in Ireland called Kilmore, and similarity of name seems to have misled Colgan, Lynch, Archdall, Lanigan, Ware, as well as later writers, who have unhesitatingly adopted their conclusions. Archdeacon Lynch's identification does not seem to rest on any reliable historical basis, and I may reject it as highly improbable. I need not discuss here the question of the location of Cell Mor Enir; but the identification of Kilmore Duithruibh is of primary importance in connection with our early diocesan history. While loth to disagree with the views of two such able authorities as Reeves and O'Donovan, I am convinced that the scene of St. Feidhlimidh's retreat must be sought for nearer home than County Roscommon. *Duithruibh* is a Gaelic

\* I refer to the manuscript copy in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin.

† *Annals of the Four Masters*, vol. i, p. 327 (notes).

‡ Reeves' *Adamnan's Life of St. Columba*.



word, which signifies a wilderness, or unfrequented place, and the wilderness into which the saint retired was, obviously, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Kilmore of Breiffne. Evidence in support of this is not wanting. A well attested tradition has it that the church of Kilmore—*Cill mór*—was founded by St. Feidhlimidh himself, and was his chief monastic establishment. Again, at Kilmore Duithruibh St. Columbkille founded a church, as we learn from his several *Lives*; and it is significant that he visited Slanore, as Adamnan testifies. That the Duithruibh, or wilderness, was identical with the present Tonymore there is little room for doubt; and Tonymore, as ecclesiastical lands, preserved its monastic traditions until the time of the confiscations. The monastery of Slanore was already in existence in the sixth century, when St. Columbkille was an honoured guest there. Where then did St. Columbkille found *his* church in the neighbourhood? At Tonymore, is the only reasonable answer. Having established there his *Domnác* he would naturally have placed it under the jurisdiction of the custodian of Slanore, and to this secluded monastery St. Feidhlimidh would have retired as a recluse. The actual site of St. Feidhlimidh's oratory, or cell, is pointed out, traditionally, in the townland of Tonymore, and furnishes confirmatory evidence that this is the *Duithruibh*, or wilderness, where the saint spent his earlier years. It is in the immediate vicinity of Kilmore, where later on he founded his own *great church*, which became the centre of diocesan government.

Regarding the identification of the Kilmore of County Roscommon with the Kilmore Duithruibh of St. Feidhlimidh, suggested, tentatively at least, by Reeves and O'Donovan, it seems beyond question that these places were quite distinct. The only evidence in support of their identity seems to rest

on similarity, or partial similarity, of name. It is not improbable that the cognomen may have been applied to both Kilmores, but the evidence for this is indecisive. Even if we were to take for granted that the Kilmore of Roscommon was in early times styled *Duithruibh*, this would not prove anything. The Kilmore of Roscommon lay in the territory of the Ui Briuin of Magh Seola, and as some historians, including Sir James Ware, have fallen into the error of confusing these Ui Briuin with the Ui Briuin of Breiffne, it will be readily understood how the confusion of names should have arisen. But when the *Martyrology of Donegal* enters the festival of St. Feidhlimidh of Kilmore Duithruibh there is no evidence, traditional or otherwise, even to suggest that any Kilmore other than our own Kilmore of Breiffne is the place intended.

Whether the church of Kilmore, County Roscommon, was founded by St. Patrick or by St. Columbkille raises another historical problem, the solution of which I must leave to the historians of the Diocese of Elphin. Close by the ruins of the old church, which bespeaks a venerable antiquity, there is a holy well, once much frequented by pilgrims; but this holy well is dedicated to St. Patrick. In another part of the same parish is a ruined church, but it is dedicated to St. Brigid. Nowhere, as far as I have been able to discover, is there to be found in County Roscommon a church, a holy well, or even a tradition, which would even remotely connect our St. Feidhlimidh with that ancient and historic church beyond the Shannon.

In the Kilmore of Breiffne the evidence of St. Feidhlimidh's manifold activities is abundant. His holy well is here, its waters sparkling as of old; the location of his cell is still remembered, and the tradition of his retirement to the wilderness is still a living one after the passage of fourteen centuries.



The existence of this tradition is of special significance, as it supplies corroborative evidence of the *Duithruibh* of our early hagiological literature, although the Gaelic form of the name is long since obsolete, and must have passed out of use at a very early date.

The veneration that has been paid to St. Feidhlimidh from time immemorial in Breiffne is a cardinal fact of history; for that veneration springs from a living tradition whose continuity has never been broken. Kilmore retained its early monastic traditions when, as will be explained later, Bishop Andrew Mac Brady, by Papal Rescript, constituted it a cathedral church in 1454.

The Kilmore *Duithruibh* of St. Feidhlimidh must be accepted, therefore, as identical with the Kilmore of Breiffne. The *Martyrology of Tallaght* enters "Fethilimmed, Cile mair," on August 3rd, and at the same day the *Martyrology of Donegal* has "Feidlimidh of Cill-mor." Evidently these entries are misplaced; they should have been entered at August 9th, on which day his festival is observed.\*

The *Martyrology of Donegal*, at August 9th, enters the "Four sons of Dioman of Cill-mor Dithruibh," which is evidently the Kilmore of Breiffne. At the same day there is an allusion to the "Nineteen saints of Kilmore, *which is a cathedral seat*" †—*Novemdecem Sancti Kilmorenses, quae Cathedralis sedes est*. Clearly the Kilmore of Breiffne is the place intended, as this was a bishop's seat from the days of St. Feidhlimidh. The names of these nineteen saints of Kilmore have not been ascertained, nor can we identify the four sons

\* Formerly, an annual fair was held at Kilmore on August 3. An entry in the *Rawlinson MS.*—Bodleian Library, Oxford—dated 1608, has "one fayre holden at Killmore yearly the third day of August beeing Saint Phelime's day"—*Analecta Hibernica*, No. 3, p. 205. This fair was a survival of the annual pattern held in honour of St. Feidhlimidh. These patterns were usually, at an early period, continued throughout an entire week.

† Note by Dr. Todd.

of Dioman ; their names have vanished beyond hope of recall. The various entries show that the monastery of Kilmore was in a flourishing condition, and was the home of many saints, in the centuries following its foundation.

The biographical details of St. Feidhlimidh's life which have survived are extremely meagre, and the dates of his birth and death cannot be established with any degree of certainty. Authorities are agreed, however, that he flourished in the sixth century, and it is stated that he was contemporary with St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise (*obit* 548) and St. Senan of Iniscatty (*obit* 544). His death took place towards the end of the sixth century. His festival, August 9th, was formerly kept with great solemnity throughout the diocese. Traditionally he is accepted as having been the first Bishop of Kilmore, and both history and tradition lead to the same conclusion, viz., that the diocese was established by him, and can boast of a venerable antiquity.

Sir James Ware conjectures that St. Feidhlimidh was identical with a Bishop Feidhlimidh who ruled over the Diocese of Clogher.\* Rev. Alban Butler, in his *Lives*, adopts Ware's conjecture, but we must unhesitatingly rule against it. In this, as in many other details of our early diocesan history, Ware is not a trustworthy guide ; but we must not unduly criticise his conclusions, as his materials were sometimes very limited, although he had access to manuscripts which now no longer exist. Suffice it to say that St. Feidhlimidh of Kilmore was distinct from the fifth Bishop of Clogher referred to by Ware.

I have already dwelt on the fact that there were no cities, in the usual sense of the term, in Ireland in early Christian times, and bishops were allotted

\* Harris' *Ware's Bishops*, p. 226.



to every tribe or population group. Whenever we find the word *civitas* (a city) in our ecclesiastical literature we must, therefore, interpret it as referring to the place where the episcopal residence was established. But we have already seen that Snamh Luithir is titled *civitas* by Adamnan. The inference is obvious: that Slanore was the seat of the bishopric at that time.

To understand clearly the early history of a district it is necessary to study also its topography. The parish of Kilmore includes both Slanore and Tonymore. A glance at the townland index map shows that the townland of Slanore is two miles south-west of Kilmore. Tonymore stretches north of Kilmore, from which it is separated by the two comparatively small townlands of Drumlion and Drumcon. It must be clearly understood that in early times Kilmore, Slanore, and Tonymore were not distinct topographical units, with clearly defined boundaries, as they are to-day. The district must have been thinly populated—a wilderness, as the early name proves. The monastery of Slanore was the earliest ecclesiastical foundation in the district, as may be inferred from Adamnan's narrative. Its situation was chosen, no doubt, from the fact of its being easily accessible by waterway at the head of Loch Erne, an important consideration at a time when roads were few and travelling by water was the most feasible method. At a later date St. Columbkille founded his *Domnach* at Tonymore, and here St. Feidhlimidh retired as a recluse. Later on St. Feidhlimidh, when raised to the episcopal dignity, founded his own church at the present Kilmore. Slanore then comprised a district of considerable extent, much larger than the present townland to which the name is applied.

An examination of the place names of the locality shows that in early times the appellation of wilderness

was not inappropriate.\* Kilmore and Tonymore are in close proximity, and since *Domnach* and *Cill* are practically synonymous terms,† it is not difficult to reconstruct the history of St. Feidhlimidh's church. That St. Feidhlimidh after his consecration founded the church of Kilmore may be accepted as beyond doubt; in the Papal Registers and other early documents it is described as St. Feidhlimidh's parish church. His holy well in the immediate vicinity is conclusive evidence of his connection with it. His episcopal residence would have been at Slanore—his successors did not remove their residence from the traditional site until the fifteenth century. But earlier than the fifteenth century the bishops of the diocese took their titles from Kilmore, although State documents named them from their territorial title in accordance with the general custom of the time. This will be readily understood when it is remembered that the parochial unit of Kilmore included both Kilmore and Slanore; at any rate their residence was situated somewhere within the parish. No traces of the church or monastery of Tonymore seem to have survived, but the site of St. Feidhlimidh's cell, which is still pointed out, obviously marks its situation.

\* E.g., Monnery, which I take to be a form of *muine*, i.e., a shrubbery. The 1609 map has "Meonarry" which would suggest *móin*, a bog or moorland. Even at the present time the district, broken by hills and small lakes, is not very accessible, but the scenery is strikingly picturesque.

† At least three well-defined classes of ecclesiastical buildings were founded by St. Patrick, viz., *Eaglais*, *Cill* (or Cell), and *Domhnach*. It is hardly possible now to understand the clear distinctions between these types as understood in St. Patrick's time. The *Eaglais* (Latin *ecclesia*) is believed to have been the earliest and simplest type of structure for the celebration of Mass. The term *Cill* was applied to an ecclesiastical settlement—something in the nature of a college or seminary. The particular features of the *Domhnach* are not so evident, but the view has been expressed that it was a church erected in some special centre for the safe keeping of relics and other religious objects. The term *Domhnach* was not applied to any church founded later than the year 500. See Rev. M. V. Ronan, "Patrician Churches. Their Form and Material."—*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, April, 1933.



The rise of Kilmore to ecclesiastical importance marked the decline and decay of Tonymore, but its church lands were annexed to Kilmore, and continued to be Church property until the sixteenth century.

Kilmore must have been constituted a parish in very early times, and most probably during the lifetime of St. Feidhlimidh himself; this is evident from the early references to *Cill Mor* and *Cill Mor Duithruibh*. Slanore gradually declined in importance. In 1454 the *civitas*, i.e., episcopal seat, was merely transferred from Slanore to the parish church of St. Feidhlimidh. We may reject immediately the "removal" theory of Ware, as it may be termed, that is, that Bishop MacBrady, in 1454, removed the episcopal seat from Urney to Kilmore. Slanore, and not Urney, was the *civitas*. It is true that the fact of the old diocesan seal having been discovered at Urney early in the last century would seem to lend some support to Ware's view; but history and tradition are against it.

The reason generally advanced to explain the transference of the episcopal seat from Slanore to Kilmore is that the former place was in an inconvenient locality, and the explanation is a plausible one. But probably there were other reasons which we can only conjecture now. For instance, the church of Slanore may have been a small building, insufficient for the increasing population of the district. Again, the chieftains of the district may have influenced Bishop MacBrady in making his decision. At any rate the bishop seems to have been influenced principally by the monastic traditions of the church.

On a green hillside, rising abruptly from the waters of Upper Loch Erne, stood the monastery of Slanore, the site of which is still remembered as the Abbey Field, which is less than an acre in extent and of circular shape. About a century ago, during tillage operations, an extensive burial place was revealed

there, and a considerable number of carved stones were unearthed. The discovery of these carved stones, some of which reveal skilled sculpture, shows that the original buildings must have been of elaborate design. In the centre of the field grows a large whitethorn bush around the base of which some of the carved stones have since been placed and preserved—the sole remnants of the once important *civitas* of Slanore, hallowed by the footsteps of Colman, Columbkille and Feidhlimidh, and hosts of others whose names are not preserved in the pages of history.

In the early years of the seventeenth century the old cathedral of Kilmore passed into Protestant hands, and was used for Protestant worship until early in the last century, when the present Protestant cathedral was erected close by. This cathedral commemorates William Bedell, Protestant Bishop of Kilmore, a native of Essex, England, who died in 1642. His mausoleum is to be seen at the east end of the old cemetery. The older cathedral is now used as a recreation hall; the ancient cemetery adjoins it. This structure, with its massive walls, incorporates Bishop MacBrady's fifteenth century cathedral, and occupies the site of St. Feidhlimidh's parish church—the great church of the wilderness. The old cemetery, surrounded by high walls must have originally extended over a much larger area than at present. It contains some ash-trees of great age. We find in Bedell's writings that during his time the old church was a favourite place of interment. No monuments of interest appear to have survived either in the old cathedral or in the remaining section of the old cemetery. The last Catholic bishop interred in the precincts of the old cathedral was Dr. Eoghan Mac Sweeney, who died in 1669, but no trace of his tomb can now be discovered. The alterations which have been made in and around



the old cathedral have resulted in the obliteration of all the ancient monuments which once adorned the venerable sanctuary. The violent hand of the iconoclast has left scarcely a vestige of the Kilmore of pre-Reformation times. Some sculptured slabs, incorporated in the Bedell mausoleum, belong to a much earlier period, and evidently were collected from the debris of the tombs of early ecclesiastics.

As the resting place of St. Feidhlimidh, and also of many of his successors, the ancient cathedral and cemetery, although no longer in Catholic hands, has always been regarded with due veneration. Countless numbers of distinguished ecclesiastics and laymen are buried here in now unmarked graves, and even though the venerable shrine is now deserted, the visitor will be deeply impressed by the picturesque surroundings of this ancient sanctuary which was for such a long period the centre of diocesan government.

An interesting feature of the new Protestant cathedral is the magnificent old Irish recessed doorway which was removed from the church of the Premonstratensian monastery a few miles away, on Trinity Island, in Loch Uachtair.

## CHAPTER III

## THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

ST. PATRICK IN WEST BREIFFNE: CROMM CRUAICH OF  
MAGH SLEAHT

IN the course of his missionary travels through Connacht St. Patrick, on a famous occasion, visited the western district of Breiffne. His principal objective was the destruction of *Cromm Cruaich*, the chief idol of pagan Ireland, which stood on the plain called *Magh Sleacht*—an ancient territory which lay within the western extremity of the present County of Cavan, and was, very approximately, geographically coextensive with the present mountainous Barony of *Teallach Eachdhach*, or Tullyhaw.

From *The Tripartite Life* of St. Patrick we learn that the saint

went over the water to Mag Slecht, a place in which was the chief idol of Ireland, namely, Cenn Cruaich, covered with gold and silver, and twelve other idols covered with brass about him.\*

The Memoir of Tirechan,† which is preserved in the *Book of Armagh*, informs us, furthermore, that St. Patrick, on his journey to Magh Sleacht, passed

\* Rolls Edition, vol. i, p. 93.

† *Book of Armagh*, edited by Rev. John Gwynn, D.D. The Memoir of Tirechan is the earliest extant account of St. Patrick's life and labours. Tirechan, the compiler, was a bishop and the disciple of St. Ultan of Ardraccon, County Meath. The work was compiled during the latter half of the seventh century, and is one of our earliest and most authentic sources of Patrician history. See Prof. Bury's "Tirechan's Memoir of St. Patrick"—*English Historical Review*, April, 1902; cf. Dr. Gwynn's *Introduction to the Book of Armagh*, and *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, vol. xvi.



through the territory of Magh Rein—that part of the present County Leitrim bordering Tullyhaw—and entered Magh Sleacht, where he destroyed the idol; and again we are told the saint sailed “over the water called Guthard,” which one of our most competent investigators has identified with the present Garadise Lake. The exact location of the site of Cromm Cruaich was a problem which for long had baffled the inquiries of the most eminent topographers.

Although the great topographer, John O'Donovan, had correctly equated the Barony of Teallach Eachdhach—Tullyhaw—with the ancient Magh Sleacht,\* yet at a much later date Most Rev. Dr. Healy, Archbishop of Tuam, in his well known and popular *Life of St. Patrick*, decides that the site of Cromm's shrine must be sought for in the neighbourhood of Fenagh, in County Leitrim, and concludes that Edentinny, between Ballinamore and Fenagh was the spot.† The same view receives the support of Canon O'Hanlon,‡ Only in recent times has one of our most capable investigators, Mr. John P. Dalton, made an exhaustive study of the topography of the territory of Magh Sleacht, and compared the configuration of the district with the descriptions given in the early *Lives* of St. Patrick. Mr. Dalton has amassed conclusive evidence to show that the elliptically shaped rath on the summit of the hill of Derryragh, locally called “Darraugh,” in the parish of Templeport, was the actual scene of Cromm's adoration.§ St. Patrick founded a church in the vicinity, over which he placed a priest, Methbran, in charge. The present Catholic church of Kilnavart

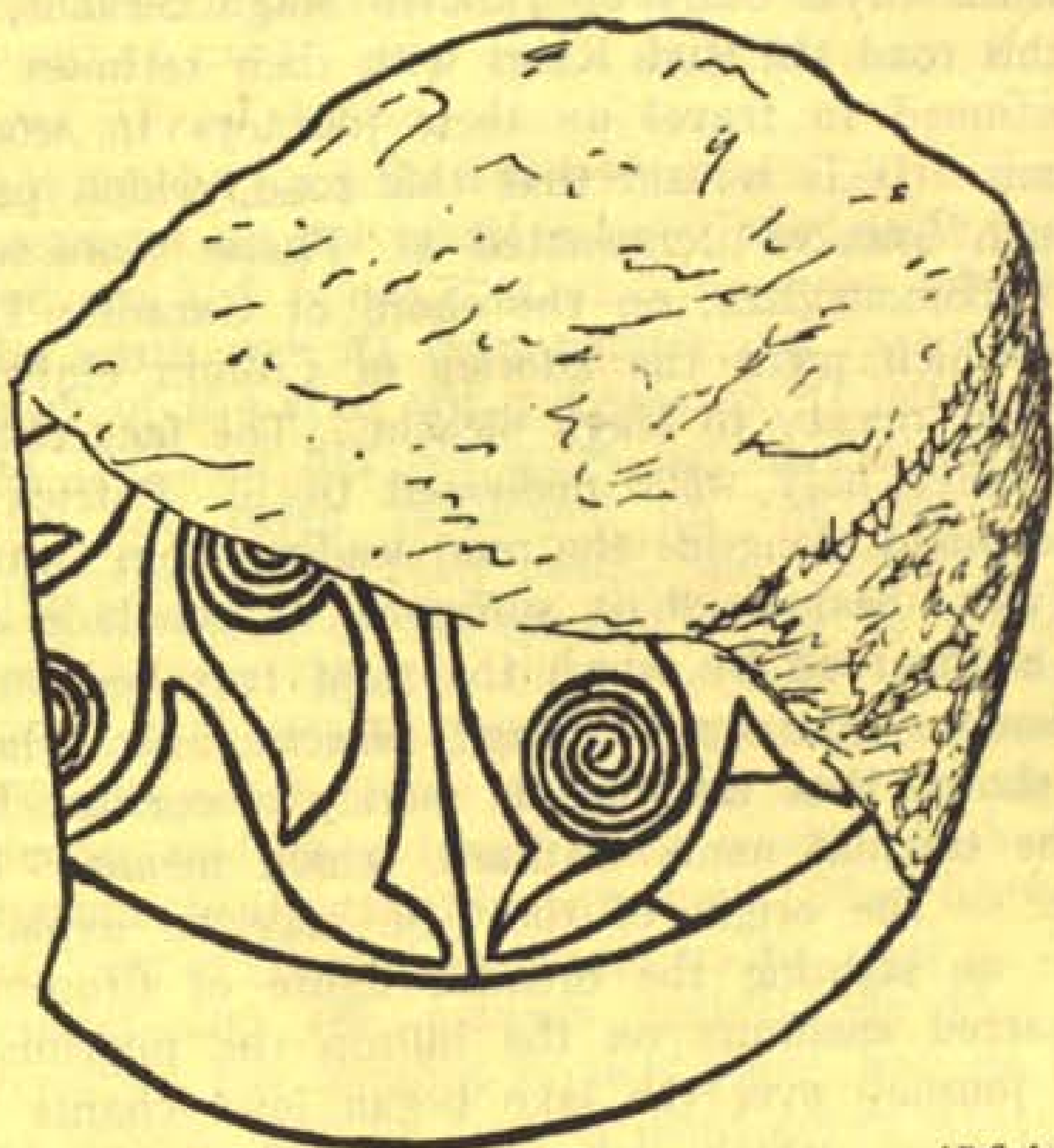
\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*—Cavan.

† *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 182 *et seq.*

‡ *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. iii, p. 581.

§ *Cromm Cruaich of Magh Sleacht*, by John P. Dalton, M.A., M.R.I.A. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxxvi, section C, No. 4 (1922).

occupies the site of this Patrician church, and near it is shown the holy well where St. Patrick baptised numerous converts. The evidence is conclusive that Garadise Lake, in the parish of Drumreilly, is "the water called Guthard" over which our National Apostle crossed on his way to convert the Masraighe, the tribe then inhabiting Magh Sleacht, and to overthrow their cherished idol.



*Photo]*

*[R.S.A.I.]*

STONE WITH LA TÈNE DECORATION AT KILLYCLUGGIN

The rath of Derryragh, on the summit of the hill, occupies a very commanding position; the enclosure, surrounded by a clay fence, is slightly over an acre in extent. In pre-Christian times the imposing figure of Cromm Cruaich, from its place within this enclosure, and facing towards the south, was an awesome spectacle, striking terror over the plains of Magh



Sleacht and Magh Rein. The narrative informs us that the idol was surrounded by twelve lesser idols, covered with brass, and that all collapsed when St. Patrick arrived before the enclosure from which the dreaded Cromm in hitherto unchallenged majesty had for untold centuries frowned on the plains below.\*

In pre-Christian times an important highway led from the royal court of Tara to Magh Sleacht, and by this road the High Kings with their retinues were accustomed to travel on their journeys to worship Cromm. It is certain that this road, which passed through Granard, terminated at *Tuaim Seanchaidh*, now Toomonaghan, on the shore of Garadise Lake, from which point the adorers of Cromm embarked on their journey to Magh Sleacht. The fact that at least three holy wells dedicated to St. Patrick are to be found alongside the road leading from Granard to Tuaim Seanchaidh is sufficient to conclude that this is the road by which the saint travelled on his momentous journey to Magh Sleacht. Mr. Dalton has shown that Garadise is merely a corrupt form of the original name Guthard, which means "loud voice." The origin of the title may be explained thus: on sighting the dreaded figure of Cromm in his sacred enclosure on the hilltop the pilgrims on their journey over the lake began loud chants and lamentations which echoed from the surrounding hills. By the same route St. Patrick crossed over

\* In the townland of Killycluggin, lying north of Derryragh, a very important discovery was made in 1921 when a stone with La Tène decoration was unearthed. The stone was examined by Prof. Macalister and a description was published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, December, 1922. The decorations belong to the Iron Age which preceded the period of Celtic Christian Art. The stone will be found near the southern boundary of the townland, and is about four feet in height. It displays three spirals with curves of the asymmetry typical of La Tène ornamentation. It is very significant that this stone should have been discovered in the immediate vicinity of Cromm's shrine.

the lake, at this point a narrow neck of water about a mile in width, and having reached the Magh Sleacht side he had only to travel half a mile before reaching the stronghold of Cromm.

After disposing of Cromm and his group of attendant idols, St. Patrick made many converts whom he baptised in a well close by. He also founded a church there called *Domnach Maige Sleacht*. The circumstances are related as follows in the *Tripartite Life* :—

When he [i.e., St. Patrick] drew nigh to the idol, he raised up his hand to put Jesus' staff upon it, and reached it not, but . . . its right side, for to the south was its face, namely, to Tara; and the mark of the staff still remains on its left side, and yet the staff did not move out of Patrick's hand. And the earth swallowed up the twelve other images as far as their heads, and they [still] stand thus in token of the miracle. And he cursed the demon, and expelled him into hell. And Patrick summoned all with King Loegaire. These are they who adored the idol, and all saw him, namely, the demon, and they feared they would perish unless Patrick should cast him into hell. Then his brooch fell out of Patrick's mantle as he was . . . the conflict and the prowess against the idol. He stript off the heather in that place, and he found his brooch; and no heather plant grows in that place more than in the rest of the field.

He founded a church in that stead, namely, *Domnach Maige Slecht*, and left therein Mabran [whose cognomen is] *Barbarus Patricii*, a relative of his and a prophet. And there is Patrick's well, wherein he baptised many.\*

It is quite certain that the present Catholic church

\* *Tripartite Life*, Rolls Series, vol. i, pp. 91, 93.



of Kilnavart,\* which is dedicated to St. Mogue, whose birthplace is scarcely a mile away, occupies the site of this early Patrician foundation, the *Domnach Maige Sleacht*, i.e., the church of Magh Sleacht. The church is surrounded by a deep *fosse*, or rath, a circumstance so unusual that it deserves close study. Neither in ancient nor in modern times would such a site have been chosen for a church except for very special reasons.

From the Memoir of Tirechan we learn that St. Patrick assigned Methbrain to the *fossa Slecht*: "Mittens autem Patricius Methbrain ad fossam Slecht barbarum Patricii propinquum."† There can be hardly any reason for doubting that the *fosse* which still survives at Kilnavart is the identical fosse within which St. Patrick founded his church—the earliest ecclesiastical foundation in Magh Sleacht.‡

The incident regarding St. Patrick's brooch and his losing it temporarily in the heather indicates

\* *Cill na bPeap*, i.e., the church of the graves. The *Inquisitions* of 1590 and 1609 have "Kilfert," which is also the form of the name on the *Down Survey* map. A State Paper of 1606 has "Kilfeart." The *Down Survey* shows that the townlands of Kilfert and Cownaran, the latter is now Cloneary, were termon lands attached to the church. On the Plantation Map of 1609 the church is marked, surmounted by a cross, and was evidently then in use.

† *Tripartite Life*, Rolls Series, vol. ii, p. 311.

‡ Cf. Prof. Bury's "Itinerary of Patrick in Connaught"—*Proceedings Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxiv; also his *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 123. It may be added, however, that some of Prof. Bury's conclusions although the fruits of deep and careful research can only be accepted with reserve. For a critical analysis of some of Bury's views and theories concerning Patrician history see Cardinal Moran's "Some Strictures on Professor Bury's 'Life of St. Patrick' "—*Irish Theological Quarterly*, April, 1907. In this scholarly article Cardinal Moran peremptorily rejects Bury's view assigning St. Patrick's death to the year 461 and marshals a formidable array of arguments to show that our National Apostle passed away in 493. Tirechan's Memoir does not decide the issue. Some of our leading authorities support the earlier date; cf. MacNeill's *Phases of Irish History*, p. 222. One point is significant: Tirechan states that Laoghaire, the High King, outlived St. Patrick. Laoghaire died in 462. All the Acts of St. Patrick's life are comprised within the period 432 to 461. The successor to King Laoghaire was Ailill Molt, who reigned till 483, but neither history nor tradition brings St. Patrick into any relation with him.

that the heather was then covering the slopes of Cromm's hill. It is interesting to point out that at the present day on the otherwise fertile soil of the southern slopes of the hill of Derryragh large patches of heather still remain despite the limestone foundation of the soil. In early times, before the slopes were drained and cultivated, a very considerable area must have been covered with heather.

It will be observed that the Rath Sleacht, now the site of the church of Kilnavart, where St. Patrick established his church, is a mile distant from the rath of Derryragh, where Cromm was worshipped. A close examination of the existing raths at Kilnavart and Derryragh will show that the former, surrounded by a double ring, was once strongly fortified, and indicating that it was at one time a place of residence. Portions of the circumferences of the rath-rings were removed in 1864, when the present church was being erected on the ancient site. The rath of Derryragh, surrounded by a single ring or circumvallation, was certainly not erected for defensive purposes, and was not a place of residence; clearly its purpose was religious—the worship of Cromm Cruaich and his subordinate idols.

The *fossa*, or rath, which now encloses the church of Kilnavart, was obviously the residence of the chieftain of the territory of Magh Sleacht, who would also have been the official or dignitary who had charge of, and presided over, the worship of Cromm. After a careful study of the topography of this territory, I find my conclusions in absolute agreement with those of my friend, Mr. Dalton. It is most probable that the chieftain of Magh Sleacht accepted Christianity, and handed over his residence as the site for the church.

St. Patrick's victory was now complete; Cromm was destroyed, and the last citadel of paganism had



fallen; the people of Magh Sleacht were gradually accepting Christianity, and a Christian church occupied the *fossa Sleacht*, the former residence of the chieftain of the district.

After accomplishing his main task St. Patrick spent some time travelling through Magh Sleacht preaching and baptising. The several holy wells dedicated to him are an indication of the extent of his itinerary. It will be remembered that he entered Magh Sleacht after traversing Magh Rein. On his return journey he re-entered Magh Rein, passing south from Belleenan to Crimlin, over a ford on the little River Blackwater, somewhere near the present townland of Derrada. He passed from Magh Rein on through Magh Ai, now the plains of County Roscommon. The traditions regarding St. Patrick's travels through Magh Sleacht are still very vivid, and confirm, in a striking manner, the identification of the places connected with the worship of Cromm. As Archbishop Healy observes, St. Patrick's visit to Magh Sleacht is one of the most noteworthy incidents in his missionary career. A list of the holy wells dedicated to St. Patrick, which could be traced in Magh Sleacht, would show that the saint made a very extensive tour through it. Many of these wells are shown on the Ordnance Survey Maps; others are pointed out by local tradition.

St. Patrick's visit to Magh Sleacht may be ascribed to the year 435, but it may have been a year earlier, or perhaps a year later. Tirechan's record does not follow chronological order, and many events can only be dated approximately. St. Patrick's first great conflict was with the Druids at the royal court of Tara in 433. But the conquest of Magh Sleacht remained to be achieved if Christianity should be successfully established. Therefore St. Patrick proceeded to Magh Sleacht on the next occasion when the High King,

Laoghaire, with his people were assembled there. How long St. Patrick remained in Magh Sleacht we are not informed, but we can infer from the several holy wells, as well as from the numerous local traditions, that he remained until he was convinced that Christianity had gained a secure foothold. He left the priest, Methbrain, whom he placed in charge of the newly founded church, to continue the work of conversion.

Professor Bury seeks to minimise the importance of St. Patrick's victory over Cromm Cruaich, and draws certain conclusions which are based on very faulty premises. He says that "later generations exalted unduly the importance of the precinct in Mag Slecht as a national centre of religion"—a statement which is in conflict with that of the *Rennes Dindsenchas*, where it is definitely affirmed that Cromm was the acknowledged deity of every people that colonised Ireland.† He further states that "its importance had dwindled before the days of St. Patrick." This was certainly not the case, as the High King, Laoghaire, was a worshipper at Cromm's shrine—a fact attested by the earlier *Lives* and mentioned, only to be rejected by Bury himself, at a later page (p. 306). But to the record of the actual destruction of the idol by St. Patrick, Professor Bury takes strong exception. "The story," he subjoins, "tells, with a simplicity which defeats itself, that he came and struck down the idol with his staff."‡ To deny, as Professor Bury does, the truth of the record of the *Tripartite Life* would be to impugn the entire collection of historical data.

In the pages of the *Life* there is no event of St. Patrick's career so clearly recorded as the destruc-

\* *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 123, 124.

† *Revue Celtique*, vol. xvi, p. 36.

‡ *Op. cit.*, p. 124.



tion of Cromm Cruaich. The simplicity of the narrative we admit, but its truth needs no elaboration. Again, Professor Bury suggests that the consent of the secular powers must have been obtained; but the secular powers seem to have been only too glad to get rid of Cromm, an idol worshipped only through fear. Such a formal success of Christian aggression against the pagan spirit would, argues Bury, have stood out in the early records as a decisive victory. "The blow struck by Patrick at the stone of Mag Slecht," he adds, "would be as the stroke of Boniface at the oak of Geismar." But it was always recognised as such by history and tradition. The truth of the episode rests, according to Bury, on an ancient tradition without any prominent place in the older records. But the older records, from which I have quoted, are clear and distinct on the matter, Professor Bury notwithstanding. I may pass over the Professor's semi-serious suggestion that St. Patrick, had he achieved such a signal success over paganism, would have sent a fragment of the fallen image—a souvenir—to the Pope! Materialists, like Bury, who essay scientific history are sometimes led into strange paths. One point more: Bury holds that the worship of Cromm was only local in Magh Sleacht. The evidence is overwhelming that the worship of the idol was of national import. The agnosticism of Professor Bury had sufficiently blurred his vision that he failed to grasp the significance of St. Patrick's victory on the plain of Magh Sleacht.

Of the subsequent history of Methbrain, the first in charge of the church of Magh Sleacht, we have no further record; but we may assume that he continued his labours, converting the Masraighe tribe. Tirechan's notice of him is very meagre. In the *Tripartite Life* he is called *Mabran*; Tirechan has *Methbrain* in the passage already quoted. The passage

referred to calls him "barbarum," an expression then applied to a non-Roman, that is, a person who was not a citizen of the Roman Empire. This shows that Methbrain, unlike St. Patrick, was born somewhere outside the Roman dominions. This is practically all the information regarding him which can be gleaned from the early writings. It is more probable that Nethbrain, or Niabrain, was the correct form of his name.\* But he occupies a worthy place in our ecclesiastical history, as he was Breiffne's earliest resident Christian missionary, and was appointed by St. Patrick himself. The year of his death is not recorded, but it is most likely that he rests within the precincts of his own church at Kilnavart—the *fossa Magh Sleacht*. In the sixth century the Masraighe of Magh Sleacht became subject to the Ui Briuin, whose rule had already extended over the adjoining territory of Magh Rein.

In Templeport Lake, a mile below Kilnavart, is the small island—Inis Breaghmuighe—where, *circa* 555, St. Mogue was born.

#### MAGH SLEACHT : GEOGRAPHICAL DEFINITION

The topography of Magh Sleacht, its ancient boundaries and limitations, deserves further consideration, especially as historians in the past have failed to agree regarding its exact situation. Even Archbishop Healy places it in County Leitrim, and searched for the site of Cromm's shrine at Edentinny, between Fenagh and Ballinamore, but a closer examination of the details, as given by the *Tripartite Life*, combined with the Patrician traditions still surviving confirms the view that no portion whatever of the ancient territory lay in County Leitrim: that, in fact, the plain which was once the theatre of

\* *Book of Armagh*, Index, pp. 491, 492.



Cromm's worship—the Irish pantheon as it has been called—lay within the present County Cavan. The evidence for this will now be briefly presented.

The parish of Templeport was, in the early Christian period, very approximately co-extensive with the district of Magh Sleacht. This parish was formerly very extensive. From the *Down Survey* map (1654), as well as the earlier 1609 Plantation map, of the Barony of Tullyhaw, it will be seen that it had a maximum length of almost twenty miles and an area of, approximately, seventy square miles. It comprised the present parishes of Templeport, Curlough, and Glan. In 1877 division took place, and Curlough became a distinct parish.

Writing from Mohill, County Leitrim, on June 24th, 1836, Dr. John O'Donovan expresses the view that the townland of Cromlin, in Oughteragh Parish, County Leitrim, was the actual scene of Cromm's adoration.\* The great topographer was then unaware of the fact that no part of Magh Sleacht extended over, or included, any portion of the present County Leitrim, and that actually he had been searching for the site of Cromm's shrine outside the boundaries of Magh Sleacht. Shortly afterwards, however, O'Donovan discovered his error and duly rectified it. Consulting Colgan's *Life of St. Dallan*, the patron of Kildallan, O'Donovan observed the following significant passage:—

Natus est in Connaciae regione Ultoniae contermina, quam prisci Masraige et Cathraige Sleacht, moderni vero Teallach Eathach noncupant.†

This revealed the matter in a new light, and O'Donovan unhesitatingly altered his earlier views;

\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*—Cavan and Leitrim.

† "Vita de S. Dallano Martyre"—*Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*; p. 203.

writing on December 9th, 1836, he declares that in his earlier identification he had been misled by previous writers—Lanigan, Beauford and Seward—and that Magh Sleacht was the ancient name of Tullyhaw. A few years later, when compiling his *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts*, in Trinity College, Dublin, he duly apologises for his error in locating Magh Sleacht in County Leitrim, and explains how he had been misled by Beauford's "Map of Ancient Ireland during the Middle Ages" \* which places "Magh Sleucht" west of Granard and partly in County Longford. Colonel Wood-Martin, relying on the same map, places "Mag Slecht" near Granard.† The writings of Beauford and Vallancey have, evidently, been in great measure responsible for the difficulties of O'Donovan and others in determining the location of the ancient territory.

In the *Catalogue*, to which I have just referred, O'Donovan defines Magh Sleacht as :—

that level part of the barony of Tullyhaw (in the County of Cavan) in which the island of Breaghwee, now Mogue's Island, the church of Templeport, and the little village of Ballymagauran, are situated.‡

In the notes to his monumental edition of *The Annals of the Four Masters*, where there are many references to Magh Sleacht, O'Donovan again equates Magh Sleacht with the plain around the village of Ballymagauran—a view from which he never deviates in his subsequent writings. Writing at a later date, 1856 he refers to "Magh Sleacht, in the barony of Tullyhaw, and County of Cavan, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the village of Ballymagauran." §

\* *Vide Vallancey's Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis*, vol. iii, p. 252.

† *Traces of the Elder Faiths*, vol. ii, p. 208.

‡ *Manuscript Catalogue*, Trinity College, Dublin, p. 159.

§ *Kilkenny Archaeological Journal*, 1856-57, p. 216.



Professor Bury agrees with O'Donovan that the site was near Ballymagauran. O'Donovan died in 1861 without discovering the exact place where the idol stood; but he correctly defined Magh Sleacht, and since his time the great majority of investigators have accepted his conclusions.\*

The present Barony of Tullyhaw includes the entire district of Magh Sleacht, no part of which extended beyond the boundaries of the present County Cavan. Recent researches have shown that the rath on the hill of Derryragh † is the actual enclosure within which the idol stood, and the conclusions of O'Donovan have been amply verified.

The Barony of *Teallach Eachdhach*, now Tullyhaw, the mountainous and picturesque district which occupies the extreme west of County Cavan, represented the territory belonging to the tribe of Eochaidh, a chieftain descended from Eochaidh Muighmeadhoin, a fourth century monarch of Ireland. From Brian, son of this Eochaidh Muighmeadhoin, were descended all the tribes of the Ui Briuin of Connacht whose rule later on extended over Breiffne. The sept of Mac Samhradhan, ‡ belonging to the race of Eochaidh,

\* E.g., D'Arbois de Jubainville, *Irish Mythological Cycle*, p. 60; Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, vol. xvi, p. 36; Dalton, *Cromm Cruaich of Magh Sleacht*; Hogan, *Onom. Goed*, p. 530; Bury, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 306.

† This is the Ordnance Survey form of the name; but "Darraugh" is the local form, and so pronounced by Gaelic speakers. In a rare list of the townlands of Templeport parish, compiled circa 1709, I find the form "Darraragh" which is certainly more correct than that of the O.S. The name is *Dairbhre*, i.e., a place abounding in oaks, showing that an oakwood once encircled the sacred rath on the summit, which is what we should expect, knowing the importance of the oak in the druidical ceremonies.

‡ Now Magauran, or Mac Govern, a name which is still numerically strong in Tullyhaw. For *Pedigree* see O'Donovan, *Ordnance Survey Letters*—Cavan and Leitrim. The form, Mac Govern, is of comparatively modern adoption and does not appear to have been in general use in Tullyhaw a century ago when O'Donovan was compiling his notes. Referring to the Mac Gaurans of County Meath, O'Donovan, in his *Letters* from the latter county, comments on the fact that they were then generally adopting the form Mac Govern—a change of name which he strongly condemns.

were the chieftains of Tullyhaw; their strongholds were at Bawnboy, Ballymagauran and Lissanover. Several of their chieftains are mentioned in the *Four Masters*.\*

At the time of St. Patrick the territory of Magh Sleacht belonged to the Masraighe, one of the rent paying tribes of ancient Ireland. The Masraighe appear to have retained considerable power in the fifth century, for an entry in the *Four Masters*, *sub anno* 464, refers to a foray which they made in that year into Meath. In the sixth century the Ui Briuin, who had already been in possession of Magh Rein, took possession of Magh Sleacht, and the Masraighe were reduced to serfdom. The Masraighe had received Christianity from St. Patrick, but after the sixth century they ceased to be a distinct unit and thus passed out of history. To the Ui Briuin race, the new possessors of Magh Sleacht, the Masraighe represented a hostile and inferior people, and it is not surprising on this account that in the Ui Briuin tradition the Masraighe should be remembered in an unfavourable light. In their mountain fastnesses of Tullyhaw the Masraighe must have long survived the inroads of the Ui Briuin. Throughout that mountain region there exist great numbers of pagan monuments, dolmens—incorrectly known as “Giants’ Graves”—and upright pillarstones; formerly the number of these monuments was much greater—in recent years many of these have been removed or destroyed. The number of raths, or ring forts, throughout Tullyhaw is very great, an indication of the large population existing there in pagan times.

In the *Annals of Ulster*, *sub annis* 1431 and 1459, we find Ballymagauran referred to as “the town of Mac Samradhain,” and the entry of the latter year shows clearly that it was in Magh Sleacht. How far

\* *Sub annis* 1495, 1496, 1512, etc.



the plain of Magh Sleacht extended in various directions may be established with a reasonable degree of accuracy. No part of Magh Sleacht can be described as flat; the region is a mountainous one. "A large rhomboidal area," writes Mr. Dalton (*op. cit.*), "on the south-east side of Tullyhaw, though presenting everywhere crumpled and twisted elevations of surface, appears lowlying in contrast with the towering Slieve Russell, along its northern margin, and the long ranges of Slieve Anierin which dominate it from the west." The immediate neighbourhood of Ballymagauran, when surveyed from the summit of Derryragh—382 feet above sea-level—appears as a flat plain in comparison with the towering peaks of Sliabh Ruisen \* on the north and Sliabh-an-Iaraind † on the west. Away to the north-west towers the summit of Cuilcagh ‡ like a giant in the landscape. Standing in the rath, which crowns the hill of Derryragh, the observer cannot fail to understand why this rugged and hilly region, with its chain of lakes, should be termed a plain—*Magh*—when viewed in conjunction with the mountainous background. The view to be obtained from the rath is a striking one, and the suitability of the summit as the position of the pagan shrine is immediately obvious.

The name, *Magh Sleacht*, is usually understood to signify the "Plain of Adoration." O'Donovan translates it as the "Plain of Genuflections." The

\* Now usually known as Slieve Russell, an example of the interchange of the letters "l" and "n" common in Gaelic as well as in other languages; the *Four Masters* have Sliabh Ruisen, sometimes written Sliabh Rossan, which signifies, most probably, the mountain of the wood.

† I.e. the mountain of iron, usually Slieve Aniern. The mineral deposits here are very extensive, and the iron mines appear to have been worked in prehistoric times. Coal and iron, a valuable combination, are here in abundance. The deposits still await a thorough geological survey.

‡ The origin of the name is explained by the chalky appearance of the mountainside owing to the presence of quartzite; *Cailceac*, i.e., chalky.

Latinised form, *Campus Adorationis*, finds favour with Colgan. Some authorities have suggested the "Plain of Prostrations" as a more correct rendering, and this latter explanation seems to be more in accordance with the historical facts of Cromm's worship. We have it on the authority of the *Dinnsenchus* poem that human sacrifices had been offered, at an early period, however, to appease the dreaded anger of Cromm. These human sacrifices appear to have been finally abandoned a few centuries before St. Patrick's time; nevertheless the worship appears to have been continued in a manner which entailed great bodily suffering. Some idea of what this ordeal really was like may be inferred from the *Dinnsenchus* account:—

They all prostrated themselves before him so that the tops of their foreheads, and the gristle of their noses, and the caps of their knees, and the ends of their elbows broke, and the three-fourths of the men of Erin perished at these prostrations.\*

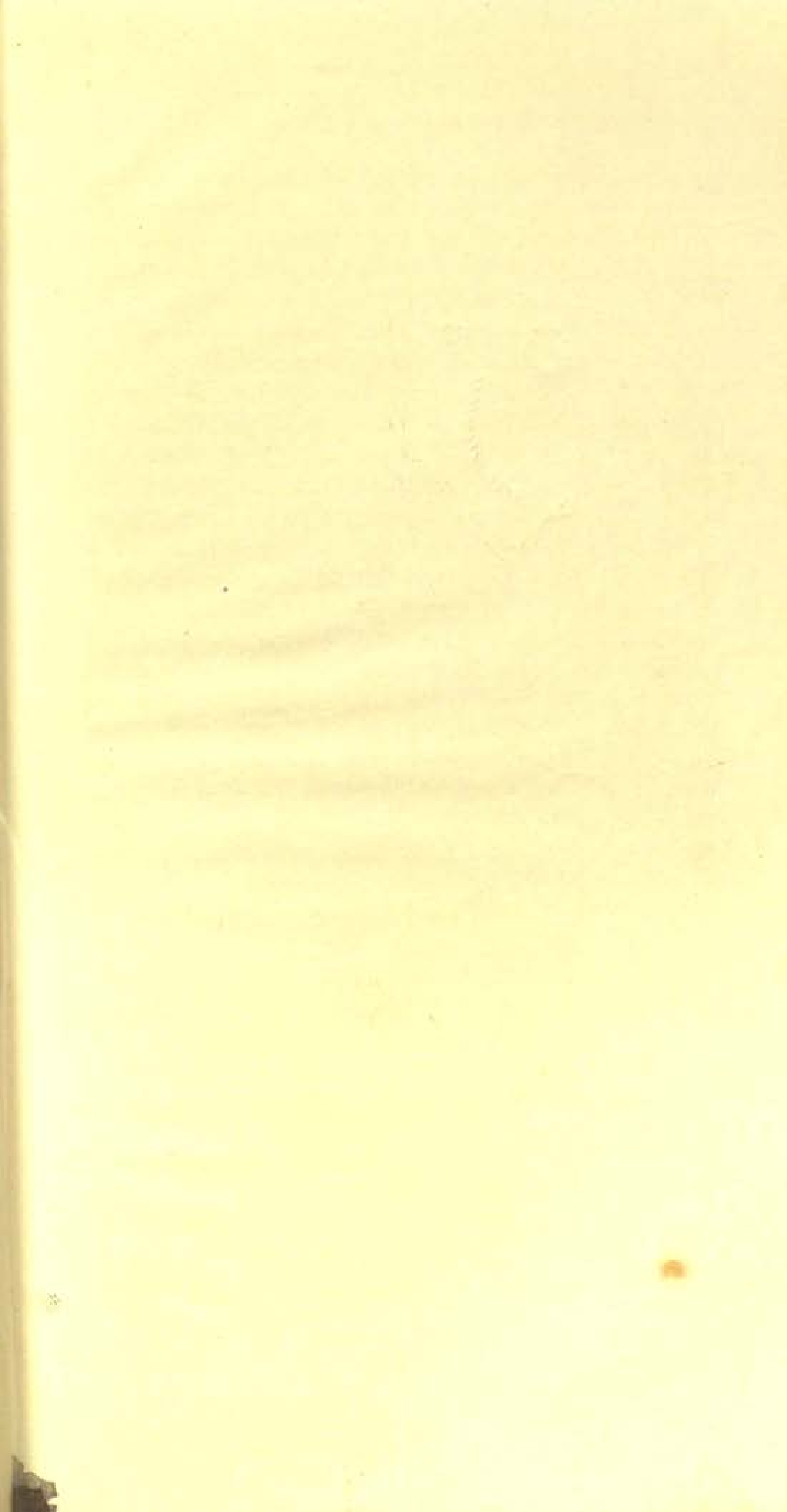
Beside the hill of Derryragh is a townland named Porturlan, the older name of which, in seventeenth century *Inquisitions*, is Portnerilinchy, which Mr. Dalton surmises to represent *Port na h-Urlaidhe h-Innsi*, i.e., the slaughter-bank of the island; the interpretation is a likely one, and the name seems to be a survival of the early sacrificial rites. In those days a great oakwood stretched from Porturlan to the summit of Derryragh, above which the figure of Cromm, facing the south, was visible over the great plain stretching south and east. As late as the seventeenth century the levels of the lakes were considerably higher. The *Down Survey Map* (1654) has "Lough Finvoy," an extensive sheet of water which joined the Lakes of Ballymagauran and Garadise. This lake—the Loch Finnmaighe, or lake

\* *Revue Celtique*, vol. xvi, p. 35.

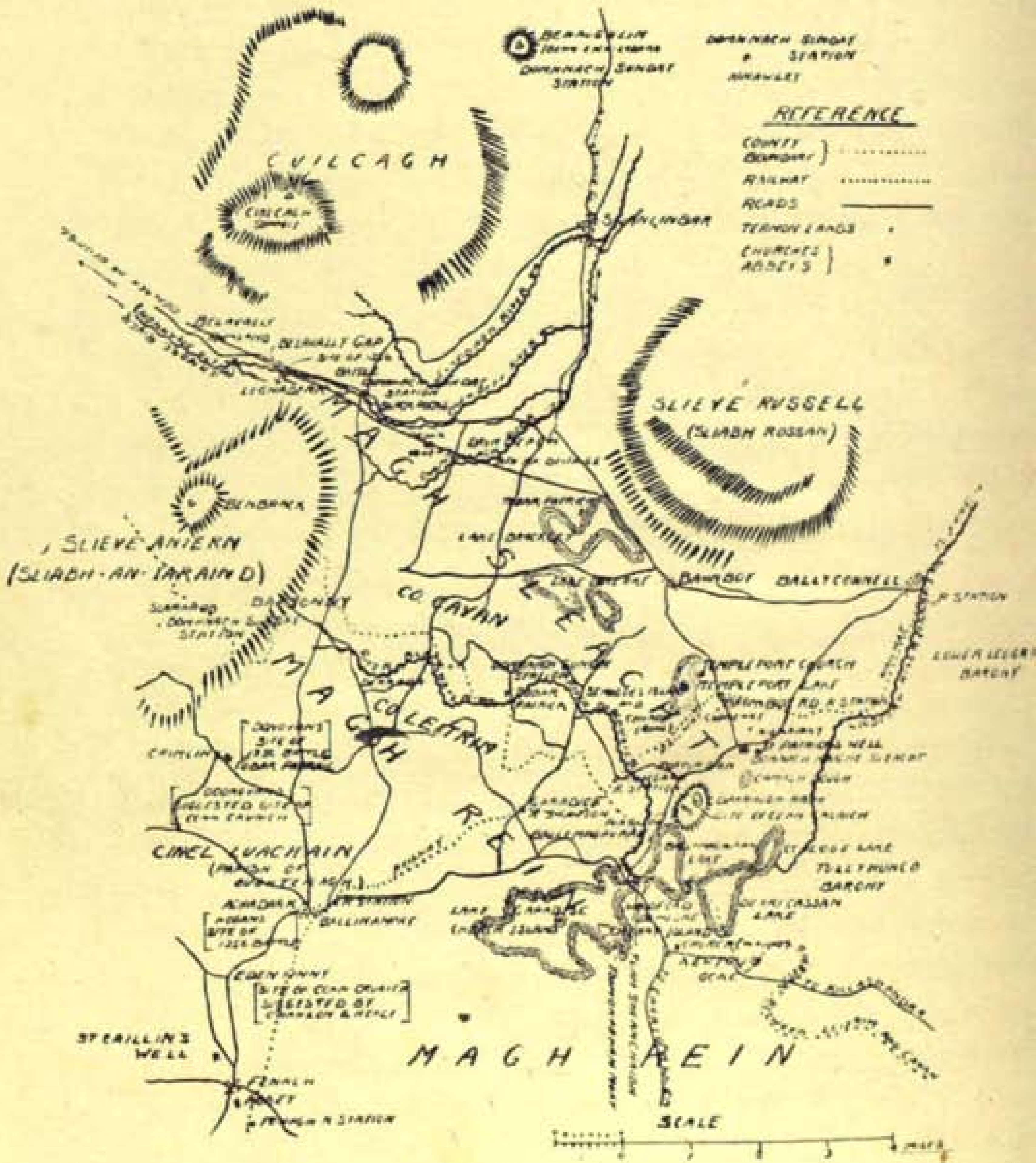


of the white plain, mentioned in the *Annals of Loch Cé*, *sub anno* 1418—has since disappeared, owing to drainage operations, and the lakes of Ballymagauran and Garadise are now about half a mile apart and joined by a canal. The *Down Survey* marks "Garteoise"—Garadise—which then extended farther towards the south-east than now. Evidently there were two Guthard lakes—Guthard-*dheas*, or south Guthard, and Guthard-*thuaidh*, or north Guthard—the junction of which was near the present Moat of Toomonaghan, and over this narrow neck lay the route from Magh Rein to Magh Sleacht. The present lakes of Ballymagauran (the older name of which was Loch Dromkirk), Coologe and Derrycassan, represent, partly, the ancient Guthard-*thuaidh*, or North Guthard. South and west of Toomonaghan stretched Guthard-*dheas*, or South Guthard, and the present Woodford Canal cuts through the original bed of this lake. The lowering of the water levels has altered very considerably the topography of the district, and it is important to remember that at the time of St. Patrick, and until a few centuries ago, the small lakes which are now visible to the south and east of Derryragh formed one continuous sheet of water—"the water named Guthard."

The title Magh Sleacht must have been originally applied to the plain in the immediate neighbourhood of Cromm's shrine, but afterwards the name came to be applied to a much larger area. The boundaries of Magh Sleacht, as it existed in St. Patrick's time, have been clearly established. To the north the plain extended to the mountain of Cuilcagh, while on the east the boundary was marked by Sliabh Ruise (Slieve Russell), and for part of the way stretched along the River Graine, now the Woodford River. Its western boundary was formed by Sliabh-an-Iaraind (Slieve Aneirn)—that is, by the chain of mountains







MAP SHOWING THE TERRITORIES OF MAGH SLEACHT AND MAGH REIN.

extending from Ballymagauran to Dowra, and to which entire chain the name Sliabh-an-Iaraind has always been applied in Breiffne. On the modern maps the name is reserved for one peak of this chain; but this limited application is of modern adoption and has no local warrant.

The boundary line of Magh Sleacht on the south was the River Graine, which separates Tullyhaw from Tullyhunco and Lower Loughtee. On its western boundary, running south-east from the slopes of Sliabh-an-Iaraind, Magh Sleacht is coterminous with Magh Rein. The boundary separating the Baronies of Tullyhaw and Carrigallen, in Cavan and Leitrim respectively, is identical with the boundary which, in ancient times, separated Magh Sleacht from Magh Rein. Magh Sleacht lay on the Cavan side of this boundary: Magh Rein was on the Leitrim side.

The various accounts of the famous Battle of Magh Sleacht, A.D. 1256, illustrate in many particulars the boundaries and extent of the territory, especially on the north and north-west. The search for the site of this battle has led many investigators astray. O'Donovan would place it somewhere between the town of Ballinamore and the extremity of Sliabh-an-Iaraind, that is, in County Leitrim and outside the boundaries of Magh Sleacht.\* Dr. Healy, relying on this identification, was led to assume that "a great part of the parish of Oughteragh, north of Ballinamore," in County Leitrim, was in Magh Sleacht,† and on the strength of this was induced to look for the site of Cromm's shrine in Magh Rein, a distinct territory. When writing his notes to the *Four Masters* O'Donovan was obviously unacquainted with the more explicit account of the Battle of Magh Sleacht given in the *Annals of Loch Cé*. In these latter *Annals* it

\* *Annals of the Four Masters*, sub anno 1256—notes.

† *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 183.



is stated very clearly that the battle took place "on the brink of Ath-derg, at Alt-na-helti, over Bealach-na-beithighe." In another passage the same *Annals* are even more definite: "between Ath na Beithige and Bel in Bhealaigh." According to the *Annals of Ulster* the battle was fought "on bealach na beithige, at the head of Sliabh-an-Iarand." These entries demonstrate that the site of the battle is beside the well-known Gap of Glan, the gorge separating Cuilcagh from Sliabh-an-Iaraind.

With the political or racial aspects of the Battle of Magh Sleacht I am not here concerned; but the place names mentioned in connection with it provide confirmatory evidence of the boundaries of the territory. "Bealach-na-beithige" was an old O'Ruairc highway passing through the Gap of Glan; it is now known as "Pedheravore's Road"—*peadair a bótair*—from one Peter (his surname does not seem to be remembered locally, but it is most likely that he belonged to the Mac Gauran family), who kept an inn here, probably in the seventeenth century. "Ath na Beithige" is now Drumbeagh; "Bel in Bhealaigh" still retains its ancient name—Bellavally, i.e., *beut a bealaig*, or the mouth of the pass, which is the entrance to the famous Gap of Glan, the home of innumerable legends and traditions. "Ath-derg," where the battle actually took place, is now the townland of Legnaderk—*lug n-ata Oeirg*, i.e., the hollow of the red ford. The fighting took place, therefore, on the Magh Sleacht side of Bellavally Gap.

Bellavally Gap, or Glan Gap as it is usually called, separates Cuilcagh from Sliabh-an-Iaraind. The sides are rocky and precipitous, and O'Donovan declared that the scenery of the district was the wildest and grandest he had ever seen. The rugged beauty of these wild mountain slopes, where in the Penal days the hardy mountaineers held many an intruder at

bay, cannot fail to evince the admiration of the visitor or tourist.

The origin and identity of Cromm, the dreaded deity of the "Plain of Prostrations," has been the subject of much theory and speculation, and may now be briefly considered. Regarding the second part of the name we may take it that Cromm *Cruaich* signifies Cromm of the *Rick*. In the *Tripartite Life* the idol is called *Cenn Cruaich*, i.e., the Head of the *Rick*. That Cromm was worshipped elsewhere in Ireland there is ample evidence, but Magh Sleacht was his principal shrine, at which the High King came from Tara to worship. From his commanding position on the hill of Derryragh the idol faced the south, that is, towards Tara, the seat of government.

In some parts of the country the deity was known as *Cromm Dubh*, i.e., Black Cromm. He was the chief god of the pre-Christian Irish, and from the earliest times until the advent of Christianity he occupied a pre-eminent position among Celtic deities. It is certain that although there were many minor deities, as there were various invasions, each bringing its own particular deity, yet Cromm was, as the *Dinnsenchus* informs us, "the god of every folk that colonised Ireland." Little wonder, then, that his own sacred realm of Magh Sleacht, flanked with towering peaks, the personification of power and majesty, should have been regarded as specially favoured.\*

To comprehend the probable significance of the name *Cromm* we must take a glimpse down the corridors of time, and survey the world of Celtic imagery as it existed over fifteen centuries ago, when our pagan forefathers supposed the gods to be revealed in the sun, moon and stars, and the anger of these

\* In his poem on the ancient Celts Thomas D'Arcy Magee alludes to the potential energies of their deity:

"Crom, their Day-God and their Thunderer,  
Made morning and eclipse."



gods occasionally manifested in thunder and lightning. Fire was one of the four "elements" of the ancients, and nowhere was its power more manifest than in the lightning flash. As keen observers of nature's giant forces they witnessed the thunderbolt being hurled, and almost simultaneously came the thunder crash rumbling and rolling through the mountains. To them the thunder was the angry voice of Cromm; for he was their *Thunder-god*.

In Celtic languages the figure of speech known as onomatopoeia is observed more frequently than in English and other tongues; the rich vocabulary of Gaelic is prolific of this figure of speech. The old Irish word for thunder is onomatopoeic, as we might expect: its form is *cruim*,\* a word which occurs in the dictionaries of Old Irish. To anyone who has witnessed a thunderstorm in a mountainous district the force of the onomatopoeia will be immediately obvious and is, I submit, a perfectly satisfactory explanation of the origin of the name of the deity whose voice, manifesting itself in rolling peals of thunder around Cuilcagh and Sliabh Ruisen, was the very personification of anger and destruction.

Cromm was, therefore, the thunder-god, the acknowledged master over earth and sky. He was no benevolent deity: sullen and vindictive, he was feared and worshipped simultaneously. From the Ard Righ himself, seated on Tara's royal throne, to his humblest subject, Cromm was a personage to be regarded with awe, and none dared to refuse him sacrifice. As

\* I have adopted the form "Cromm," rather than the usual "Crom," as the former represents more substantially the onomatopoeia which, in my opinion, is the genesis of the name. Those who have experienced a thunderstorm in a mountainous region, say in Alpine countries, will be convinced of the force of the argument. Among the Gaelic speaking people of Tullyhaw, where the word *cruim* is long since obsolete, I have heard this onomatopoeic form used to imitate the sound of thunder, although the word *toinneac* in the spoken language is the general form. Vide Kuno Meyer, *Archiv für Celtische Lexicographie*, Band iii, Heft i, p. 535.

thunder-god, wielding absolute dominion over fire, his power was unbounded.\* To the ancient Celts he was what Zeus was to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans, Thor to the Teutons, and Taranis to the Gauls. It is significant that the Ard Righ, Laoghaire, while tacitly concurring with St. Patrick's actions at Magh Sleacht, should have lacked the courage to abandon the worship of Cromm and fearlessly to adopt Christianity. The psychology of King Laoghaire is a perplexing one, a curious problem, the mystery of which has never been revealed. He was a curious complex of Christianity and paganism. Tolerant of Christianity as an effective bulwark against the despotism of Cromm, he feared lest by any act he might incur the anger of that dreaded and vindictive deity. Fear rather than genuine respect for Cromm that compelled that vacillating monarch to continue in his attachment to the discredited and vanishing cults of paganism.

The destruction of the idol was a necessary preliminary to the successful establishment of Christianity in Ireland, and the ancient territory of Magh Sleacht must always be regarded as the scene of St. Patrick's crowning victory over the powers of darkness.

There is abundant evidence that Cromm's feast in pre-Christian times was celebrated on the first day of August, or *Lá Luġnara*, as it was called. This was the great religious festival of Celtic times, when

\* Although the leading facts are obvious yet it must always be remembered that it is impossible, in the present limited state of our knowledge, to attempt a systematic synthesis of the religious philosophy which constituted the basis of early Celtic religion. Intuition and imagination may find a place in the historian's equipment but it is manifestly unsafe to forsake the solid ground of historical truth for the realm of speculation. The stream should rise no higher than the level of its source. Many writers, influenced by works like Sir James G. Frazer's *Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, have advanced elaborate theories on very slender foundations, or based on false analogies. Christianity cannot be dismissed as merely a rehash of pagan synthesis



the people on the "Plain of Prostrations" gave thanks to Cromm for the crops then ripening. These great August carnivals were held in many places throughout Ireland, and probably in Britain also. Lug, the sun-god of the pagan Romans, was honoured throughout western Europe: the city of Lyons—the *Lugdunum* of the Romans—in the south of France, was one of his strongholds, and was named after him. The worship of Lug was brought to Ireland evidently through the influence of the various races moving westward from Central Europe, and in the course of ages the deities, Cromm and Lug, became merged into a single divinity. It is true that in Ireland Cromm was the older deity, but back in the dim mists of antiquity Cromm and Lug had a common origin in the "element" of fire. Lug has left his name in *luġnarā*, the month of August, and as we will see, his feast synchronises with that of Cromm.

St. Patrick, on his arrival, observed those great annual gatherings, which at that time appear to have been regarded as both religious and national. With consummate wisdom St. Patrick, after destroying for ever the figure and influence of Cromm, took full advantage of these gatherings for promulgating Christianity. The August celebrations still continued, not as pagan assemblies, but as Christian celebrations; in many districts they still survive, evidence of the tenacity with which tradition clings, despite the passage of fifteen centuries.

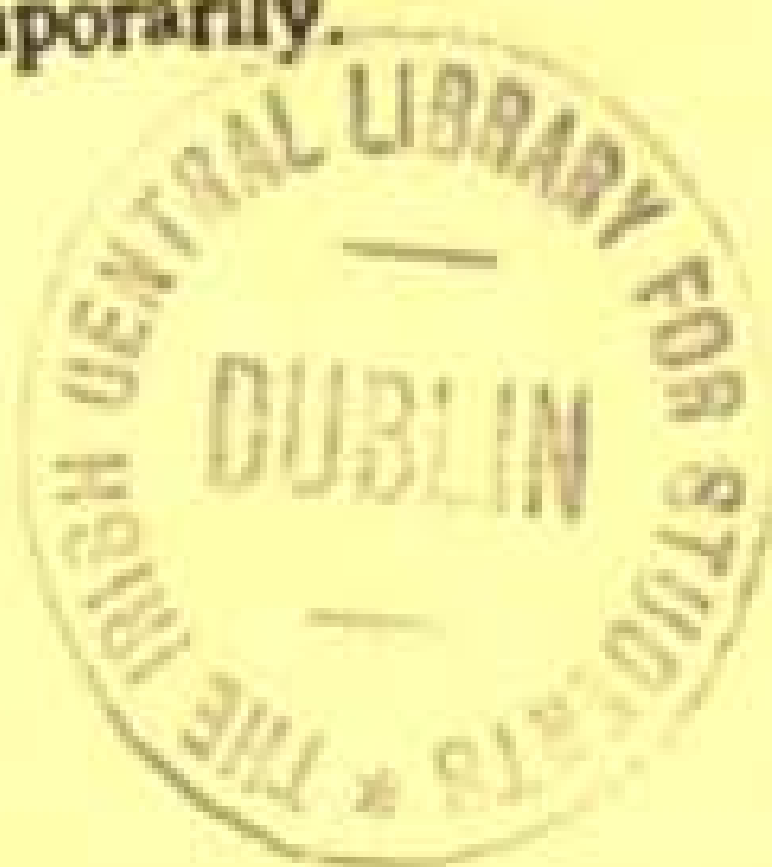
At Kilnavart, a short distance east of St. Mogue's church, is a well-known holy well—St. Patrick's—overshadowed by a hoary ash-tree. This is, certainly, the well mentioned in the *Tripartite Life* "wherein he baptised many." A vivid local tradition tells how St. Patrick moved over on his knees from the well to the church. History and tradition are here in

absolute agreement. A pattern,\* or station, was held at this well on the last Sunday in July; but the pattern seems to have been largely discontinued about the middle of the last century, although still practised by members of the older generation. Furthermore, according to custom, the pilgrims, in imitation of the National Apostle, moved on their knees from the holy well to the church—a custom which will recall to many the ascent of the *Scala Santa* at the Lateran Basilica in Rome.

It will be specially noted that the pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Well took place on the last Sunday in July rather than on St. Patrick's Day. In the townland of Ballyleenan, to the west of Kilnavart, is another holy well, also dedicated to St. Patrick, which is frequented by large crowds on the last Sunday in July. Among English speakers the Sunday is known as "Garland Sunday," but the Gaelic name is "Domhnach Sunday"—a pleonasm, as Domhnach (cf. Latin *dominicus*) is the equivalent of Sunday. In many places throughout Ireland the last Sunday in July is called "Domhnach Cromm Dubh"—Domhnach Cromm Dubh, i.e., Black Cromm's Sunday, a title immediately suggestive as to the origin of these gatherings. In many localities the first Sunday in August was observed as the festival of Black Cromm, or Garland Sunday. The latter title originated from the garlands of flowers strewn around the meeting-place—evidently the survival of some pagan custom.

Although these celebrations on Domhnach Cromm Dubh—on the last Sunday in July or on the first Sunday in August, depending on the custom obtaining

\* The pattern—*an pátrún*—was the public celebration of the feast of the patron of the Holy Well. In many cases, owing to the operation of the Penal Laws, the pattern lost its religious significance and became principally a scene of festivity. The religious element having diminished, and abuses having crept in, the clergy in some cases were obliged to suppress the pattern, at least temporarily.





in the particular locality—are nearly always of a religious nature, in connection with holy wells, yet in a few cases such, for example, as the annual gathering at "Maguire's Chair,"\* a massive limestone rock beside the Gap of Glan, no religious observances are now attached; but it is obvious that the origin of this annual gathering is to be found in some religious ceremony long since discontinued.

At several places in Ireland where holy wells are dedicated to saints other than our National Apostle, the Domhnach Cromm Dubh assemblies are still maintained. Why the once dreaded Cromm should have obtained friendly recognition in Ireland in Christian times requires an explanation. The reason for this recognition under Christian auspices is well interpreted by Mr. Dalton (*op. cit.*):—

St. Patrick, with his legion of saints and angels, had invaded Crom Dubh's citadels at Magh Sleacht and elsewhere; that the aged deity Crom then forfeited his heathen existence; that the evil spirit of paganism—the lingering regard for idol-worship—

\* This remarkable natural formation, also known as the "Black Rocks"—in comparison with the white water-rolled limestone protruding through the layers of peat on the rugged slopes of Cuilcagh—is in the townland of Áltachullion, alongside the road—Pedheravore's—leading from Bawnboy to Glangevlin, and beside the junction of the Swanlinbar road. Rising precipitately above a deep gorge, through which, "intense and rapid," flows a mountain torrent, and commanding an extensive view over the plains of South and East Breiffne, its situation is singularly picturesque. Close by, in the angle formed by the Swanlinbar road, is shown the site of the once famous inn of Pedheravore's of which, however, not a vestige now remains although it survived until the early years of the 19th century. Wild nature has here triumphed over the works of man, and the heather once more grows around this quondam scene of rout and revel.

The name "Maguire's Chair" is a local one, and this particular family of Maguire appear to have been the owners of the inn about the close of the 18th century. The title is responsible for Coote's error, in his *Statistical Survey of County Cavan*, p. 25, where he states that the Maguires, Chieftains of Fermanagh, were crowned on the summit of Cuilcagh. The annual celebration at "Maguire's Chair," judging by the large attendance in the summer of 1933, is not waning in popularity. Regarding the Battle of Magh Sleacht which, as already shown, was fought in this vicinity no local tradition appears to have survived.

still struggled hard to resist destruction; that the same spirit was quickly maimed, and Crom Dubh's instrumental influence rescued from its grasp, by the new-risen church of Patrick's founding. Thenceforth the saints had possession of Crom's soul; and his quondam friends were doomed to perpetual banishment.

The demons having been routed, Crom became thereafter the friend, the associate, and the helper of those saints who had rescued his soul from its appointed doom. In the beautiful figure which thus accounts for the origin of the name Domhnach Crom Dubh, we see exhibited the *raison d'être* of the same Domhnach institution, and obtain a graphic illustration of the mode in which Ireland's ecclesiastical mind reacted on its *damnosa haereditas* of paganism during the era of its endeavour to organise our early Church.

Long after the evil spirit had been exorcised the better qualities of Cromm were remembered, and that the memory of his good works should have earned for him some recognition under the Christian dispensation may be accepted as evidence that he was not regarded as a wholly malignant deity. The common people were slow to abandon the belief that Cromm was, perhaps, responsible for the abundant wheat crops and that on him depended the success or failure of these grain crops. It would be unreasonable to expect that even the introduction of Christianity should have, immediately and effectively, caused to vanish all the traditions of such a once potent deity from the imaginative Celtic mind.

The first day of August, *la lughnasa*, was, of course, Cromm's great festival in pagan times. With the advent of Christianity, and Sunday as the Lord's Day, these celebrations underwent, as was inevitable, a fundamental change. The celebrations, having now assumed an entirely religious aspect, were transferred



from the first day of August to the Sunday nearest the original date, that is, to the Sunday before or to the following Sunday, according to local custom.

Domhnach Sunday stations formerly existed in many parts of Breiffne, but only in Magh Sleacht is the old custom of visitation on Domhnach Cromm Dubh still perpetuated, at least under the old name. The history of well-worship in Ireland brings us back to pagan times, when wells were actually objects of worship. Tirechan relates how St. Patrick on one occasion found the druids worshipping at a fountain and offering sacrifices to it. Water was one of the four "elements" of the ancients, the others being earth, air, and fire. St. Patrick having blessed these wells, and many of the early churches in after years being established in their neighbourhoods, the wells became intimately associated with Christian practices, and this veneration has continued down to the present time. In many parts of Ireland are wells called *Tobar Domnaigh*, i.e., the Well of Sunday, the origin and meaning of which in many places is no longer remembered. In Breiffne, both east and west, are wells called by that title, but without any specific tradition attaching to them beyond the fact that in early times they were centres of Sunday devotions. In these cases it is most probable that they are the last vanishing traces of the Domhnach Sunday stations.

The exact period which St. Patrick spent in Magh Sleacht is not mentioned in the record of Tirechan, but it is quite clear, from local evidences, that he made a circuit of the place; the large number of holy wells dedicated to him is positive evidence of his visits to the stations among the mountains where once the worship of Cromm reigned supreme. It is a singular fact, which cannot be explained by mere coincidence, that these holy wells dedicated to St. Patrick should be centres of devotion, not on St. Patrick's Day, but

on the day that was once the festival of Cromm. The transformation from paganism to Christianity, the overwhelming victory of St. Patrick's mission, is nowhere more manifest than among the mountains of Magh Sleacht.

In the Province of Leinster Domhnach Sunday patterns are very rare, but two interesting survivals may be mentioned here. In the parish of Castlekieran, in County Meath, a few miles from the Breiffne border, is a well known holy well dedicated to St. Ciaran the Pious, the patron of the parish.\* An annual pilgrimage to St. Ciaran's Well on the first Sunday in August is attended by immense crowds from Meath and Cavan. In this picturesque spot, forming a natural amphitheatre, the sparkling waters of St. Ciaran's Well spring from the limestone rock, and from time immemorial the people have come here on "the first Sunday of Harvest" to perform stations. In recent years a neatly constructed oratory has been erected beside the well, and the passage of years has increased the popularity of the annual celebrations.

St. Ciaran died A.D. 770, and his festival is celebrated on June 14th. He was a famous man, descended from one of the ruling princes of Meath, founded the monastery of Bealach-Dun, now Castlekieran, circa 750, and was the author of a *Life of St. Patrick*. His name is still venerated, and visits are made to his holy well on his festival; but the grand celebrations in his honour take place on the first Sunday in August. In this case, however, the Sunday does not seem to be locally remembered by any special name; but that it is a survival of a pre-Christian ceremonial there can be no doubt—another of the many Domhnach Cromm Dubh celebra-

\* The parish is the union of Castlekieran, Loughan and Dulane. In the modern *Directories* it is sometimes called Carnaross, the name of the townland which contains the present parish church of the union.



tions. Before the time of St. Ciaran the district of Bealach-Dun (i.e., the pass, or way, of the raths or forts) on the bank of the River Blackwater, formed part of the great plain of Tailten. At Tailten was the famous shrine of Lug, beside which the Ulster kings were buried.\* In the days of St. Ciaran the August hostings at Bealach-Dun had already largely ceased to retain their pagan significance, and under his guidance the assembly would have become definitely Christian. He substituted Christian ceremonies for pagan, or semi-pagan, rites. The August festival, placed under the patronage of St. Ciaran, eclipsed in the course of time the festival of St. Ciaran himself.

Another survival of the August celebrations is connected with St. Patrick's well, in the townland of Shancor, in the parish of Moybolge and Kilmainhamwood, which is in County Meath and near the east extremity of Kilmore Diocese. In former times this holy well was visited by large numbers of pilgrims on the first Sunday of August.

The worship of Cromm was always associated with the mountains, and the survivals of Domhnach Cromm Dubh are most numerous among the mountains in the region between Loch Allen and Loch Erne. It was among the mountain peaks that the reverberations of his awe-inspiring voice were better calculated to inspire terror. The August celebrations in County Meath, at St. Ciaran's Well † and St. Patrick's Well, are in this respect somewhat unusual, but prove how widespread were the observances in pagan times.

\* The pagan cemetery of Tailten was on Sliabh na Caillighe, a prominent hill, or series of hills, near Oldcastle, in the north of County Meath. See *Senchas na Releg* in Petrie's *Round Towers*, p. 101.

† An account of St. Ciaran's Well and ruined church, with a description of the Termon Crosses, will be found in Sir William R. Wilde's *Beantias of the Boyne and Blackwater* (Second Edition), pp. 138-142. The saint's name is sometimes given as "Kieran," a modern and incorrect form.

In connection with the annual celebration at St. Ciaran's Well it is a noteworthy feature that great numbers of people come from the north and west, that is, from County Cavan. The popularity of this annual pilgrimage with the people of Breiffne may be accepted, in my opinion, as an indication of the tenacity with which the Domhnach Cromm Dubh tradition has persisted on the borderlands of Breiffne. The midnight vigil, which is a feature of the pilgrimage, may be a link with the Penal times, when public worship was proscribed.

Fifteen hundred years have rolled by since St. Patrick's great victory was won over paganism in its stronghold of Magh Sleacht. The magnitude of that victory is evidenced by the complete Christianising of the August festivals, a transformation which hardly finds a parallel in history. These annual celebrations, religious and national, have survived the persecutions and proscriptions of centuries, and in our own time we see them being developed on a still grander scale :

The holy wells—the living wells—the cool, the fresh  
the pure—

A thousand ages rolled away, and still these founts  
endure.\*

\* John De Jean Frazer, *The Holy Wells of Ireland*.



## CHAPTER IV

## ST. PATRICK IN EAST BREIFFNE

## CAILLEACH GEARAGAIN OF MAGH BOLG

IN the early *Lives of St. Patrick*, compiled by Muirchu and Tirechan, we are given accounts of his missionary labours and ecclesiastical foundations in the territory of Bregia, or Magh Breg,\* a tract of country which included the greater part of the present County Meath, together with portions of Louth, Cavan and Dublin. At an early period, according to an ancient tract copied by Keating, it extended to Drumlane in County Cavan.† Within this expansive territory were many tribes to whom St. Patrick preached, and in the *Tripartite Life* we have the names of many of the churches founded by him; but as most of these names are now obsolete the task of their location and identification is one of considerable difficulty. Recent researches have revealed that the *Tripartite Life*, one of the authoritative sources of Patrician history, was originally drafted by Tirechan, who did not follow chronological order in detailing the topography of St. Patrick's itinerary.‡ Dr. Whitley Stokes, in his introduction to the Rolls edition of the *Tripartite*

\* The name survives as *Sliabh Breagh*, a range of hills extending northwards from Slane, County Meath, through the baronies of Ardee and Ferrard, in south County Louth and terminating at Clogher Head. The highest point of the range, still known as *Sliabh Breagh*, is 753 feet in height and is in County Meath, close to the Louth border.

† *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, pp. 1 to 9.

‡ MacNeill, "Origin of the *Tripartite Life* of St. Patrick"—*Journal Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, June, 1929.

*Life*, concludes that it was compiled in the eleventh century; but later research has shown conclusively that it belongs to a much earlier period.\* From certain passages in the *Tripartite Life* it can be shown that St. Patrick extended his missionary labours into the eastern part of Kilmore Diocese; furthermore, tradition furnishes strong corroboration of the recorded facts, and supplies many details which are not recorded by Tirechan.

The early chroniclers have not recorded in detail every journey undertaken by St. Patrick, and it is now quite impossible, although often attempted by modern historians, to follow with certainty his footsteps through every district which he visited. For instance, we are told that he spent seven years in Connacht; yet we have only very meagre records of his journeys through that province. Again, we have no record in Tirechan or elsewhere of his journey to Loch Derg in Tir Conaill, yet the fact of his sojourn in that island sanctuary has never been doubted, and the famous pilgrimage dates back to the earliest centuries of Christianity in Ireland.†

In Tirechan's record it is stated that after preaching and founding many churches in the present Diocese of Clogher, St. Patrick entered the territory of Bregia and

went to Rath Cúle, and blessed Fir Cúle, that is Húi Segain, saying:

A blessing on Fir Cúle  
I am pleased though . . .  
On Fir Ross without . . .  
From Lerga to Léire.‡

\* *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, vol. xvi.

† A magnificent new church dedicated to St. Patrick has recently been erected on Station Island. It was consecrated in the presence of many distinguished prelates on May 17, 1931, and there was conferred on it the title and dignity of a Minor Basilica.

‡ *Tripartite Life*, Rolls Edition, p. 185.



His journey from Mugdoirn, now Cremorne, to Rath Cúle lay through Enach Conglais, which has been identified as Killanny, three miles west of the town of Louth. The territory of the Fir Roiss was chiefly in South Monaghan, extending from Castleblaney to Ardee, and including a portion of County Louth. The name is retained in Carrickmacross. Lann-leire was the older name of Dunleer, County Louth. The tribe of the Fir Roiss is said to have extended its territory into north-east Meath, where the village of Carnaross is most likely another survival of this ancient tribal name.

The identification of Rath Cúle, the residence of the chieftains who ruled over the Fir Cúle, does not appear to present much difficulty. After a careful study of the local topography, made on the spot, I have no hesitation in equating it with the present townland of Coole, beside the village of Kilmainhamwood in the parish of Moybolge. The first part of the name, Rath Cúle, is retained in the townland of Rathe, adjoining Coole. The boundary line separating the Dioceses of Kilmore and Meath passes between these townlands, leaving Rathe in Meath. It is both interesting and significant that these townlands should so completely preserve the ancient territorial title. Canon O'Hanlon, relying on similarity of name, has already suggested that Coole is identical with the place mentioned in the *Tripartite Life*; but he was unaware of the strong confirmatory evidence afforded by local topography and tradition.

For many centuries before St. Patrick's time this district was inhabited by a tribe called the *Ui Segain*, often mentioned in early manuscripts. Some place names of Meath, e.g., Syddan, near the Louth border and, perhaps, Sedenrath, near Ceanannus, are believed to be derived from this tribal name. Early raths are very numerous in the district of Kilmainham-

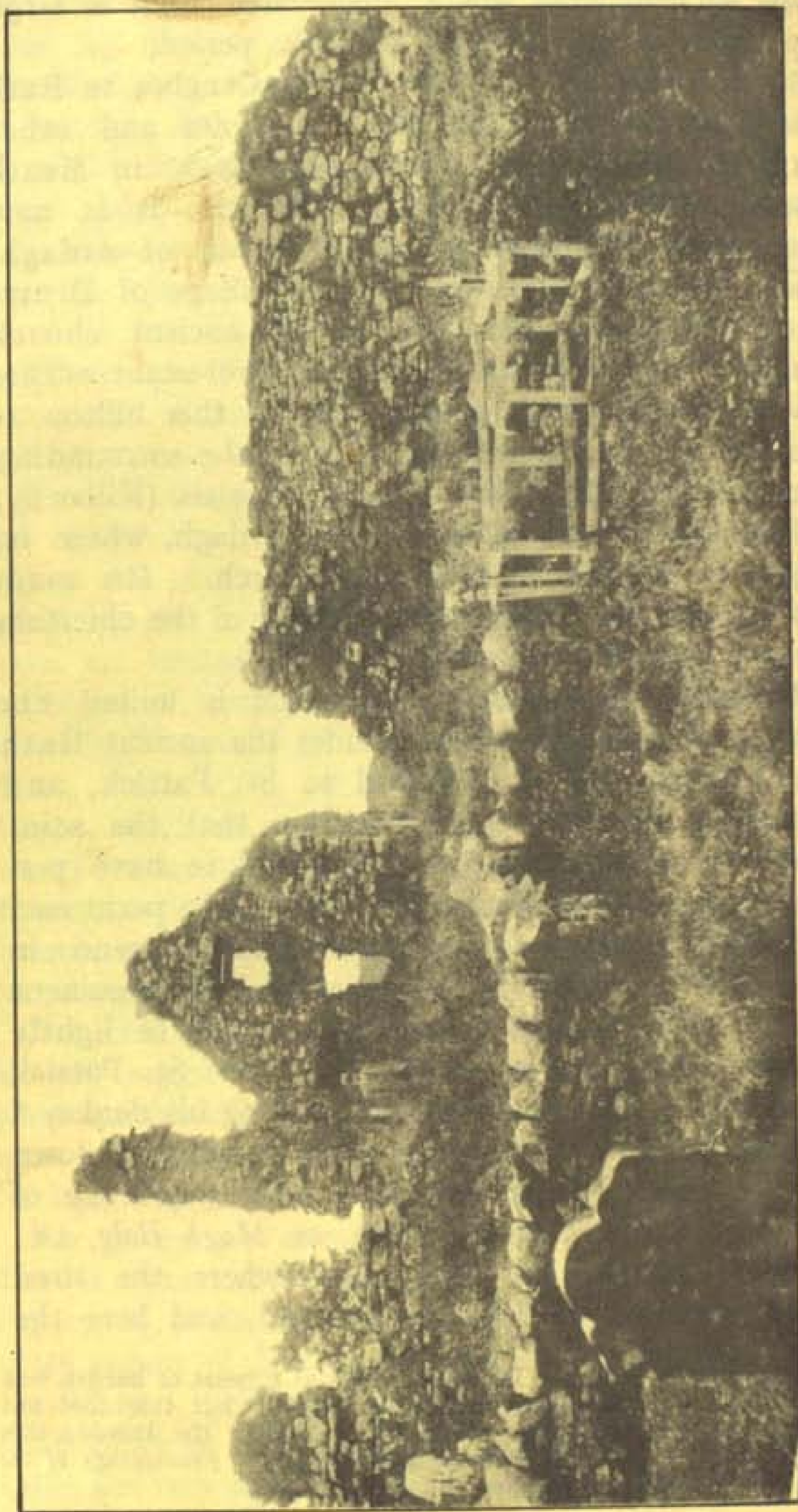
wood showing that there must have been a large population group there at an early period.

St. Patrick's journey from Enach Conglais to Rath Cúle may be traced in the placenames and other features. The ancient parish of Ardagh, in Meath Diocese, was dedicated to St. Patrick; it is now united with Drumcondra. On the hill of Ardagh, about five miles north-west of the village of Drumcondra, is shown the site of an ancient church founded by St. Patrick himself; a Protestant edifice now usurps the ancient site. From this hilltop is obtained a truly magnificent view of the surrounding country. The route from Enach Conglais (Killanny) to Rath Cúle would have been by Ardagh, where he chose this splendid site for a church. His main objective was, obviously, the residence of the chieftain of the Ui Segain at Rath Cúle.

The parish of Moybolge, to which is united the parish of Kilmainhamwood, includes the ancient Rath Cúle. The parish is dedicated to St. Patrick, and there is a persistent local tradition that the saint visited the place, where he is believed to have performed a miracle not less wonderful than he performed at Magh Sleacht. The extraordinary legend in connection with his visit occupies such a prominent place in Breiffne tradition that it cannot be lightly ignored. The story is briefly as follows: St. Patrick set out on his journey, *via* Ardee, driving his donkey \* before him, and wherever the animal would lie down there he would erect a church. After a journey of some days he reached Moybolge, or *Magh Bolg*, i.e., the Plain of the Fir Bolg race, where the tired animal stretched itself on the ground, and here the

\* According to Professor Mahaffy the ass as a beast of burden was not introduced into Ireland until about 1780; but this does not invalidate the legend. See J. P. Mahaffy, "On the Introduction of the Ass as a Beast of Burden into Ireland"—*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Dublin, vol. xxxiii, 1917.





*Photo, 1934*

**ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH, MOYBOLGE**

**[Coleman, Ballyboro]**

church was erected. At Moybolge he is said to have performed many miracles, including the following, which forms the extraordinary climax to the legend.

One Sunday morning the people were assembling to hear Mass in the church and to listen to a sermon from St. Patrick himself. A woman, young and beautiful, named *ḡearḡán*, according to the tradition—it is locally pronounced "Gawraga"—was making her way along the roadway close to the church. She was fasting, intent upon receiving the Blessed Eucharist. Coming upon a horseman on the roadway she asked him to hand her some of the blackberries—*rínéapa*—which were growing on the top of the fence. He complied with her request, and on receiving the blackberries she, disregarding her intentions, ate them. Instantly she was transformed into a ferocious black swine, which swallowed both man and horse. Fuming and foaming, she dashed among the people, devouring them one by one as they crossed her path. The saint, who was in the vicinity, hearing the tumult and learning of its cause, quickly made his way to the spot. Going down on one knee, he hurled his holy water brush in her direction, whereupon she was blown into four parts, the quarters all going in different directions—one to Lenanavragh Lake, one up in the air, and the other two to respective places in and alongside the road leading to Tievurcher, where the present Catholic church is situated. But the story has it that prior to her destruction she pronounced a sort of anathema on the district, in which it was stipulated, in terms of wrath, that when ninety-nine generations of the redhaired race of *ḡearḡán* would cross the stream she would rise again in all her pristine fury and spread death, destruction and terror throughout the land!

Such in brief is the tradition of the *Cailleach*



*Gearagain*—*Cailleach Gearagain*—as this female ogre is named. So persistent was this tradition that up to about the middle of the last century funerals or processions would avoid crossing this particular spot by making a circuit through the fields. A rooted aversion to crossing it at all existed in the minds of some people up to very recent times. In the townland of Cornaville, where part of her body is supposed to have fallen, is a dolmen, usually called a "Giant's Grave." The rock on which St. Patrick was supposed to have knelt when hurling his holy water brush at the monster was shown in the district until some years ago, when it was removed during road-making alterations. Popular belief held that the imprint of his knee was outlined on the stone.

Some miles from Moybolge, in the sacristy wall of Clannaphillip church—Killinkere parish—there is the sculptured head of a wrinkled old woman, which is claimed to represent the *Cailleach Gearagain*. Among the allegorical pictures which covered the walls of the famous "Painted Parlour" of Quilca, the home of Richard Brinsley Sheridan and his ancestors, in the parish of Mullagh, which existed in the days of Dean Swift, there was one which was supposed—incorrectly, however—to represent the female monster. The decorations had been executed by a London artist named Lewis, who worked for the Sheridan family. A visitor to Quilca, in 1852, refers to the legend as it was then related to him. According to his narrative the body of the "Garragh-Maw," as he writes it, was buried in the "Mound of Moybullagh" where, "like an over-fed Esquimaux," she reposes, "after the toil of her carnivorous achievements." \*

This rather apocryphal legend of the *Cailleach Gearagain* has retained all its weird significance from generation to generation around Moybolge. The

\* *Dublin University Magazine*, vol. xl.

legend, as I have briefly outlined it, is hardly free from anachronisms, but a critical examination would hardly come within the scope of the present investigation. It is quite certain that the narrative, handed down through many generations of *reanácaróe*, or storytellers, has undergone many changes, and that the details are hardly reliable. But the legend, wildly exaggerated and fanciful in detail though it certainly must be, cannot be dismissed as entirely devoid of foundation. Allowing for inevitable local variations and the embellishment of detail depending on the rhetorical skill of each particular *reanácaróe*, and viewing the legend against the background of Patrician history, the story appears in a new light and gathers an entirely new significance. A valuable item of unwritten history appears as the background of the legend.

The basis of the legend is that St. Patrick visited Moybolge, and although the *Tripartite Life* has no record of the visit—Moybolge is not mentioned in that work—yet his visit to Rath Cúle is definitely inserted. As will be shown later, Moybolge was included in the territory of Rath Cúle, and the omission of any mention of Moybolge is not so serious as otherwise might appear.

In his missionary travels throughout the country St. Patrick had frequently to destroy or exorcise idols or pagan divinities. The destruction of Cromm Cruaich was not an isolated instance. Minor divinities lurked in every part of the country, and each particular tribe worshipped its own choice of idol. There are reasons for believing that St. Patrick exorcised the "two air demons"—*Dá eciar*—from which Dromahaire takes its name. The legend of the Cailleach Gearagain furnishes very convincing evidence that Moybolge was the scene of an exorcism of which history has preserved no record.



Shorn of its anachronisms and embellishments the legend is capable of only one interpretation: that the prominent hill of Moybolge, overlooking the plains of East Breiffne, was, in pre-Patrician times, the site of a pagan ceremonial station, where a pagan divinity—a female—was worshipped.\* The tradition is positive that an exorcism was performed there; the details may not be clearly remembered, but the central fact is established beyond doubt. Another important fact emerges from the legend: the personage is remembered as a *Cailleach*—*Cailleac*, i.e., an old woman—suggesting immediately a *female* divinity. Hence we may accept the story as substantially true. As in Magh Sleacht, St. Patrick usually founded a church beside the spot where he destroyed an idol; Moybolge was no exception, and the ruins of St. Patrick's church crown the famous hill.

It was inevitable that the legend should have undergone many minor variations, but, as I have shown, the principal facts are substantially preserved. The origin of the title *Cailleach Gearagain* is capable of a reasonable explanation. This female divinity was regarded as the special protectress of the Fir Bolg race inhabiting Magh Bolg. The pagan ancestors of the Clan Mac Garrigan, who ruled over the district, would have regarded this deity as their own special divinity. She would, in fact, be regarded as the eponymous ancestor of the tribe to which the territory belonged, and even when destroyed by St. Patrick the tradition persisted, so that in the course of centuries her name likewise became inseparable from that of the Clan Mac Garrigan. This accounts for the form in which the name is remembered, *Cailleach Gearagain*, i.e., the female divinity regarded as the eponymous ancestor of the Clan Mac Garrigan, and

\* I have compiled a history of Moybolge parish for the *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. ii, No. 2—1924.

which, fortunately, preserves the original name of the divinity. That the *Cailleach* was a malignant and vindictive deity we may infer from the dread manner of her departure from the realm of human affairs and the last terrible anathema which she pronounced. Even after her passing her memory remained in popular dread, and the legend reflects the absolute abjuration of paganism which followed the introduction of Christianity. Her departing threat, that she would rise again and execute revenge, is an expression of the gloom and terror of the thralldom which she wielded for so many centuries over the Fir Bolg tribes.

In the case of Cromm Cruaich, which was a national idol, the historical evidence for its destruction is available; but the *Cailleach Gearagain* was, apparently, only of local importance and escaped the notices of the Patrician biographers. Luckily the vivid local tradition has preserved the salient facts.

The people of Moybolge, freed from the grim exactions of the monster and rejoicing at her destruction, became Christian, and gave the site for the church. The site is one of the most imposing in East Breiffne, and the view obtained from the hilltop is truly magnificent. The present ruins are of medieval style, but they occupy the site of St. Patrick's church.

The well-known family of mac Geargáin—Garrigan, or Gargan, as it is sometimes written—were from a very early period the owners of the territory around Moybolge. They were the Erenachs of the church during the Middle Ages, and continued as such until the confiscations in the early seventeenth century. The family gave many priests to Kilmore Diocese.\* Rev. John Garrigan, a great classical scholar, was

\* The late Right Rev. Philip J. Garrigan, D.D., Bishop of Sioux City, U.S.A., who died October 14, 1919, belonged to a branch of the family which had settled in Lurgan parish, where he was born.

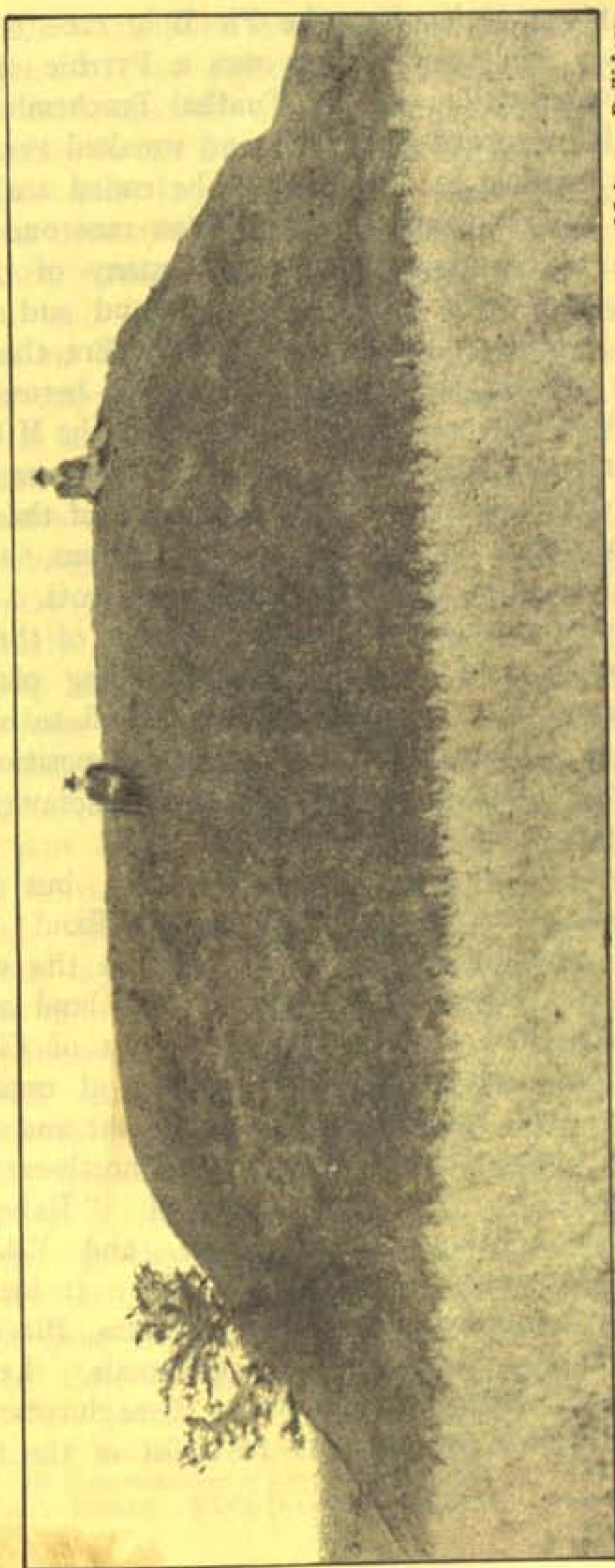


parish priest of Moybolge, and died about 1730. He taught Latin in the old ruined church, then serving both as school and church. The antiquity of the family in the district is fully established by the tradition. The Garrigans are still numerically strong in the barony of Clankee, and many, indeed, of the mystic "ninety-nine generations" of the legend have already crossed the famous stream on their last journey to the ancient graveyard of Moybolge without having disturbed the repose of their eponymous ancestor!

The moat of Moybolge, which is on a higher level than the site of the church, occupies a commanding position on the summit, and is a remarkable object in the landscape. This conspicuous moat is a great mound of earth, flattened at the top and circular at the base. It is surrounded by a deep circular fosse, and, curiously enough, the moat is not placed at the centre of this circumvallation, but the base just touches the circumference on the western edge. A plan would show the fosse as the larger circle, with the moat as the smaller inscribed circle, both circles touching a common tangent on the west. I have identified this moat as the most probable site of the pagan divinity. A tradition which was remembered a century ago connected the idol with this moat; it was supposed to be her place of earthly imprisonment awaiting the execution of her anathema, but this may be interpreted as signifying that the moat was the site of the idol herself.

I take it that the moat is sepulchral, and elsewhere I have suggested that it is probably the tomb of Fiacha Finnfolaidh, King of Ireland, who was slain in the great battle of Magh Bolg, A.D. 56,\* that is, nearly four centuries before the coming of St. Patrick.

\* *Annals of the Four Masters*



[Coleman, Bailieboro]

THE MOAT OF MOYBOLGE

[Photo]



From this great conflict the Fir Bolg race emerged victorious, but their victory was a Pyrrhic one, for twenty years later, A.D. 76, Tuathal Teachtmhar, son of Fiacha, returned from exile and wreaked vengeance on the Fir Bolg race, whose rule he ended and made them a subject people. The Milesian race once more became the dominant people, and many of the Fir Bolg leaders were expelled from Ireland and settled in the Hebrides. Before the Christian Era there was a state of war, prolonged for centuries, between the Fir Bolg, which was the older race, and the Milesians, who came at a later period. These struggles are known as the Attacotic Wars. Later on many of the exiled Fir Bolg race joined the Roman legions, and in classical writings are known as the Attacoti.

The visitor who stands on the summit of the moat of Moybolge and surveys the surrounding plains of East Cavan and North Meath cannot fail to observe that such a prominent and commanding position was admirably adapted for the effective display of an awe-inspiring idol in pagan times.

Moybolge survives as a parish title, but is no longer the name of any particular townland. It is applied generally to the district around the church and moat. Srahan is the present townland around the church and moat. The 1609 map of Clankee barony has "Moybolge"—a townland of unusually extensive area, bounded on the south-east and south-west by County Meath, and on the north-east and north-west by the townlands of "Rakenan" (Rakeevan), "Lisnelly" (Lisnalea), and "Lissonallorke" (Lisanalsk), in County Cavan. It included the present townlands of Srahan, Carnans, Blackhills, Tullynaskeagh, Aghaclue, Greaghnamale, Leitrim, Greagharue, Relagh, Lurganbane, Greaghnadarragh, and probably a few others. In a list of the Cavan

townlands \* compiled for taxation purposes in the early part of the eighteenth century the following are the denominations of the divisions of the "Parish of Mybollog in the Barony of Clonkee":—"Greaghan, Durragh, and Leytrim; Saram and Ballaghboy." The two denominations first mentioned represent one townland, Greaghnadarragh; Saram is a form of Srahan, and Ballaghboy—which is now obsolete—appears to have represented a portion of the townland of Coppenagh: an adjoining townland in County Meath is Lisnaboy.

In the *Fiants* of Elizabeth, *sub anno* 1586, we find the names of many members of the Clan Mac Garrigan of Moybolge, and of "Little Releghe" (Relagh Beg). Evidently the district was then thickly inhabited. The early forms of the name do not differ substantially from that of the present time: *Moybolge* is the form in Archbishop Fleming's *Register*, *sub anno* 1409, and in the several *Inquisitions* and Plantation records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

No part of the district of Moybolge can strictly be called a plain: church and moat are on elevated ground. But at a very early period the name was certainly applied to the plain which stretches east of the hill towards Kilmainhamwood. A passage in the *Dinnsenchus*, a work to which I have already referred, states that the title Magh Bolgaide was applied to Magh Breagh before the name Brega, or Bregia, was established. This indicates the great antiquity of the name. The hill of Moybolge was situated at the north-western extremity of the extensive territory of Magh Bolg, but the eastern limit is not quite free from ambiguity. Certain it is that at the time of St. Patrick the territory of Magh

\* *A List of the Several Baronies and Parishes in the County of Cavan with all the Denominations of Land in each Parish, etc.* Cavan: Printed by Henry Ireland. MDCCIXO (most probably 1709).



Bolg was not greater in extent than the present parish. The site of the battle of Magh Bolg is pointed out by tradition in the plain which lies between the old church and the present church of Tievurcher. The townland of Carnans—Carn, i.e., a monumental mound—received its name from the burial mounds erected over those who fell in the battle.

An entry in the *Martyrology of Donegal* refers to Bishop Siric of "Magh Bolg in Fir Cul in Bregia." In the *Feilire of O'Gorman* and all the Irish *Calendars* the festival of Bishop Siric of Magh Bolg in Feara Cul Bregia is commemorated on November 26th. It is now impossible to ascertain the period at which Bishop Siric lived, but O'Donovan's investigations have made it quite clear that the ancient Feara Cul Bregia was, approximately, coextensive with the present barony of Kells, in North Meath.\* The Meath portion of Moybolge parish is in the same barony, but in very early times Feara Cul Bregia must have included portion of the present County Cavan. The somewhat arbitrary division into counties has introduced much confusion and complexity into inquiries concerning early topography. One fact, however, is quite clear: Magh Bolg was a comparatively small territory, which was included in the larger area called Feara Cul, belonging to Bregia. Feara Cul and Rath Cúle are synonymous terms: *Feara*, or *Fir*, was a prefix meaning men, i.e., inhabitants, of a tribal district, and Rath Cúle was the chief residence, the residence of the chieftain, of the tribe of Cúle, or Cul, a name which may have had its etymology in some early Fir Bolg race.

For the purpose of our present inquiry it is now clear that the territory of Rath Cúle, or Feara Cul, was coextensive with the present barony of Kells, and extended over portion of the barony of Clankee

\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*, Meath, p. 153.

in East Breiffne. Magh Bolg, at the time of St. Patrick, was a smaller sub-district, occupying the north-west of Rath Cúle. The entry in the *Tripartite Life* shows that St. Patrick visited Rath Cúle and blessed its people, that is, the Feara Cúle. The ancient title is substantially preserved in the townland names, Rathe and Coole, the original centre from which the once extensive territory was named. The name Rathe—Rat, a circular fort, or place of residence—proves that it was in early times the residence of the chieftain, or ruler, of the district.

A detailed examination of the topography of the district, interesting although it may be, is beyond the scope of this present inquiry, but in the townlands of Rathe and Coole may be seen traces of several early fortified circular raths, showing that in early times the district was thickly inhabited. The advance of a (supposedly) more modern, but unfortunately less cultured, civilisation has led to the demolition of many of these early earthen structures. Local tradition regarding St. Patrick's visit to the district is not so definite as in the case of Moybolge; the dearth of tradition is directly due to the barbarous clearances of the forties of the last century, when the sturdy and industrious peasantry, who were then the proprietors of these rich Meath lands, were evicted from their homes and forced to find a home in foreign lands.

The *Tripartite Life* has no record of the actual foundation of a church at Rath Cúle, but we may be quite certain that St. Patrick made provision in this respect. At Kilmainhamwood, adjoining Coole, a Commandery was established in the thirteenth century by the Preston family for the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. "Kylmaynan" was already a parish church in 1366, in which year it is mentioned in the *Register* of Primate Sweteman.



I take it that the parish church of Kylmaynan\* marked the site of this foundation. The site of this parish church is now occupied by the Protestant church of Kilmainhamwood, on a hill overlooking the village.

Elsewhere I have described the main facts concerning the history of this Commandery. The Order was originally founded as a religious Order of Hospitallers, for the care of pilgrims to the Holy Land. The provision of armed escorts was rendered necessary in the twelfth century, and a military branch of the Order was then established. The Order was introduced into Ireland at the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion, and was richly endowed with lands. Two Commanderies were established in County Meath, viz., Kilmainham-wood and Kilmainhambeg (the latter is beside the town of Kells), and the suffixes "wood" and "beg" became necessary in order to distinguish them.

With the coming of the Knights Hospitallers and the adoption of the newer name, Cill Maignenn, in the thirteenth century, the older Gaelic name of the locality, Rát Cúle, was gradually eclipsed, but managed to survive in the names of two townlands. But the Order did not prosper in Ireland. The lands belonging to the Order were farmed out to laymen, and many of the Commanderies or Preceptories became ruinous. Furthermore, the Hospitallers remained thoroughly anti-Irish through the centuries, and it is scarcely to be wondered that even tradition hardly remembers them. The Chapter Acts of the Order

\* Kilmainham, at Dublin, was the principal house of the Order in Ireland, and some of its dependent Commanderies adopted the same name. It took its title from St. Maighnenn, who lived in the seventh century and whose name is commemorated in the *Martyrologies* on December 18. The final letter of the name should be *n* rather than *m*, thus Cill Maignenn. All early forms are in agreement:—Cill Maignenn, Kylmaynan, Kilmenan, etc. See Father Edmund Hogan's *Onomasticon Góidelicum*, s.v. "Cell-Maignenn."

from 1326 to 1339 have recently been published, and exemplify the manner in which the Order performed its duties.\* The Hospitallers were in reality a portion of England's garrison in Ireland, and in 1360 Edward III regarded them as a useful instrument in repulsing the king's "Irish enemies." The Order was "so thoroughly English, not alone in speech but in sentiment, that it never professed a knight that was not of English blood." At the time of the confiscations under Henry VIII there seems to have been only four members of the Order in Ireland, two knights and two chaplains. Hardly any remains of the buildings survive in Ireland, and such an Order could hardly arouse Irish enthusiasm.

The imposition of the newer title *Cill Maignenn*† eclipsed the older *Ráth Céle*. It is not to be assumed that St. Patrick just paid a formal visit to the house of the chieftain of Rath Céle and then proceeded on his journey through Leinster. He "blessed Fir Céle," says the *Tripartite Life*; again it is clear that he was well received, and that he was greatly pleased with the people there. That he made a circuit of the territory of Rath Céle, preaching and founding churches, is a direct inference from the text. His blessing of the Fir Céle would connote the destruction of the remnants of paganism which might have then existed. To this occasion must be ascribed the saint's visit to Moybolge, the overthrow of the Cailleach Gearagain and the foundation of the church. The chronological details of his journey need not be discussed here, but from various considerations the date of the visit may be ascribed to the year 444, shortly after he had established his metropolitan see at Armagh.

\* *Registrum de Kilmainham*. Edited by C. MacNeill from the Bodleian MS. Rawl. B. 501 (Dublin, 1932).

† I am informed by the Rev. T. Small, P.P., that the older Gaelic speakers invariably use the form "Kilweenan," which represents, phonetically, *Cill Maignenn*.



The tradition is positive that St. Patrick reached Moybolge from the direction of Ardee, which is in strict accordance with the account of his itinerary given in the *Tripartite Life*. At an earlier period he had visited Ceanannus (Kells) and founded a church at Ath-da-laarg (i.e., the ford of the two forks), on the River Blackwater, east of the present town. It is possible that the saint may have visited Rath Cúle on the occasion of this earlier visit to Bregia, but there is no mention of such a visit.

The presence of a St. Patrick's well is another link with his visit. This holy well is in the townland of Shancor, a few miles west of Kilmainhamwood village. It is in a picturesque and once secluded valley, through which the Bailieboro'-Kilmainhamwood road, constructed early in the last century, now passes. Beside the well is a Mass Rock, with memories of the Penal Days when Mass was celebrated furtively here. Before the construction of the present road this valley was covered with an extensive wood—hence Kilmainhamwood—which made it admirably adapted for purposes of security. Through the valley flows a small river. From time immemorial St. Patrick's well has been a centre of pilgrimage on the first Sunday in August, another example of Domhnach Cromm Dubh survivals already described. Shancor is on the direct route from Kilmainhamwood to Moybolge, and this well must have been associated with St. Patrick's missionary labours among the people of Rath Cúle. The August pilgrimages to this well had been largely discontinued during the last century, but the pilgrimage has been recently revived.\*

Situated on an eminence overlooking the well is a circular rath with an unusually deep and wide

\* Through the zeal and enthusiasm of Rev. Father Small, P.P., a cross has been erected beside the well in the summer of last year (1933).

fosse. The internal diameter measures, approximately, 35 yards, and the south edge of the fosse rises abruptly from the road. This rath, judging from its size and position, seems to have been the residence of one of the chieftains of Rath Cúle. The conversion of this chieftain was, no doubt, the object of St. Patrick's visit to this locality. Near the rath is shown the entrance to a cave, not now accessible, evidently a Bronze Age structure.

Beside the well a small stream toppling over the rocks forms a picturesque waterfall, and on this account the well is sometimes known as Tubbernessan (Tobar n-earan, i.e., the well of the waterfall).

The institution of counties, a purely arbitrary proceeding, in the sixteenth century, caused many of the older territorial divisions to be obscured, and as the boundaries of the modern counties seldom coincide with those of the older historic divisions much confusion arises when we try to establish the original boundaries and limits of the clan territories. But the older divisions, although partially obscured, were never wholly effaced. The county scheme of classification was adopted by the map-makers, who entirely ignored the older tribal divisions, and the result was an artificial system based on the county as the unit. The modern text-books on Irish geography, adopting the county as the unit and omitting the tribal territory, have dehumanised the subject, and are practically useless as topographical guides. The resulting chaos has been, at least, partially rectified through the herculean labours of John O'Donovan, the greatest topographer of his generation.

Fortunately, the Irish ecclesiastical map has escaped the whims and fancies of the civil surveyors and the older tribal boundaries can be ascertained with reasonable certainty. To add to the inevitable confusion caused by the county scheme of distribution



several of the older place-names became obsolete; hence the great difficulties which confronted O'Donovan and his co-workers.

The boundary line separating the Counties of Cavan of Meath on the east cuts across the parish of Moybolge. The townland of Coole, the governmental centre of Rath Cúle, is in the parish of Moybolge and Kilmainhamwood. The parochial unit has remained unchanged since St. Patrick's time. Unlike many of the older tribal territories, Moybolge has never become obsolete.

The topography of Moybolge resembles in many ways that of Magh Sleacht, except that the region is not a mountainous one. The object of St. Patrick's visit to Moybolge was to destroy the pagan deity which had received the veneration of the people. From the prominent position overlooking the territory of the Feara Cúle was visible on the western horizon the cairn-topped Sliabh na Caillighe, the burial place of Queen Tailte, wife of Eochaidh Mac Erc, the last Fir Bolg king. Having exorcised the evil one, St. Patrick blessed the people, and after fifteen centuries the memory of that happy event is still enshrined in the traditions of the people.

From the traditions and holy wells to be found in various districts of East Breiffne, we may infer that St. Patrick's labours extended over a considerable area. The *Tripartite Life* has no reference to any of these itineraries, and the chronology of these visitations, or whether he made several journeys, cannot be established with the data at our disposal.

Two holy wells dedicated to St. Patrick are in Lurgan parish; one is to be found beside the old pre-Reformation parish church, and the other is in Virginia Park, near Loch Ramor. There is another St. Patrick's well in the parish of Munterconnacht, on the opposite shore of Loch Ramor. On an island

in Loch Ramor stood a church which, together with a large tract of land on the mainland, the townland of macáipe Dún, belonged to the Abbey of St. Mary's, Ceanannus. Ceanannus (Kells) was an important Patrician foundation,\* and from it the neighbouring churches were supplied with clergy. This, in my opinion, accounts for the fact that, in the seventeenth century, many of the parish churches of Breiffne were dependencies of Ceanannus. They may have been placed by St. Patrick himself under the spiritual jurisdiction of Ceanannus.

In the *Martyrologies*, and commemorated on February 6th, we find SS. Brandubh and Coluim of Loch Muinreamhair. This is Loch Ramor—Loch Muinreamhair—in East Breiffne, and is most likely the place mentioned. Always mindful of leaving a priest in charge of a newly converted people it is probable that these saints were, after St. Patrick, the pioneers of Christianity around Loch Muinreamhair. No tradition regarding these saints can now be discovered, nor can we discover the period in which they lived. Whether St. Coluim was identical with the "Presbyter Colomb," who was placed by St. Patrick in charge of a church at a place called Cluain Ernain,† in Meath, is a question which must await further investigation. Another passage in the *Tripartite Life* refers to the tribe of Muinreamhair.‡ but, as an able commentator has clearly demonstrated, this particular tribe was located in North Leitrim.§

The epithet "Muinreamhair" (literally Fat-neck) was not uncommon in ancient Ireland, and a tribe descended from a chieftain of that name inhabited

\* St. Patrick's church was at Ath-da-laarg, east of the present town; this name is now obsolete. About a century later the great abbey of St. Mary's was founded by St. Columbkille.

† *Tripartite Life*, Rolls Series, vol. i, p. 75.

‡ *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

§ Henry Morris, *St. Patrick in the County Sligo*.



the district around Loch Ramor at the dawn of history. There have been, at least, a few tribes in Ireland bearing the title "Muinreamhair," claiming descent from some eponymous ancestor, but only in one case has the title been applied to a lake, that is, Loch Muinreamhair in Breiffne. Our oldest place names, and those less liable to suffer change, are lakes, mountains, and rivers, and these names, dating perhaps to pre-Celtic times, belong to the pre-Celtic tribes about whom we can gather little that is historically certain. The Loch Muinreamhair of the *Martyrology of Donegal* is then, I take it, the Loch Ramor of East Breiffne, and the church which stood on the island, now known as Woodward's Island, which I have described elsewhere, may have been the site of the early ecclesiastical foundation of SS. Brandubh and Coluim. The early church was demolished in the early years of the eighteenth century to make room for the mansion of the Woodward family. The Woodwards, like other exotics, have long since disappeared, and their mansion has crumbled to the water's edge.

The parish of Castletara is dedicated to St. Patrick, and the original parish church is believed, traditionally, to have been founded by him. In a Roman document of 1429 it is referred to as St. Patrick's church, "de Casselterien." \* St. Patrick's well is in the townland of Carrickateane, about half a mile north of the present parish church. The holy well, overshadowed by a few aged whitethorns, springs from the limestone soil on a gentle slope to the right of the main road leading from Cavan to Cootehill. Its clear sparkling waters flow freely as in the days when our National Apostle himself visited the place. In former times this well was visited annually by a large concourse

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 233.

of pilgrims, but the pilgrimage is now largely discontinued.

The origin of the name Castletara—Coir an t-Sioppaig, i.e., the foot of the colt—is attributed to the fact that St. Patrick found the impression of a colt's foot on the rock near which he erected his church.\* The present parochial title is, therefore, a corruption; it should be pronounced "Cushatirry," which is the actual form used by Gaelic speakers at the present day. Whatever may have been the origin of this curious tradition, which is obviously hazy and incomplete, there can hardly be any doubt regarding St. Patrick's visit to Castletara, afterwards in the territory of *Cuil Brighdin*, the country of the Mac Bradys.

East of Castletara is Drung parish, the old parish church of which, now in ruins, is on a hilltop in the townland of Drung. The Gaelic name *Drung* signifies a crowd or assembly and, according to the legend, St. Patrick, when at Castletara, saw on the hilltop, towards the east, a large gathering of people. He visited the place, preached to the people, made many converts, and founded the church. The tradition is only imperfectly remembered by the people, but is sufficient to show that the hill of Drung was a place of assembly in pagan times, evidently the scene of some pagan ceremony. There is a St. Patrick's well in the parish, in the townland of Drumacleeskin, on the border of County Monaghan.

Other parishes in East Breiffne dedicated to St. Patrick are Ballintemple and Drumgoon. A Roman document of 1471 refers to St. Patrick's, "Ballemtempaill," and another document of 1491 has St. Patrick's "Druymghin."† Both parishes have traditions that St. Patrick visited them.

\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*, Cavan, 1836. The existence of the well at Carrickateane seems to have escaped the notice of O'Donovan.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i. p. 237 and p. 239.



In Drumloman parish, in County Cavan, but in Ardagh diocese, there is a St. Patrick's well in the townland of Carnagh, beside the County Longford border. It is visited by large crowds on St. Patrick's Day, and there is a vivid tradition of St. Patrick's visit there. Drumloman—*DRUIM LOMAIN*—signifies, as far as I can discover, the Ridge of St. Loman. Several saints of this name are given in the *Martyrologies* and it is not possible to decide, without further inquiry, which of them is patron of this parish. Perhaps St. Loman of Trim, who is reputed to have been a nephew of St. Patrick, is the patron.

In a letter dated from Ballyjamesduff on May 25th, 1836, O'Donovan expressed a doubt whether St. Patrick had ever visited Breiffne. "I fear," he wrote, "he [St. Patrick] never hallowed Breiffne with his presence." \* But we must not censure the great topographer for such a hasty generalisation. The published materials then accessible were both meagre and unreliable. The great Continental libraries had not as yet, yielded up their secrets. O'Donovan was then only beginning his labours in the uncharted fields of Irish topography. The materials which would have illustrated Breiffne's history were then inaccessible to him, and not for several years later did he gain access to the great mass of historical materials which he utilised so fully in his later works. In his notes to *The Annals of the Four Masters* and elsewhere he rectifies his earlier errors regarding Magh Sleacht, but regarding St. Patrick's travels in East Breiffne he seems to have made no further investigations. It may seem strange that O'Donovan failed to note more traditions regarding St. Patrick's itinerary in East Breiffne, but a perusal of his letters may partially explain the reason: in several places the great topographer was mistaken for a Methodist clergyman and at a

\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*, Cavan.

time when proselytism was rampant in County Cavan a harassed and persecuted people could hardly be expected to be communicative with such a personage.\*

The Patrician foundations in Breiffne have now been shown to be very numerous. The value of local tradition in supplementing the records of Tirechan and other early writers should not be underrated. The historical record is very incomplete, and tradition, judiciously sifted, together with a study of local topography, is always valuable. Seldom do we find history and tradition in disagreement.

Other Patrician foundations may be mentioned, but space does not allow detailed descriptions. On his way to Magh Sleacht St. Patrick passed through Magh Rein, where he founded a church, over which he placed a priest named Bruscius, about whom Tirechan relates a curious story—his re-appearance after death to another saint, requesting the removal of his body and its burial elsewhere.† The ruined church of Moy, at Newtowngore, seems to have been the place where Bruscius laboured. The parish of Carrigallen, which includes Moy, i.e., Magh Rein, may be claimed as a Patrician foundation. Church Island, in Garadise Lake, was at an early period the retreat of a hermit, and this island seems to be the place mentioned in the *Tripartite Life* as near the site of the church of Bruscius and where the bones of Bruscius were taken for reinterment, his own church being "deserted and empty" (*in deserto, in ecclesia relictā et vacua*).

Donaghmore, in Cloonclare parish, was founded by St. Patrick. The territory of Drumlease, the most famous ecclesiastical foundation in County Leitrim, attracted St. Patrick very much and for years he had planned to establish there his ecclesiastical capital.

\* *Ibid.* Letter dated from Virginia, May 25, 1836. "I assure you," he writes, "that I was refused lodgings in several places in consequence of looking so like a swadling preacher."

† *Tripartite Life*, vol. ii, p. 311.



## CHAPTER V

## THE PATRICIAN LITURGY

IN every parish of the diocese, and indeed throughout Ireland, may be traced the early church sites, dating from the very foundation of Christianity in the country. The place names preserve the only traces of many of these ancient sites, which otherwise would have suffered absolute obliteration. It is hardly necessary to remark that in pre-Christian times the Gaelic language possessed no suitable appellations for ecclesiastical buildings or ceremonies. Hence the early Christian missionaries introduced the necessary Latin or Greek terms which in the course of centuries became absorbed into our native language. Our place names, great numbers of which are of ecclesiastical origin, preserve under various forms these early Christian terms, and their study is very illuminating, as proving the great influence of Christianity in displacing many earlier titles of pagan significance.

As already shown there are several Gaelic terms, of Greek or Latin origin, signifying a church. The most frequently occurring form is *Cill*, sometimes written *Cell*, or *Ceall*, which is based on the Latin *Cella*. Throughout the diocese, in parochial and townland names, the name is everywhere to be found, e.g., *Cill mór* (the great church); *Cill Dallain* (St. Dallan's church); *Cill Naile* (St. Naile's church); *Cillín Ciar* (the little black church), etc. In its anglicised form it occurs as *Kill*, and can easily be distinguished, phonetically, from *Coill*, a wood, which is also sometimes anglicised *Kill*.

Teampall, from the Latin *Templum*, is found in several parochial titles, e.g., Templeport (Teampall an Puirte, i.e., the church of the bank, or mainland) ; Ballintemple (Baile an Teampall, i.e., the town of the church) ; Magherintemple (MacAire an Teampall, i.e., the plain of the church—a former parochial unit now amalgamated with Drung), and in the names of a few townlands that were once church property. Its anglicised form is usually *temple*. Both Cill and Teampall enter very largely into our Kilmore place names.

Another term, meaning a church, is eaglais (Latin *ecclesia*, Welsh *eccluis*, Cornish *eglos*) which is not found so often in Kilmore as in other dioceses, and which enters, in Kilmore, into only a few names of minor importance. Domnac, from the Latin *Dominica*, i.e., the Lord's Day, was according to a passage in the *Tripartite Life* applied to those churches founded by St. Patrick himself, and were so called because he marked out the foundations on a Sunday. The statement is not quite free from ambiguity and the rule must not be accepted as an invariable one. Donaghmore (Domnac mór, i.e., the great church) is a townland in Cloonclare parish. Reic, usually applied to a cemetery, is from the Latin *Reliquiae* ; *Relec* is the form which occurs in early manuscripts. Zeuss, in his *Grammatica Celtica*, shows that the word was borrowed from the Latin at a very early period. It enters into several Breiffne place names, chiefly sub-denominations, and is easily recognised.

Ceallorac, a derivative of Cill, is found in a few townland names, but chiefly in sub-denominations—names of fields, or raths. Its anglicised form is Caldragh, or Caltragh, and in every instance, as far as I can discover, the name was applied only to such places as were used for the interment of the unbaptised, or those who, according to the rigid ecclesiastical discipline of the Church, were deprived of Christian burial. In several



parts of the diocese such cemeteries are still pointed out and it is practically certain that they do not mark early church sites. Occasionally the name is applied to a place without any tradition attaching to it or no indication that it was ever used as a cemetery. Probably these Caldraghs are of pagan origin, and many curious legends of supernatural phenomena centre around them.

In Kildrumsherdan Parish there is a townland named Errigal—*Διρεαλα*, an oratory, from the Latin *Oraculum*. In early Irish we find the form *Airicul* applied to the residence of a hermit. These oratories were usually of a primitive type and very few traces of them have survived to the present day ; they belonged to the earliest age of Christianity in Ireland. Another word, almost similar in meaning, is *Διρεπ*—Latin, *Desertum*—which was applied to a secluded retreat, or hermitage, and afterwards came to mean a church. A parish, *Disert Fincheall*, is mentioned in the medieval records of Kilmore ; I have identified it with the present Kildrumsherdan. Some townlands bearing the name *Disert* occur in the diocese.

*Uṛnarōe*, or *Opnarōe* from *Oratorium*, was applied to a prayer-house, or oratory, and commonly takes the form *Urney*. In most cases in Breiffne the place name *Urney* has this meaning, but an exception seems to be the parish of *Urney*, which, as I have shown elsewhere, seems to be of tribal origin, dating from early Celtic times. The Gaelic word for a monk is *manač*, from *Monachus*, and there is a well-known townland beside the town of Cavan called *Drumavanagh*, i.e., the ridge of the monk ; the site for the new cathedral is in this townland. A friar is *ḃrátair*, from *frater*, and occurs in the townland name *Gallonamraher*, i.e., the gallon, or division of land, belonging to the friars, in Lurgan parish. *Órō*, from *Ordo*, meaning an order or ecclesiastical rank, has given its name to the townland of

Drumhurt, *Drum úirto*, i.e., the Ridge of the Order, in Kildrumsherdan parish. An anchorite gave its name to Dunancory, *Dún Ancoire*, i.e., the residence of the anchorite, in Lurgan parish.

*Eapros*, a bishop, is derived from *Episcopus*. In early Gaelic manuscripts the form is *Epscop*, which by metathesis gave *Easpog*. *Sasart*, a priest, the older form of which was *Sacart*, is derived from *Sacerdos*: another word, although of rarer occurrence, is *Cruimter*, which comes from the Greek *Presbyter*.

Many other examples might be quoted from our place names to show how Latin and Greek terms became absorbed into our language. The close connection which has existed between Ireland and Rome since the days of St. Patrick stands out prominently in every phase of our history. Even our place names testify to this inseparable connection, which was cemented by St. Patrick himself. On the Great Island of Aran there is a monument carrying the significant inscription "VII Romani," i.e., Seven Romans, which according to our best authorities dates from the sixth century. In County Roscommon is a townland, Rathnarovanagh, *Ráe na Rómanaí*, i.e., the Rath of the Romans. In County Kerry is a townland, Kilnarovanagh, *Cill na Rómanaí*, i.e., the church of the Romans. Evidently all these places received their names from early Roman pilgrims.

Gaelic has a rich vocabulary of ecclesiastical terms and we have seen some of the commoner terms applied to the various styles of churches. Zeuss, in his *Grammatica Celtica*, quotes examples from the earliest manuscript sources. These terms were not strictly synonymous, but represented particular types of foundations. Owing to the decay of Gaelic it is now very difficult to ascertain with certainty the fine shades of meaning attached to these terms. That the names were applied in no haphazard fashion is



beyond question. In Ireland the early Christian Church was highly organised and the great numbers of ecclesiastical terms which have survived in our place names in their rich and varied forms, testify to the perfection of that ecclesiastical organisation and the deep veneration of the early Christians.

The Mass, the great central act of Christian worship, enters largely, as we should expect, into our place names. The Gaelic word is *Διῤῥεανν* (old Irish *Oifrend*), and there is scarcely a parish in the diocese that cannot show its Mass Rock, where Mass was celebrated surreptitiously in secluded glens during the dark Penal Days. These places are known by various titles, e.g., *CARRAIS AN ΔΙῤῥΙΝΝ*, i.e., the Rock of the Mass, and *MULLAC AN ΔΙῤῥΙΝΝ*, i.e., the Hill of the Mass. The practice of celebrating Mass in the open air appears to date back to the early Christian period in Ireland, as some of our place names would seem to show. But the Mass Rocks belong to the Penal times.

From the time of St. Patrick Mass was celebrated on Sundays and festivals. The festival of Easter was one of special solemnity; the townland of Drumcask, i.e., *DRUM CAISC*, the ridge of Easter, shows that Easter celebrations were observed there in early times. Philologists have shown that our Gaelic term *Διῤῥεανν* is derived from the Latin *Offerenda*, whereas in all other European languages the name for the Mass is taken from the Latin *Missa*. Gaelic, including all branches of the Celtic tongue, is the exception, and this interesting piece of evidence throws much light on the Liturgy introduced by St. Patrick into Ireland, and points to the conclusion that the Liturgy of St. Patrick was strongly influenced by the Liturgy of Milan. A recent writer summarises the evidence for this and I quote his words.\*

\* *The Mass in the Irish Church*, by Rev. John Ryan, S.J., D.Litt. (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland—1931.)

In the days of St. Ambrose the Church of Milan was more prominent than ever before or since. To the West, in Gaul, and in the South, towards central Italy, were bishops who held it in exceptional honour. Its customs tended to extend far beyond its own borders. And just at this moment the peculiarities of its liturgy had taken definite shape and were fixed in a system that still, in large part, survives, under the name of the Ambrosian rite. The connection between St. Patrick and the Milan use may be briefly stated . . . why, may we ask, did the Irish take their word from *offerenda* and not from *missa*? The answer to this question brings us to the Ambrosian liturgy. In Milan, as in the Orient, the bread and wine for Mass were prepared beforehand, and after the preparatory prayers and lection, when the catechumens had been dismissed, were brought in procession by the clergy to the Altar. The choir then sang a sacred chant, which in the Ambrosian rite, was called *Offerenda*. The Irish word for Mass is thus taken from the chant which marked the beginning of the Eucharistic rite, the Mass properly so-called, as distinct from the Mass of Catechumens, and it is interesting to note that the word *missa* which gives *Mass* in English and in so many other languages, stands more closely related to *Offerenda* than one would be tempted to suspect. *Missa*, or Mass, marks, in all probability, the point where the catechumens were dismissed; *offerenda* or *ḁṡṡṡṡṡṡṡ* marks the moment immediately after when the sacred elements were laid on the Altar and the sacrificial rite commenced. *Offerenda*, as far as I can discover, is found as a name for the chant mentioned only in the Ambrosian liturgy. *ḁṡṡṡṡṡṡṡ* derived from *offerenda* is the name for the Mass in Ireland back to the days of St. Patrick. It follows then, that the liturgy of the Mass introduced by St. Patrick into Ireland was, to some extent at least, that whose use had in his time become fixed in Milan, and which had spread beyond the boundaries of that city and diocese to the neighbouring regions of southern Gaul.



In his student days in Gaul St. Patrick was brought up in the liturgy of Milan. This liturgy, known as the Ambrosian rite, still survives in Milan, where the visitor to the great cathedral of that city may observe its ceremonial. In the Irish monasteries following St. Patrick's time various liturgies seem to have been adopted. These different liturgical practices were, as indicated by a statement of Pope Gregory the Great, of secondary interest, but as historical facts, illustrating the customs and practices of the period, they are of great interest. In the seventh century the usages of the Roman rite were generally adopted throughout Ireland. One of the great outstanding characteristics of St. Patrick's life is his recognition of the supremacy of Rome, a recognition which, down the centuries, was never questioned until the Religious Revolt, or "Reformation," as it has been rather ironically called, of the sixteenth century. The Patrician Canons, in the *Book of Armagh*, are positive in asserting the supremacy of Rome.

It seems passing strange that in the twentieth century writers should be found who, throwing history and logic to the winds, should entertain a theory that the Celtic Church, founded by St. Patrick, was independent of Rome. Proofs, so-called, of this fantastic doctrine have been occasionally presented, but when we come to examine critically these alleged proofs and subject them to rigorous historical analysis we find that, stripped of their verbiage, they are based on nothing more substantial than differences in liturgy—the Paschal controversy and the question of tonsure. Differences in liturgy existed then as they exist to-day, and the arguments based on these differences are very feeble indeed; but such arguments are useful as smoke screens to cover a mass of confused ideas. No serious student of history has ever confused matters of Faith with questions of discipline; but this confusion

apparently exists in the minds of many of the controversialists of the present time. In the Eastern Church the peculiarities of discipline were still more pronounced than in the Celtic Church, but there was no question of the unity of the Easterns with Rome until the time of Photius, who led the people into schism. The Uniates of our own day possess a rite much more different from the Roman rite than that of the Patrician Church, yet they are in full communion with the Holy See. In fact there never was any confusion in the early Irish Church between questions of doctrine and matters of discipline; the confusion is quite a modern growth. A perusal of some of the books and pamphlets which purport to "prove" the so-called independence of the Celtic Church will reveal only very mediocre historical acumen, and instead of sound historical reasonings emerges a confused jumble of *petitiones principii*, false analogies, and innuendoes—in fact a budget of historical fallacies.

The letter written by St. Columbanus to Pope Boniface IV (608–615) has often been cited by anti-Roman controversialists, few of whom seem to have gone to the trouble of consulting the original text. A reading of the complete text shows at once that St. Columbanus fully recognised the supreme authority of the Pope; only by the quotation of certain phrases apart from their context, and carefully ignoring others, could some modern writers have attributed to St. Columbanus views which he would have spurned.\* It is scarcely necessary to refer to the arguments of Skene, G. T. Stokes, and Todd. With Mosheim, Michelet, Gibbon, and the Centuriators of Magdeburg,

\* For the text of the letter of St. Columbanus, with an excellent account of the history of the early Church in Scotland, see Major M. V. Hay, *A Chain of Error in Scottish History*. (London, 1927.) Major Hay explodes, effectively, the fallacy of the so-called "independent" Scottish Church, and his book is deserving of careful study.



their arguments have long since been shown to be worthless. The writings of St. Columbanus, as Professor Bury agrees, represent the views of the Irish Church at the time of his youth and training in Ireland, that is, during the second half of the sixth century. St. Columbanus arrived in Burgundy about the year 590, and his letter to Pope Boniface was concerned with the alleged condonation of the Nestorian and Monophysite heresies by Pope Vigilius (538–555) and the supposed adoption of the error by Pope Boniface. The question is now of merely historical interest, but in the three letters addressed by St. Columbanus to the Pope there is, to quote the words of Professor Bury, "the fullest recognition of the Pope's *auctoritas* in the Western Church."

The unity of the Catholic Church [subjoins the same writer] is an axiom with Columbanus, and there is not the smallest reason to doubt that this idea was inculcated in Ireland. *Unius enim sumus corporis commembra, sive Galli, sive Britanni sive Iberi, sive quaeque gentes* (we are all fellow members of one body, whether Gauls, or Britons, or Irish, or any other nation).\*

There is no ambiguity regarding the doctrines of St. Columbanus, and lengthy quotations from his letters might be adduced to prove his unswerving allegiance to Rome; one quotation will suffice: *ego enim credo semper columnam ecclesiae firmam esse in Roma*—"for I believe that the pillar of the Church is always solid in Rome."

Even in our own times the old fallacies have been, occasionally, resurrected, and in new dress once more paraded as new discoveries. Protestant historians, like Ussher, have accepted the Roman mission of St. Patrick. Professor Bury accepts without question

\* Bury, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 370.

the Patrician Canon which declares the supremacy of Rome.\* This Canon lays down: "If any questions of difficulty arise in this island, let them be referred to the Apostolic seat." The reasonableness of this was apparent to Bury, and this is his comment:

Not to have recognised the Roman see as the source of authoritative responses would have been almost equivalent to a repudiation of the unity of the Church.†

No other conclusion is possible. A recent work on the history of the Celtic Church in Scotland, written by a non-Catholic clergyman, Rev. J. C. McNaught, who is minister of Kilmuir Easter, reaches the same conclusion.‡ Mr. McNaught admits frankly that he approached the question from the point of view of the independence of the Celtic Church—a view in which he had been reared and nurtured. After years of deep study and research he found the arguments empty and unconvincing. This induced him to pursue his studies, and he reached the conclusion that the Celtic Church was in full communion with Rome, and that "the Popes never admitted to their communion any who differed from them in matters of faith." Mr. McNaught's scholarly volume is an antidote against the fallacious reasoning which, in some quarters, is accepted as history.

The continuity of the Patrician Church down the ages is the completion of the unbroken chain of evidence of its unquestioned recognition of Papal supremacy. Our

\* Wasserschleben, "Collectio Canonum Hibernensis"—*Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 2nd Edition, 1885. It is generally agreed that these Canons were put together at the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century.

† *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 170. Prof. Bury, although an agnostic, was eminent as a historian. Paradoxical though it may seem at first sight the very agnosticism of Bury made him an impartial commentator on the historical issues of St. Patrick's mission, and his carefully documented work has a peculiar interest on account of its author's strange outlook on religion.

‡ *The Celtic Church and the See of Peter*, by Rev. J. C. McNaught, B.D. Oxford: Blackwell, 1927.



numerous Mass Rocks testify to its unbroken continuity through the Penal times. And among the Patrician Canons in the *Book of Armagh* have we not the command of St. Patrick himself to his people "to be Romans as they were Christians"—*ut Christiani ita et Romani sitis*?

## CHAPTER VI

CHURCHES AND PATRONS OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL  
BREIFFNE.

*Kinawley — Killasnet — Killinagh — Loch MacNein —  
Kildallan — Drumreilly — Tomregan — Killesher —  
Knockninny — Disert Fincheall — Annagh —  
Aelmagh — Cloonlogher — Drumlease — Dromahaire  
— Lavey — Urney — Enniskillen — Drumgoon —  
Raffony — Mullagh.*

## KINAWLEY

THE parish of Kinawley is situated partly in the barony of Tullyhaw, Co. Cavan, and partly in the baronies of Knockninny and Clanawley, Co. Fermanagh. St. Naile, Latinised Natalis, is patron. A *Life* of St. Naile, based on the O'Clery MSS. in the Burgundian Library, Brussels, has been recently edited by Dr. Plummer and printed in Brussels.\*

According to the *Martyrology of Donegal* St. Naile was Abbot of Cill-Naile (Kinawley) and Daimhinis (Devenish). He was the immediate successor to St. Molaise in the Abbacy of Devenish, and ruled for many years over that great monastic foundation.† On the *Calendars* his festival is entered on January 27th. According to the genealogists St. Naile was the son

\* *Miscellanea Hagiographica Hibernica*, Vitae adhuc ineditae Sancti Naile. Bruxelles. Société des Bollandistes, 1925. Dr. Plummer, who has been called the "doyen of British Celtic scholars," has already given us learned *Lives* of St. Mogue, evincing consummate scholarship and skill. We in Breiffne are much indebted to his labours.

† *Devenish, Its History, Antiquities and Traditions*, by Very Rev. J. E. Canon McKenna, P.P., M.R.I.A. (Enniskillen, 2nd Edition, 1931.)



of Aenghus, who was third in descent from Lughaidh, a king of Munster. The Brussels MS. speaks of him as a brother of St. Molaise, but for several reasons this is unacceptable and must be rejected. There were other saints of the same name—Naile—and their Acts have become so confused that it is quite impossible now to disentangle them. Colgan was unable to distinguish them, and their Acts are consequently of little historical value.

St. Naile of Cill Naile is also patron of the parish of Inbher Naile (Inver), in Raphoe diocese, on Inver Bay; in the fifteenth century a Franciscan monastery was erected on the site. There is a tradition that the monastery of Cill Naile, now Kinawley, was his earliest foundation. The church of Kinawley, now in ruins, is surrounded by an ancient cemetery. In the vicinity is *Tobar Naile*, i.e., St. Naile's Well. According to O'Donovan the handle of an old bell, supposed to have belonged to St. Naile, was preserved in the parish a century ago.\*

The parish name *Cill Naile* has been anglicised Kinawley, an example of the interchange of consonants l and n: it should be "Kilnawley." The present form of the name is comparatively modern. An *Inquisition* of 1609 has "Killnallie" and also "Killmally." In a survey of County Fermanagh taken at Devenish in 1603 it appears as "Keannallee." The *Rawlinson MS.* form (1608) is "Kilnalty." The date of St. Naile's death is given by Archdall as 563, but O'Hanlon and others ascribe it to 564, which is most probably correct.

#### KILLASNAT

In the sixth century St. Osnat founded a monastery in the present district of Glencar, then called Glendallain. She was daughter of Nadfraic, a chieftain then ruling

\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*—County Fermanagh; letter dated from Belturbet, Co. Cavan, November 12, 1834.

over that romantic district. The church of St. Osnat, *Cill Easnat*, gave its title to the present parish of which she is patroness. Colgan, in his *Acta Sanctorum*, has "Osnata de Gleann Dallain in Carbria." The old cemetery of Killasnat marks the site of her early church. According to some commentators she was a sister of St. Molaise of Devenish.

In the townland of Aghamore is a Holy Well dedicated to St. Patrick. Another church site in the townland of Kilroosk—*Cill Rusc*—is noted by O'Donovan. The glen from which Glencar \* takes its title is about five miles in length: *Gleann na Cairte*, i.e., the glen of the pillarstone. The older name has the same meaning; *Dallán*, a pillarstone. The ruins of an O'Rourke castle—*Cairlean na Cairte*—are to be seen in the townland of Castletown, in Glencar. This was one of the strongholds of the O'Rourkes.

St. Osnat died about the close of the sixth century, but the precise year is not recorded. Her festival occurs on January 6th.

### KILLINAGH

The church of Killinagh—*Cill Laighne*—was founded in the early part of the sixth century by St. Laighne. According to a local tradition, the original church, which gave its title to the parish, was founded jointly by SS. Brigid and Laighne. The festival of St. Laighne, son of Garbhan, is entered in the *Martyrology of Donegal* at January 12th. It is significant that there are two Holy Wells in the parish, one dedicated to St. Brigid and the other to St. Laighne. St. Laighne is said to have been a native of Leinster—hence his name, which signifies a Leinsterman. It is said that he was converted

\* The picturesque lake and valley of Glencar, on the borders of Leitrim and Sligo, is the scene of Mrs. M. T. Pender's popular novel, *The Knight of Glencar*, the materials for which were collected by the late Rev. Joseph B. Meehan, then a student at Maynooth.



to Christianity by St. Brigid. The *Martyrology of Tallaght* has "St. Laighne, son of Garbain," but none of the early references identify him with any particular locality. In the parish of Killinagh his memory is enshrined in the traditions of the people. Legends of his conversion by St. Brigid are also remembered. Beyond the fact that he was a contemporary of St. Brigid, who lived during the last half of the fifth and the first quarter of the sixth centuries, we cannot ascertain the exact period during which St. Laighne flourished.

The church of Killinagh belonged to the Abbey of Ceanannus, Co. Meath, to the Abbot of which one-third of the tithes were payable. In Roman documents of 1430 and 1433 there are references to Ruerico Magam-rughaiy (Magauran), who was then perpetual vicar of the parish church of "Cyllnalaynacha." \* Situated among the lakes and mountains of Tullyhaw barony the parish has many remains of antiquity deserving of close historical examination.

The ruins of the ancient parish church of Killinagh are situated on the southern shore of Upper Loch Mac Nean. In the vicinity of the church, and close to the shore of the lake, may be seen a remarkable *bullán*† which served the purpose of a mill for the grinding of corn.

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, pp. 233-234.

† This *bullán* is a unique example of a quern, the earliest form of mill for the crushing of grain. It is a boulder of red sandstone about 3 feet in height with a rough tablelike surface measuring 5 feet 9 inches from E. to W. and 5 feet 2 inches from N. to S. This surface has nine cavities, eight of which are arranged somewhat irregularly round the margin with one, the largest, in the centre. Each hollow is filled with a loose stone, oval in shape. The *bullán* was in reality the village mill. Bennett and Elton, in their standard work, *The History of Corn Milling* (4 vols. London, 1898), refer to the Killinagh *bullán* as "one of the most impressive monuments of its curious class remaining in the country" (vol. i, p. 20). They rightly conclude that it is "nothing more than the common mealing stone of the early settlement on the site of Killinagh; at which, if necessary, eight women could grind together the grain for their families." The surface, however, is not sufficiently extensive to

## LOCH MAC NEIN

In the various Irish *Martyrologies*, under April 13th, we find entered the Sons of Terchur of Loch Mac Nein—*Mac Tarchair Locha Mic Nina*. Whether their place of retirement was on the shores of this lake, or on one of the several wooded islands which it contains, is a problem which awaits further investigation. Loch Mac Nean (loc mac n-en, i.e., the Lake of the Sons of En) seems to have received its title from some pre-Christian ruler of the locality. His identity I cannot, at present, establish. The lake, which extends between the counties of Leitrim and Fermanagh is partly situated in County Cavan, of which it forms the extreme north-west boundary. The scenery around Loch Mac Nean is wild and beautiful and some magnificent cliffs stretch along its shores. The age in which the Sons of Tarchair lived in this secluded spot has not been determined.

## KILDALLAN

The church of Kildallan was founded by St. Dallan Forgaill, who was, as already noted, a cousin of St. Mogue. St. Dallan, who was a very eminent scholar, was son of Colla, son of Erc, according to the most trustworthy genealogists, and was, therefore, St. Mogue's first cousin. His mother's name was Forchella and for this reason he was, according to some authorities, styled Forgaill.

allow eight people to work together. The principle of the mortar and pestle used in modern chemistry is essentially the same. Querns were in use in County Leitrim until recent times. In Liverpool Museum, George's Square, may be seen two querns, labelled, "From Creevelea, County Leitrim," presented to the late Mr. Bennett, of Liverpool, by the late Father J. B. Meehan. Some good examples in the National Museum, Dublin, are from Killeshandra. For over 1000 years these querns were the most important objects in the household. About a century ago they were beginning to fall into disuse. The bullán at Killinagh is locally known as "St. Brigid's Stone."



The place of St. Dallan's birth is usually assigned to the district of the Masraighe, an ancient tribe which inhabited the country around the present Tullyhaw before the coming of St. Patrick. We may assume, and there are several reasons for believing, that the territory of the Masraighe included the present parish of Kildallan. It is not improbable that this parish, which was the scene of his labours, and which perpetuates his name, was also the place of his birth. The saint was at first called Eochaidh, and in early youth showed great intellectual promise. Making rapid strides in his studies, he wrote many books and contributed much to the scholarship of his time. St. Dallan, indeed, must be numbered among ancient Breiffne's most remarkable men; he was great as a missionary, scholar and poet. He wrote a panegyric on St. Columbkille and several other poems. The "Amhra Choluim Cille"\* is one of the most famous, as it is certainly one of the most ancient, of our old Irish poems. At the Synod of Drumceat † (in the present Diocese of Derry), which was held in the sixth century, the Monarch of Ireland, Aidus, endeavoured to have the bards expelled from the country; this arose from the survival among the old pagan bards of a rooted hostility to Christianity. Both Dallan and Columbkille attended this Synod, and the latter made his famous defence of the Christian bards. St. Dallan, who had already composed the elegy on St. Columbkille, asked permission to read it at the Synod, but the latter refused. ‡ Furthermore, on the principle that "no man should be praised during life," Columbkille would only consent to the publication of the poem after his death.

\* *The Amra Choluim Chilli of Dallan Forgaill*, edited by J. O'Beirne Crowe.

† *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, xxix, Januarii.

‡ Colgan's *Trias Thaumaturga*, p. 432.

St. Dallan was blind for some years before the Synod of Drumceat; hence the name "Dallan" meaning a blind person, which is the name by which he is best known. On the death of St. Columbkille in Iona in 597 (in 596 according to the *Annals of Tigernach*; in 592 according to the *Four Masters*), St. Dallan was informed by an angel (according to the early writers) and immediately set about the publication of the elegy. At the same time, it is said, he recovered his sight.

The missionary labours of St. Dallan extended over a wide area. Besides the parish church of Kildallan, he is patron of two parishes in Donegal, and also parishes in Down, Meath and Westmeath. He died, a martyr, about the year 598, in the monastery of Inis-Coel—now Iniskeel—in County Donegal, where he was on a visit to his close friend St. Conall Coel, Abbot of that monastery. A band of pirates raided the monastery, plundered it, and St. Dallan was murdered. He was buried in the monastery church of Inis-coel and his funeral elegy was pronounced by Senchan Torpeist, who was afterwards Chief File, or Poet, of Ireland. St. Dallan's feast is celebrated on January 29th.

The former title of the parish was Cluain Dallain, which became afterwards Cill Dallain. As Joyce suggests, the Cluain may be a remnant of a former pagan name which was partly changed after the foundation of the church. Another of St. Dallan's ecclesiastical foundations was at Cluain Dallain, near Newry, County Down, and the name still survives—Clonallan, a parish in Dromore diocese.

The site of St. Dallan's early church in the townland of Kildallan is marked by a cemetery, one of the most remarkable in the diocese. The cemetery is surrounded by a fort, which shows that St. Dallan made his choice of a church site in the interior of



a rath. Very rarely do we find such places chosen for churches either in the early or medieval periods. It will be observed that the Protestant church of Kildallan, situated on the opposite side of the road, is also surrounded by a small rath or fort, elliptically shaped. These raths were constructed long before the advent of Christianity and were the residences of chieftains or distinguished personages. It has been suggested by an eminent antiquarian that one of these raths may have been the residence of St. Dallan's father and the other the site of the early church. The conclusion is irresistible, and we have already seen at Kilnavart—about five miles from Kildallan—that a fosse surrounds the early church founded by St. Patrick. The cemetery of Kildallan is a place of great historical interest. No traces of the ancient church remain. Two huge trees in the centre entwined for about the first twelve feet form a great canopy covering the entire cemetery.

In the townland of Kilnacross, north of Kildallan and alongside Kilnaglare, is shown St. Mogue's Well. Here St. Mogue baptised Aodh Dubh, the reigning monarch of Breiffne and the ancestor of the Ui-Briuin race. The High King of Erin assisted at the ceremony. This Holy Well is therefore, connected with one of the most important events in the history of the Ui-Briuin race.

### DRUMREILLY

The parish of Drumreilly is situated partly in the barony of Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim, and partly in Tullyhaw, County Cavan. The Gaelic form of the name is *Drum air Dealaig*, i.e., the ridge of the eastern road. On the *Down Survey* Map it is "Drumreally." In olden times it formed part of the territory of Magh Angaidhe, where, at Tuaim Seanchaidh, was the chief residence of the O'Ruaircs.

In the *Martyrology of Donegal* a festival in honour of the "Seven Bishops of Druimairbhealaigh" is registered on January 15th. A similar entry occurs in the *Martyrology of Tallaght*: "Seacht n-Eps Droma airbelaigh." These holy prelates are also mentioned by MacFirbis, and are invoked in the Litany of St. Aengus the Culdee. The names of these bishops, or the periods during which they lived, have not been ascertained, and the *Martyrologists* afford no further details concerning them. It may be assumed that they flourished shortly after St. Patrick's time, but it is not necessary to assume that all, or any, of them were contemporaries.

In fifteenth century ecclesiastical records we find mention of this parish under various forms of the name, e.g., "Drinnyrbealaynch" (1423), "Droimerge-laid" (1477), and "Drumerbelaid" (1481). In Papal documents sub anno 1481 there is mention of a hospital for the poor in the parish of "Drumerbelaid." \*

St. Everan (*Emhearanus*) is patron of the parish, where there is a Holy Well dedicated to him.† Whether St. Everan was one of the Seven Bishops referred to by the *Martyrologists* does not seem possible now to determine.

The old church of Drumreilly, in the townland of the same name, was situated on rising ground on the shore of Garadise Lake. The original structure has long since disappeared and a Protestant edifice surrounded by an ancient cemetery, occupies the site. Two neatly sculptured mitred heads, one of which is in a good state of preservation, are built into the gable of the present structure. Beside the entrance are some sculptured slabs, in a broken condition, which evidently belonged to ancient tombs. In the lake is the island, called Church Island, where the ruins of a very early church may be seen.

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 239.

† *Ordnance Survey Letters*, County Leitrim.



## TUAIM DRECUIN OR TOMREGAN

The parish of Tomregan, which lies partly in Co. Cavan and partly in Co. Fermanagh, is now ecclesiastically united with Kildallan. The older form of the name is *Tuaim Drecoin*, i.e., Drecon's burial mound, and from the many references in our early records this *Tuaim* must have been a conspicuous object in the landscape of ancient Breiffne. Who this *Drecon* was, or the period in which he lived, we cannot now discover; his history is veiled in the mists of antiquity. That he was a pagan chieftain ruling the district around the River Graine—now the Woodford River—is all we may venture to surmise; and that he lived at a very early period is clear from a reference in the Annals that 1500 years before the Christian Era Eochaidh, King of Ireland, won the battle of Tuaim Drecoin. The *name* of this parish is therefore of pagan origin, but in Christian times it became famous as the seat of a University, with three constituent schools of law, classics, and humanity.

The great lay University of Tuaim Drecoin flourished in the seventh century, and to it was attached St. Bricin, whose skill in surgery has earned for him a niche in the Temple of Fame. The operation which he performed on Cenn Faelad, who was brought to Tuaim Drecoin from the battlefield of Moy Rath, where he had been badly wounded, does credit to his skill. A brief account of this will illustrate the history of this once great Breiffne University.

Cenn Faelad, born *circa* 618 and died in 679, was a chieftain of royal blood.\* At the battle of Moy Rath, or Moira, fought near Lisburn, County Down, in the year 638 (or 634 according to the *Four Masters*) he was laid low with a cloven skull, and was hurried away for

\* For a lengthy account, mainly inductive, of the literary side of Cenn Faelad's career, I must refer my readers to Professor MacNeill's "A Pioneer of Nations" in *Studies*, March and September, 1922.

Could Tuaim Drecoin = Tuaim Bricin?

treatment to St. Bricin, in the University of Tuaim Drecauin. The warrior's brain was protruding and St. Bricin performed on him an operation unique, perhaps, in the achievements of medical science; he cut away a part of his brain—"the part with which one forgets." The operation was successful and Cenn Faelad made a rapid recovery. It was really trepanning which, as Professor MacNeill assures us, was then frequently practised even in prehistoric Western Europe. However we may interpret the removal of the particular part of the brain which "forgets," and Professor MacNeill advances a very plausible theory in the articles to which I refer, we cannot discount the statements of the early chroniclers that the operation was a very remarkable one and reflected great credit on St. Bricin and the University of Tuaim Drecauin.

In his period of convalescence Cenn Faelad was not idle. According to the law and custom of the time one suffering from his specific injury had to remain three full years under the doctor's care. During this period he wandered from one department of the University to the other, a privilege accorded his noble birth, for he was a nephew of the Ard-Ri, and proved himself an apt pupil. Before receiving the wound his mental training had been neglected, except a knowledge of chess, which was, most probably, directed towards his training as a military tactician. But now all his energies were directed towards mental training, with marvellous results. Whether the removal of the part of the brain which forgets was responsible for his rapid intellectual development is a matter which I must leave for the psychologists to discuss; at any rate, in a few years he had imbibed all the learning of the University of Tuaim Drecauin and, like St. Ignatius of Loyola, he abandoned the sword for the pen and became very learned, a historian, an authority on the Brehon Laws, and a poet. He may be claimed as



Tuaim Drecauin's most illustrious pupil. It has been said that Oxford would be famous if only for educating and training Roger Bacon : much more so is our own Tuaim Drecauin, which produced the genius Cenn Faelad. An Irish Grammar, written by Cenn Faelad, is yet, in part, extant, and we have it on the authority of Professor MacNeill, that this work is a thousand years "older than any treatise on the grammar of any other European language, except Greek or Latin." He also wrote a treatise on law, which is extant. The later history of this remarkable man is connected with the district of Cookstown, County Tyrone, but Tuaim Drecauin's great distinction is that it afforded him both the opportunity and the means for doing so much for the land of his birth.

The University of Tuaim Drecauin was not an ecclesiastical foundation although St. Bricin was connected with it. But there is no record of a monastery having existed there. In later days Bricin was honoured as a saint—by popular canonisation, as in the case of all our early Irish saints—and this would lead us to infer that he was an ecclesiastic. Archbishop Healy, in one of his historical essays, suggests that St. Bricin was the founder of Tuaim Drecauin \* ; but from what I have already described this cannot be maintained.

This leads us to inquire what was the origin of this great lay University of Tuaim Drecauin. It was situated "at the meeting of the three streets between the houses of the three chief professors." † The streets mentioned seem to have been the residences of the students, and the three schools were, as already indicated, Irish law, Irish learning, and Latin learning. The first-mentioned pair, flourishing in Cenn Faelad's time, appear to have been founded long before it for

\* *Ireland's Ancient Schools and Scholars*, 2nd Edition, p. 602.

† *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, iii, 88.

the propagation of native pre-Patrician erudition. Tuaim Drecauin is only four miles, in a direct line, from Magh Sleacht itself, the great centre of pagan worship. As Professor MacNeill infers, their professors were men of the highest eminence. They were in unbroken succession from the druids, and carried out in the seventh century the druidical method of imparting knowledge—neither books nor writing. All instruction was oral and *dicta* had to be retained by memory. The professors, loyal to their conservative traditions, despised book work, and had only contempt for the Latinists. Evidently the genius of Cenn Faelad absorbed the learning of the older schools and he did not hesitate to write down his notes. He, therefore, was a link between both traditions.

Classic literature was well developed in Tuaim Drecauin. The amassed experience of Greece and Rome—Imperial and Christian—was at their command. Their teaching was not different from that of our modern colleges, but their texts were fewer and more carefully studied. To the students of the Classics the older institutions were antiquated and primitive and tainted with that paganism the traditions of which would linger long among a conservative people. MacNeill supposes that the classical school was added as a safeguard, a lay school, on Christian principles, devoted to the study of law, classics, medicine and history. In the seventh century we cannot suppose that the last trace of reverence for Cromm Cruaich had gone from Magh Sleacht.

The achievements of Cenn Faelad were manifold; he broke down a good deal of the antagonism between the schools, and joined together the native and the foreign culture. Professor MacNeill shows that he succeeded in uniting the distinctively Latin and ecclesiastical culture, with the distinctively Irish and pre-Christian culture. Up to his time Latin held the



monopoly of literature throughout Western Europe. The Romance dialects, which had grown out of Latin, "were felt to be vulgar jargons beneath the dignity of literary culture"; even for Celtic and Germanic languages the educated people showed scanty respect and carefully ignored them. First in Western Europe the Irish had a literature in their own vernacular. This fact was established by Cenn Faelad, and his Irish Grammar was compiled to make this great store of literature accessible to all. He was truly a "Pioneer of Nations." Having broken down the barrier of tradition separating the two cultures, Latin and Irish, he admitted, as Professor MacNeill points out, the *filid* and their lore to the franchise of the Latin alphabet, and turned to the services of the language, the laws, the poetry and the history of Ireland, all the resources of the Latin learning.

The identification of the site of the great University of Tuaim Drecauin, which gave its name to Tomregan parish, has been established in recent years through the researches of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society.\* Unlike Kildallan, the original townland of which still retains its ancient title, there is no townland which now bears the name Tuaim Drecauin, or Tomregan. The name is now obsolete. However, an examination of the early maps of Breiffne will help to locate it. That a townland of the name existed in the seventeenth century is shown by the *Down Survey* Map of 1654, which has a division marked "Tomregan." An earlier map of Loughtee barony—the 1609 Jacobean map—has "Tomregan." Both these maps indicate the townland jutting out in a point between the baronies of Tullyhaw and Tullyhunco.

Local investigation has shown that the present townland of Mullynagolman (Mullaig na gColman, i.e.,

\* *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. i, p. 63.

the hill of the doves) was the site of the University. All traces of buildings have long since disappeared, but it has been stated that in ploughing certain fields in the townland traces of the foundations of an oblong building and a round one have been unearthed. Some of the carved stones used in these buildings are still preserved in the neighbourhood. The burial mound of Drecauin has also disappeared and its exact location is not known with certainty; but it must have been in the neighbourhood of where the University stood. Mullynagolman is about two miles south-east of the town of Ballyconnell and is in the neighbourhood of Kildallan.

Regarding St. Bricin, the great Breiffne surgeon, we have only scanty biographical details. He was also a famous missionary, and we learn from the *Felire of Aengus* that he was "called forth from Ireland," from which we infer that he afterwards went abroad on missionary work. In the *Felire* his feast is recorded on September 5th. Although St. Dallan has survived in local tradition yet the name of St. Bricin seems to have faded from popular memory. But like St. Dallan, his name is recorded in local topography; the townland of Slievebricin (Slíabh Bricín, i.e., Bricin's Hill) lies west of Mullynagolman. This shows that in early times his name was well remembered in Tuaim Drecauin. Gerald Griffin couples him with St. Columbkille:

"When the Church of the Isles saw her glory arise  
In Colum the Dovelike and Bricin the Wise."

Very appropriately, the chief Military Infirmary in Dublin, established about 1922, has been named St. Bricin's Hospital.



## KILLESHER.

On the south-eastern shore of Loch Mac Nean, and in County Fermanagh, is the ruined church of Killesher, which has given its name to the parish. Its Gaelic form is Cill Láisir, i.e., the church of St. Laisir, who is patroness of the parish.\* In the *Martyrologies* we find the entries of no fewer than fourteen saints of the same name, and it is not quite easy now to determine with certainty which of them is here intended. Lassar of Achadh Fada appears in the *Martyrology of Donegal* on January 6th. O'Donovan, who visited Killesher in 1834, records that there is a *Tobar Laistreach* beside the ruined church; also the cell of St. Laisir is pointed out in the same townland. But he did not establish the particular saint to whom the church and well were dedicated.

In Brother Michael O'Clery's work on the Genealogies of the Kings and Saints of Ireland—*Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae*—in the Franciscan Library, Merchants' Quay, Dublin, there is a reference to St. Laisir which, however, establishes her identity. The entry concerning her genealogy is as follows:

Lasair ingen Ronain m Ninnedha m Aodha m Feargosa m Nélline m Muircertoigh m Muireadhoigh m Eogain m Nell [i.e., Niall] Naoighiallaigh.

O Achadh Beithe agus o Cill Lasair for bhrú Locha mic nEn, 13 Nou.†

This identifies St. Lasair, or Laisir, of Cill Lasair beside Loch Mac Nean, with the daughter (*ingen*) of Ronan, son (*m*) of Ninnedh, etc., descended from Niall of the Nine Hostages, monarch of Ireland, who died A.D. 405. Her festival is entered on November 13. It may be accepted without further question

\* In Roman documents of 1488 it is written "Killasyar": *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 239.

† *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. v.

that the *Cill Lasair for bhru Locha mic nEn* is identical with the present Killesher. *Achadh Beithe*, of which place she is also mentioned as patroness, is also in Co. Fermanagh; it is now Aghavea.

Even a century ago, when O'Donovan visited Killesher, the traditions concerning St. Laisir do not appear to have been well remembered. Further local inquiry may ascertain whether there may exist any collateral evidence, such as the date of the annual pattern, which would verify, from traditional sources, the festival date of St. Laisir.

### KNOCKNINNY

Knockninny, now a parish in County Fermanagh, is called by the *Four Masters*, *Cnoc Ninnro*, i.e., St. Ninnidh's Hill. St. Ninnidh, whose feast is entered on January 18th by the Irish hagiologists, was Bishop of *Inis-muighe-samh*, now better known as Inismacsaint, an island in Loch Erne. The form of the name given by the Annalists reveals its derivation: "the island of the plain of the sorrel." On this island may be seen a ruined church and beside it a very remarkable stone cross, very ancient. The island has given its name to the parish on the mainland—in Clogher diocese.

In the *Martyrology of Donegal* we are given on January 18th the festival of Ninnidh, Bishop of Inis-muighe-samh, in Loch Erne. He was, according to the genealogists, son of Ethach, son of Aid, son of Laogaire, and was born about the beginning of the sixth century. In the famous school of Clonard, County Westmeath, under St. Finian, he was educated, and among his contemporaries in that great seat of learning were St. Columbkille, St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, and St. Brendan the Navigator, who seems to have anticipated Columbus in the discovery of America.



After founding his monastery of Inis-muighe-samh St. Ninnidh is said to have been made a bishop and was the founder of many churches in the neighbourhood of Loch Erne. He died about the middle of the sixth century.

Traditionally he is believed to have retired during the season of Lent to the steep hill of Knockninny, rising from the waters of Upper Loch Erne, and there to have remained for forty days in close retreat. There are no historical records connecting St. Ninnidh with this locality, but the name of the hill furnishes the strongest and most convincing proof of a very early and reliable tradition. The Well, which supplied him with water during the Lenten season, is shown near the shore of the lake, and is known as St. Ninnidh's Well.

The present parish of Knockninny is of comparatively recent formation; it was formerly included in the parish of Tomregan. During the first half of the eighteenth century—between the years 1714 and 1750—it was detached from Tomregan and constituted a separate ecclesiastical unit. The parish church is now in Derrylin, but in pre-Reformation times there were churches in the townlands of Callowhill and Knockategal. Around the ruined church of Callowhill are to be seen some seventeenth century monuments commemorating the Maguires of Fermanagh.

#### DISERT FINCHEALL

In the *Martyrology of Donegal* we find St. Fincheall of Sliabh Guaire commemorated at January 25th, and on the same date St. Finche is entered in the *Martyrology of Tallaght*. The ancient territory of Sliabh Guaire included portions of the baronies of Loughtee, Tullaghgarvey and Clankee. From the definition of its boundaries in the Jacobean *Inquisitions* it is clear that

it occupied a considerable area in the very heart of the present East Cavan. Disert Fincheall signifies the hermitage or retreat of St. Fincheall, and it is obvious that we must search for it somewhere within this territory.

The territory of Sliabh Guaire comprised the greater part of the parishes of Kildrumsherdan, Drumgoon, Drung, Lavey, Knockbride, Laragh, with sections of Annagh, Killinkere, and Killann. The boundaries of this ancient territory, the patrimony of Philip O'Reilly, are specified in great detail in the *Inquisition* of 1618,\* which was taken at the castle of Tullyvin. Many of the place names are now obsolete, but by the help of the older maps and a knowledge of the physical features of the locality, the boundary may be traced in an unbroken line throughout its extent.

Regarding the identification of the Disert Fincheall of Sliabh Guaire, the late Chevalier W. H. Grattan-Flood, Mus. D., in his notes to *De Annatis Hiberniae*, equates it with the parish of Knockbride. But this identification is unsatisfactory and the evidence is all against it. Still less satisfactory is the suggestion, advanced reservedly however, by the editor of the *Calendar of the Register of Archbishop Fleming*, that it is identical with the parish of Kildallan, in Tullyhunco barony. That Disert Fincheall is identical with the parish of Kildrumsherdan may be deduced from an examination of the historical data.

In Papal documents of the fifteenth century the parish of Disert Fincheall is frequently mentioned, sometimes slightly disguised under Latinised forms.†

\* Patent Rolls, 19 James I. O'Donovan, *Ordnance Survey Letters*, Cavan, 1836, refers to this *Inquisition*, but the task of the identification of the place names he allotted to one of his less critical assistants who did the work very imperfectly, and his notes are, therefore, unreliable. The document is too lengthy for reproduction and annotation in these pages.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, pp. 230, 232, 243.



In 1409 it is recorded that David O'Farrelly was rector of the parish church of St. Brigid of *Disertfynchill*. Again, in 1423, Philip MacBrady promised to pay the Papal taxes for the parish church of St. Brigid of *Disertfinchilly*. Similar entries are found *sub annis* 1426 and 1428 in the Papal Annates, where the name appears as *Dysertfyndgilli* and *Disceartynceil*. There are several references to it, with the names of its rectors, in the Annates, and it is clear in the first case that it was a parish church, and, secondly, that it was dedicated to St. Brigid. But since Knockbride fulfilled both these conditions a commentator might, without further question, hastily conclude that Disert Fincheall was identical with Knockbride. Closer investigation, however, shows such a conclusion to be unwarranted.

The Papal Annates of 1433 refer to the parish church of SS. Brigid and Fynchille of Disertfynchill, alias Teallachgarnech (*rectorie parrochialis ecclesie Sanctarum Brigide et Fynchille de Disertfynchill alias de Teallachgarnech*).<sup>\*</sup> This extract preserves the names of both patronesses; furthermore, it specifies that Disert Fincheall is in Teallachgarnech, that is, in the barony of Tullaghgarvey, the ancient *Teallach Gairbheth*—*Teallac Gairbheth*, i.e., the tribe of Gairbheth, one of the early princes of the O'Reillys. The Annates *sub anno* 1446 have another reference to the parish church of SS. Brigid and Fyncille of Dysserfyncille.<sup>†</sup> The church was, evidently, an important one in medieval times.

At the same period, as shown elsewhere in these pages, a large number of the parish churches of Kilmore were dependencies of the Abbey of Fore, County Westmeath. A considerably smaller number belonged to the Abbey of Ceanannus in Meath. That the church of Disert Fincheall was a dependency of Fore is apparent

<sup>\*</sup> *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 234.

<sup>†</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 236.

from an entry, dated July 21st, 1411, in the *Register* of Primate Fleming, concerning a dispute which arose regarding the jurisdiction of the Prior of Fore. The *Register* has "Disertyncill." The Cavan *Inquisition* of 1609 has Killsardinny (Kildrumsherdan) among the number of parish churches belonging to Fore. In the list of Cavan churches given in the *Rawlinson MS* (Bodleian Library, Oxford), dated 1608, is "the parish church of Killisserdinny the rectory is appropriate to the said Abbay of Fowre [Fore]."

The church of Knockbride was not a dependency of Fore: it belonged to Ceanannus. This is definitely stated in the Report of the 1609 *Inquisition*. The *Rawlinson MS*. has "the parish church of Knockbridy the rectory is appropriate to the Abbay of Kells in Meith [Meath]." It follows that Disert Fincheall and Knockbride were distinct parishes; the former belonged to Fore and the latter to Ceanannus.

Disert Fincheall was in the barony of Tullaghgarvey; Knockbride is in Clankee and no portion of it extends into Tullaghgarvey.

To sum up: Disert Fincheall was dedicated to St. Brigid, was in Tullaghgarvey, and was a dependency of Fore. The only logical conclusion is that it was identical with the present Kildrumsherdan. Beyond the fact that Knockbride was also under the patronage of St. Brigid it cannot be equated with Disert Fincheall.

As a place name Disert Fincheall—Disert Fincheall—has long since become obsolete and is locally forgotten. Evidently it passed out of general use in the sixteenth century, since which time the present parish name has been adopted. The townland map of 1609 has "Farnekill, clearly a corrupt form of Fincheall, so that the older name must have been remembered in the early seventeenth century. It is not shown, however, on the *Down Survey* map of 1654, which has "Killserdinny." The ruined church is marked on both maps.



The site of the old parish church of SS. Brigid and Fincheall is in the townland of Drumhurt, about four miles from Cootehill. St. Brigid is patroness of the parish of Kildrumsherdan, but no tradition of St. Fincheall is now remembered. O'Donovan, who visited the district in 1836, notes that St. Brigid is patroness, but since he has no reference to St. Fincheall it is quite certain that he had heard no tradition nor even mention of her name. The historical materials then available were scanty and the documents which would have elucidated many a historical problem were then inaccessible in the Roman archives.

Kildrumsherdan is now usually called Kilsherdany, or Kill. O'Donovan gives the Gaelic form *Cill Drum Súirteain*. Early forms of the name are practically identical with the present; "Killysardinny," 1590 *Inquisition*; "Killsardinny," 1609; "Killserdinny," 1654; "Killyserdin," 1704; "Kildromseridan," Townland List, 1709; "Killeserdinen," 1714. The long ridge, or series of ridges, passing through the parish was called *Druim Súirteain*, i.e., the ridge of the Sheridans. The name was applied to the district rather than to a particular townland. Sub-divisions of this tribal territory are preserved in the townland names:—Drumgill, Drumnagress, Drumeltan, Drumhurt, Drumerkillew, Drumleague, etc. The Sheridan family was numerically strong in the parish in the sixteenth century as we may infer from the entries in the *Fiants* of Elizabeth. In 1609 the following townlands were church property: Drumchill (Drumerkillew), Aghorahan (northern end of Drumerkillew), Rachane (Rakane), and Dromgress (Drumnagress), together with the townland containing the parish church, Farnekill—now Drumhurt.

Lengthy names have a tendency towards abbreviation and Kildrumsherdan became shortened to Kilsherdan. But it still retains its original significance as the name of a district rather than of a townland.

Drumhurt is *Drumhúir*, i.e., the Ridge of the Order, or ecclesiastical rule (cf. Latin *ordo*). Cornanurney, i.e., the hill of the oratory, is near the old church and suggests an early ecclesiastical structure. Another townland is Cornabraher, i.e., the hill of the friars. These names testify to the ecclesiastical importance of the district in early times.

The site of the old parish church is marked by a cemetery in which many interesting inscriptions may be deciphered. The building has disappeared, but traces of the foundations may be observed. The period during which St. Fincheall flourished is not recorded, but she must have belonged to the early Christian centuries and was most probably a contemporary of St. Brigid. No traditions regarding her have survived, nor is her name even remembered, although her festival is established on January 25th in the Irish *Calendars*.

#### ANNAGH

St. Mochonna of Earnaidhe is venerated on January 25th, according to the *Martyrologies* of Donegal and Tallaght. The *Martyrology of Donegal* calls her Mochonna of Earnaidhe-Mochua.

The district of Earnaidhe was in the territory of Sliabh Guaire. The parish name, Urney, preserves the original title; but the ancient Earnaidhe was more extensive than the present parish of Urney. The name does not appear to be ecclesiastical, but is of tribal origin, being derived from that of a pre-Christian people inhabiting the country around Loch Erne. The parish church of Annagh, beside Urney, was dedicated to St. Mochonna. The Papal Annates, *sub anno* 1450, have a notice of the "parish church of S. Motana of Enga [Annagh]."\* This gives the Latinised form of the saint's name. Traditionally

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 251.



St. Mochonna is connected with Annagh, the ruined church of which contains many interesting monumental slabs. We have no means of discovering any further details concerning St. Mochonna, nor are we informed of the precise period during which she flourished.

### AELMAGH

The *Seven Bishops of Aelmagh* are commemorated in the *Irish Martyrologies* on August 23rd. Under the same date Mac Firis enters the Seven Bishops of Domhnach Mor Aolmaighe, i.e., the "church of the limestone plain." Tirechan's Memoir in the *Book of Armagh* informs us that St. Patrick himself was the founder of the *Domhnach Ailmaighe*. The name of this church is given as *Domhnach Srata* in the *Tripartite Life*. As a place name Aolmaigh has long since become obsolete, and its identification is, therefore, more uncertain. A reference in the *Four Masters*, at the year 781, shows that the "limestone plain" was in the territory of Calraighe, or Calry, which then covered a much larger area than the present parish of Calry in County Sligo.\* A recent writer, and a reliable authority on topographical questions, shows that the present townland of Donaghmore, in Cloonclare parish, County Leitrim, and immediately south-east of Manorhamilton, has the weightiest claim to having been the site of St. Patrick's church.† Tirechan explains that the Domhnach was in the glens eastward of Drumlease, and this supports the view that Donaghmore preserves the name of this Patrician foundation.

There is a persistent tradition that Cloonclare parish was founded by St. Patrick himself, that is, that he founded a church within its borders. No trace of this

\* Cf. *Journal of the Ardagh and Clonmacnoise Antiquarian Society*, 1926.

† Morris, *St. Patrick in the County Sligo*. — (Sligo, 1930.)

church has survived in the present townland of Donaghmore. The history of the Seven Bishops of Aelmagh, their names, or the periods during which they lived, cannot now be determined; but it is not necessary to assume that they were contemporaries. Evidently they were attached to the Domhnach of St. Patrick, and lived during the sixth and seventh centuries. The mystic number seven—seven bishops, seven churches, etc.—occurs very often in the ancient *Calendars*.

#### CLOONLOGHER

St. Curcach of Cluain Lothair is entered in the ancient *Calendars* on August 9th. She is given in the pedigrees as Curcach, daughter to Dael, son of Maisine, and belonging to the race of Colla Menn. The *Martyrologies* have Curcach of Cluain Lothair in Breiffne O'Ruairc. This is now Cloonlogher parish in County Leitrim. Nothing further concerning St. Curcach has been ascertained. O'Donovan was not able to discover the name of the patron of the parish. The Gaelic form of the parish title is Cluain Locair; the second half of the name appears to be personal.

#### DRUMLEASE.

Tirechan's Memoir in the *Book of Armagh* informs us that St. Patrick, after labouring in County Sligo, proceeded to *Calraige tri Muigi*, i.e., Calraige of the Three Plains, where he erected a church near Drumlease; the text reads:

Et Exiit ad regiones Callrigi Tre Maige et fecit aeclessiam iuxta *Druim Leas* et baptizavit multos.\*

Here he baptised MacCaerthinn, who presented him with the site for a church. Drumlease is now a parish, retaining its ancient name, and the site of St. Patrick's

\* *Tripartite Life*, Rolls Edition, vol. ii, p. 328.



church is indicated by a cemetery near the eastern extremity of Loch Gill, and about half a mile south-east of the little town of Dromahaire, famed for its once great Franciscan monastery.

The following extract from the *Book of Armagh* preserves the original name of the place, Druim Daro, as it was known before the arrival of St. Patrick :

After this offering Patrick set up in Druimm Daro, that is, in Druim Lias. Patrick left his pupil there, Benignus his name, and he was therein for seventeen years. Lassar, daughter of Anfolmid, of the race of Caichan, took the veil from Patrick. She abode there after Benignus for three score years.\*

The writer of the *Tripartite Life* gives the same information but in slightly greater detail :—

Thereafter Patrick went into the district of Callraighe, to Druim Daro, the stead wherein to-day standeth Druim Lias. There he baptised Caerthann's son, and that place was offered to Patrick for ever. Thereafter Patrick set up on the offering in Druim Daro. " Druim Lias " (it is) to-day, namely, from Patrick's stations and from the sheds (*liasa*) it was named. Patrick left his foster-son Benen there, in the abbacy, for the space of twenty years.†

Druim Daro, i.e., the ridge of the oaks, was, therefore, the older name of Drumlease ; and the latter name was applied on account of the huts, or sheds, erected by the saint as residences for his followers. It became an important ecclesiastical establishment and, according to Colgan (who quotes the writings of St. Aengus the Culdee) seven bishops await the Resurrection in the cemetery of Drumlease. In our Irish *Martyrologics*, at February 9th, there is mention of St. Cruimther Finne of Druim Licce. The ancient cemetery is

\* *Additions to Tirechan's Collections : Tripartite Life*, vol. ii, p. 339.

† *Tripartite Life*, vol. i, p. 145.

situated on the summit of a cone-shaped hill, near the eastern border of the townland of Drumlease. All traces of St. Patrick's church have long since disappeared, but the foundations have frequently been laid bare.

Referring again to Tirechan's Memoir we are told of those baptised and of the lands granted by the chieftain to the saint :

Patrick came into the district of Calrige and baptised Cairthen's son and Caichan, and after he had baptised them Cairthen's son and Caichan offered Caichan's fifth part to God and to Patrick, and the king made it free to God and to Patrick.\*

The writer then proceeds to specify with great precision the boundaries of the territory of Drumlease, presented to the saint by Cairthen and Caichan. The account preserves a most interesting description of the topography of ancient Drumlease :

These are the boundaries of the fifth part, that is Caichan's fifth. From the stream of the hill of Berach Abraidne as far as a . . . from the mountain. From the stream of Conaclid to Reiriu, and from the border of Druimm Nit to the stream of Tamlacht Dublocho, by the stream to Long Grenlaich by Ront. Round the Sant (Sanad ?) to the Moor of the two Hillocks ; from the Moor of the two Hillocks by the south of the meadow by Fur as far as the Nine-Trees Hill ; with Daire Mor, with Daire Medoin, with Daire Fidas, with Daire Meil, with Druim Toidached by the stream as far as Conaclid. Lord and vassal offered all this immediately after Baptism had been conferred upon them.†

\* *Additions to Tirechan's Collections: Tripartite Life*, vol. ii, p. 339.

† This passage exemplifies the detail with which the early topographers traced the boundaries of the ancient territories. The place names are now obsolete, but a careful study of the physical features of the locality should help to identify them. The location of the boundaries of Caichan's "fifth part" would constitute a valuable piece of original research, which I commend to local investigators.



The right of succession to the rich lands granted to the church was then carefully defined. It was specified that the right of inheritance was vested not in any particular family but in the race of Feth Fió to which Cairthen and Caichan belonged. The record helps to make clear the manner in which church lands were administered in the early Irish Church. I quote from the *Additions to Tirechan's Collections* :

This is Feth Fió's confession and his bequest two years before his death, to the monks of Druim Lias and to the worthies of Callrigi, both laymen and clerics of Druim Lias. That there should not be a family right of inheritance to Druim Lias, but that the race of Feth Fio [should inherit it], if there were any one of them, [i.e.] of the clan, who should be good, should be devout, should be conscientious. If there should not be, that it should [then] be seen whether one could be found of the community of Druim Lias or of its monks. If one is not found, a member of Patrick's community is put into it.\*

Later on further grants of lands were bestowed on this church. St. Patrick placed there two of his own nephews, who seem to have been possessed of lands and became liberal benefactors :

Nao and Nai, sons of Patrick's brother, and Dall, son of Hencar, whom Patrick left there, offered three half-indli [ploughlands] through their land to Patrick in perpetuity. And Conderc, son of Dall, offered his son to Patrick.†

The view of the surrounding country obtained from the old cemetery of Drumlease is truly grand, and in pre-Patrician times, when the plains of Calraige were covered with mighty oaks, the striking prospect must

\* *Additions to Tirechan's Collections: Tripartite Life*, vol. ii, p. 339. The context implies that Feth Fio is another name for Benignus, or Binean, son of Luigne, first abbot of Druim Lias. Another Benignus, son of Sescnen, was afterwards St. Patrick's Coadjutor in Armagh. The names are often confused.

† *Ibid*, p. 341.

have been enhanced. The picturesque River Bonnet—*Buanaid*, i.e., the lasting river—rising in Glenade Loch, and passing through Manorhamilton and Dromahaire, pursues its winding course through wooded glens and finally empties itself into Loch Gill. Here the varied scenery of North Leitrim—the O'Ruairc country—is seen at its best. The ruined castles of the O'Ruaircs—Castlecar and Newtown Castle—lie away to the west, and the road passing from Dromahaire to Sligo, and skirting the northern shore of Loch Gill, leads through the famous valley immortalised by Moore in his poem—“The Valley lay smiling before me.” \*

It was smiling then [observes Archbishop Healy] and it is smiling still, upon one of the fairest scenes in Ireland, where every charm that can lend beauty to a landscape—lake and river, plain and wood, and mountain—show themselves in marvellous richness and variety of perspective to which neither poet nor painter can do full justice.†

Away beyond Loch Gill rise the Benbulbin mountains with their steep cliff-like sides. Viewed from Drumlease the mountains of Sligo rise like towering sentinels guarding the western fringes of the “Smiling Valley.”

In this pleasant district on the “Ridge of the Oaks” St. Patrick remained for a considerable time, and the beauty of the landscape seems to have made a very

\* Referring to the supposed twelfth century incident of the elopement of Dervorgilla, wife of O'Ruairc. The poem has, unfortunately, helped to perpetuate a tale which rests on no historical foundation. It is one of the historical fables which leans on the very doubtful authority of Giraldus Cambrensis. But the story served a useful political purpose at the time, and seems to have been specially invented with that end in view. The truth, or falsehood, of the report was quite immaterial to Cambrensis.

Dervorgilla was born in 1108, and was, therefore, at the time of the elopement, in her forty-fourth year. Diarmaid was then in his sixty-second year. The “Church of the Nuns” at Clonmacnoise was erected, in 1180, by Dervorgilla, who was also a generous benefactor of the Abbey of Mellifont, County Louth, where she spent her declining years, and where she was interred.

† *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 285.



special appeal to him. It is believed, not without convincing historical reasons, that he intended to establish his ecclesiastical capital at Drumlease. Not alone did he erect a church there, but he also erected a number of residences suggesting at once that he contemplated a permanent settlement. In several parts of Ireland we find the sites of Patrician churches, but rarely do we find any indication, historical or traditional, of settlements. St. Patrick's journeys were missionary ones and rarely was his stay in any particular place of a prolonged nature. Drumlease was unique in this respect, and was Armagh's only serious rival for the honour of being Ireland's ecclesiastical capital. St. Patrick placed Benen, or Benignus, in charge of Drumlease, and the latter ruled over it for a long period afterwards, eighteen or twenty years.

It is unnecessary here to enter into a discussion on the reasons which historians have advanced to account for St. Patrick's final choice of Armagh as his ecclesiastical capital. Several reasons, both diplomatic and ecclesiastical, seem to have influenced his choice.\* But it is certain that he had formed a very strong attachment for Drumlease, and not without very careful consideration did he leave it and finally decide to establish his Primatial See at Armagh.

\* *Vide* Archbishop Healy, *Life of St. Patrick*, pp. 485, *et seq.*; Bury, *St. Patrick*, pp. 154, *et seq.* Bury was an agnostic and his temperament and principles were such that due allowance must be made before accepting some of his historical theories.

## CHAPTER VII

CHURCHES AND PATRONS OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL  
BREIFFNE—continued.

## DROMAHAIRE

THERE is a well-founded tradition that St. Patrick himself established a church at Dromahaire. The great Franciscan monastery, now in ruins, situated on the south bank of the River Bonnet, was at a much later period erected on the site of St. Patrick's early church.\* The monastery is known by various names: *Dromahaire* (or *Drumahaire*, as it is sometimes written)—*DRUM* Á *ÚÁ* *ETIAR*, i.e., the ridge of the two air demons, suggesting a pre-Christian origin; *Bally O'Rourke*—*Dáile* Ó *Ruairc*, i.e., the town of the O'Rourkes; *St. Patrick's Rock*, *CARRAIS* *ṖÁDPAIC*, suggesting that there was a Patrician tradition connected with it; *Creevelea*—*CRAOB* *LIAC*.†

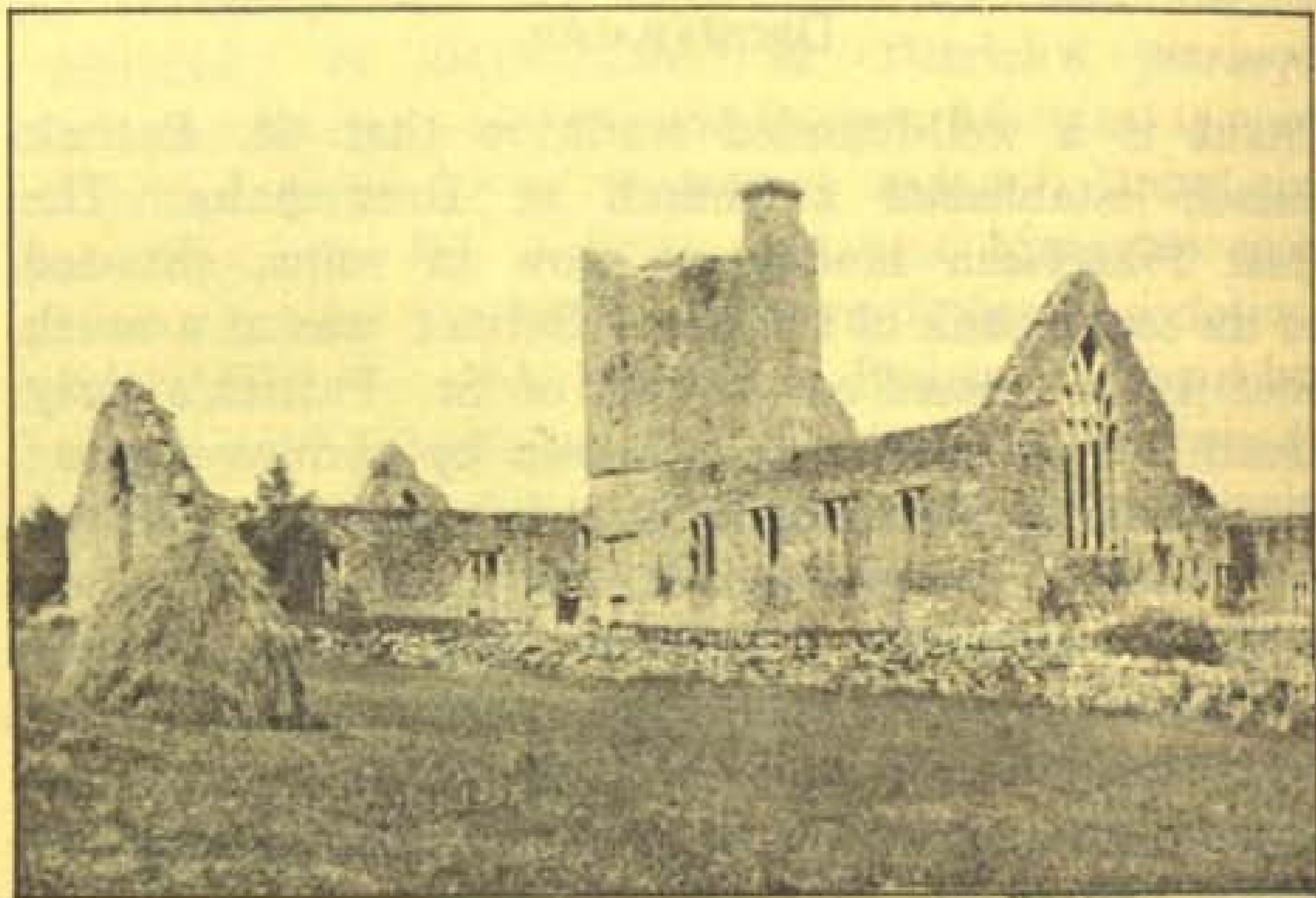
The monastery of Dromahaire is not, strictly speaking, in Kilmore diocese; it is on the Ardagh side of the River Bonnet, which at this point is the boundary between the two dioceses. But as it was founded by the O'Ruaircs of West Breiffne, is on the very borders of the diocese, and has many links with Kilmore, a brief sketch of its history may be included here.

\* Rev. C. P. Meenan, *Rise and Fall of the Irish Franciscan Monasteries*, a work which has passed through several editions.

† This name is usually understood to mean the "grey branch," but this interpretation is unsatisfactory. Some Scotch etymologists have suggested that the name *creeve*, occurring so frequently in our place names, is not in every case to be understood as derived from *craob*, a branch, but rather from the Cymric *cryf*, meaning a fortress or place of strength. "No doubt in many cases the word has this meaning. "The grey fortress" would be a more intelligible interpretation of Creevelea, especially as it was an O'Ruairc stronghold.



The Franciscan monastery of Dromahaire was founded in 1508 by Eoghan O'Ruairc, King of Breiffne O'Ruairc, and his wife, Margaret O'Brien, daughter of Conor O'Brien, King of Thomond. Eoghan O'Ruairc was the father of Brian Ballach, and grandfather of Brian na Murtha, who was executed in London, by order of Queen Elizabeth, for harbouring



[Photo]

DROMAHAIRE ABBEY

[Mason]

in his castle of Dromahaire the Spaniards of the ill-fated Armada. In Franciscan literature the monastery is usually named "St. Patrick's Rock."

The building of the monastery was completed in 1511, in which year the consecration ceremony was performed by Bishop Thomas MacBrady of Kilmore. The founders—Margaret, who died in 1512, and her husband, Eoghan, who died in 1528—were interred in a magnificent tomb in the chancel of the monastery church. In 1536 the monastery was accidentally burned and one of the Friars, Eremon O'Donnell, perished in the flames. The edifice was restored by Brian Ballach O'Ruairc, and flourished for some

years until the confiscations, when the Franciscans were dispersed.

Towards the close of Elizabeth's reign the monastery was pillaged by Sir Richard Bingham, Governor of Connacht. The district was then parcelled out between Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and the Hamiltons. Of the notorious families of Villiers and Hamilton it is truly recorded that they "scourged the native population with a rod of iron." Verily, they inherited the mantle of Tamerlane the Tartar.

In 1642 the Franciscans returned to live in the monastery, which they repaired. But their stay was not for long, for in 1650 they were finally dispersed and the Puritans took possession of it. The monastery was leased to an undertaker named Harrison, whose infamy is not yet forgotten in Dromahaire. He built himself a castle on one of the Doonbran Islands in the River Bonnet, at the junction of the parishes of Drumlease, Killanummery and Killery, and proceeded to enrich himself on the proceeds of sacrilege. Erecting a gate at the entrance to the cemetery he demanded a charge for burials. A contemporary writer refers to Harrison as "a truculent, grasping wretch . . . a veritable Charon."

It is worthy of record that it was in the monastery of Dromahaire that Father Donough Mooney, the celebrated Franciscan Provincial and the historian of his Order, was ordained and celebrated his first Mass. His account of the Irish Franciscan monasteries, written in 1617, preserves much that is now of great historical value. In his youth he had served as a soldier in the army of the Earl of Desmond; tired of military life, he joined the Franciscans in the monastery of Donegal, made his novitiate in Multifarnam, County Westmeath, and completed his studies at Dromahaire. Afterwards at Louvain he compiled his account of the Irish monasteries.



Archdall, in his *Monasticon Hibernicum*, tells that in his time (*circa* 1780) the monument of the founders was to be seen in the ruined church. No trace of it can now be located. Several O'Rourke tombs, with elaborate carvings and quaint inscriptions, are to be seen. The earliest inscribed slab now to be found is dated May 22nd, 1721, and is in memory of "Hugh Ó Roirk and Catharin Mc Ternan." Across the top is a long panel displaying a spade, a diamond, a club and a heart. I cannot propose to unravel the mystery of these symbols, especially on a monumental slab. Is there any historical evidence to suggest that the O'Rourkes were patrons of the game of Bridge? Below this panel is the figure of an animal, most likely a cat, which is occasionally depicted among the O'Rourke emblems.

No monuments earlier than the eighteenth century appear to have survived. A horizontal slab marks the grave of Teig Mc Owen O'Rourke, who died February 2nd, 1730, and his wife Una, died August 2nd, 1737. Several monuments with the O'Rourke Coat of Arms and motto, *Serviando Guberno*, are around the ancient cemetery, the necropolis of the O'Rourkes.\*

Two inscribed slabs, one horizontal and the other a broken head-stone, mark the graves of priests at the east end of the cloisters. The horizontal slab commemorates Rev. Charles Brady, pastor of the parish for 30 years, who died September 4th, 1813, aged 61 years. The broken headstone records the name of Rev. Peter Bernard Magauran, O.S.F., who was parish priest of Killanummery and died December 1st, 1837. Both monuments show a chalice with a hand on either side of it.

A magnificent silver chalice, presented in 1619 to this monastery by Mary, wife of Thaddeus O'Rourke, is

\* I am indebted to Mr. Vincent Keany, Manorhamilton, for his valuable assistance in examining these inscriptions.



THE O'ROURKE CHALICE (1619)

still in use in the church of Butlersbridge, near Cavan.\* The chalice, which displays highly skilled workmanship, carries the following inscription :

*Maria Ni Domnaill filia Hugonis Magoni Pro  
AiA Thaddei Ruairc Sui Mariti me fieri fecit  
Monasterio Chriveleliae, 1619.*

\* The accompanying illustration is from a photograph prepared for the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* by the late Rev. J. B. Meehan, P.P. For permission to reproduce it I have to express my indebtedness to Rev. John J. Wynne, S.J., New York, the Editor of the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.



This Mary O'Donnell was a half-sister of Red Hugh; her husband, Thady, was a brother of the Prince of Breiffne.

Another O'Rourke chalice is preserved in the oratory at Clonalis, Co. Roscommon, the residence of The O'Connor Don. It was made in 1722 for the monastery of Dromahaire, as shown by the following inscription, which is around the base:

*Orate pro Illmo ac Rmo, D. Thadaeo O'Rourke Ep.  
Alad. qui me fieri fecit pro Conv. Petrae S. Pat. Anno  
1722.*

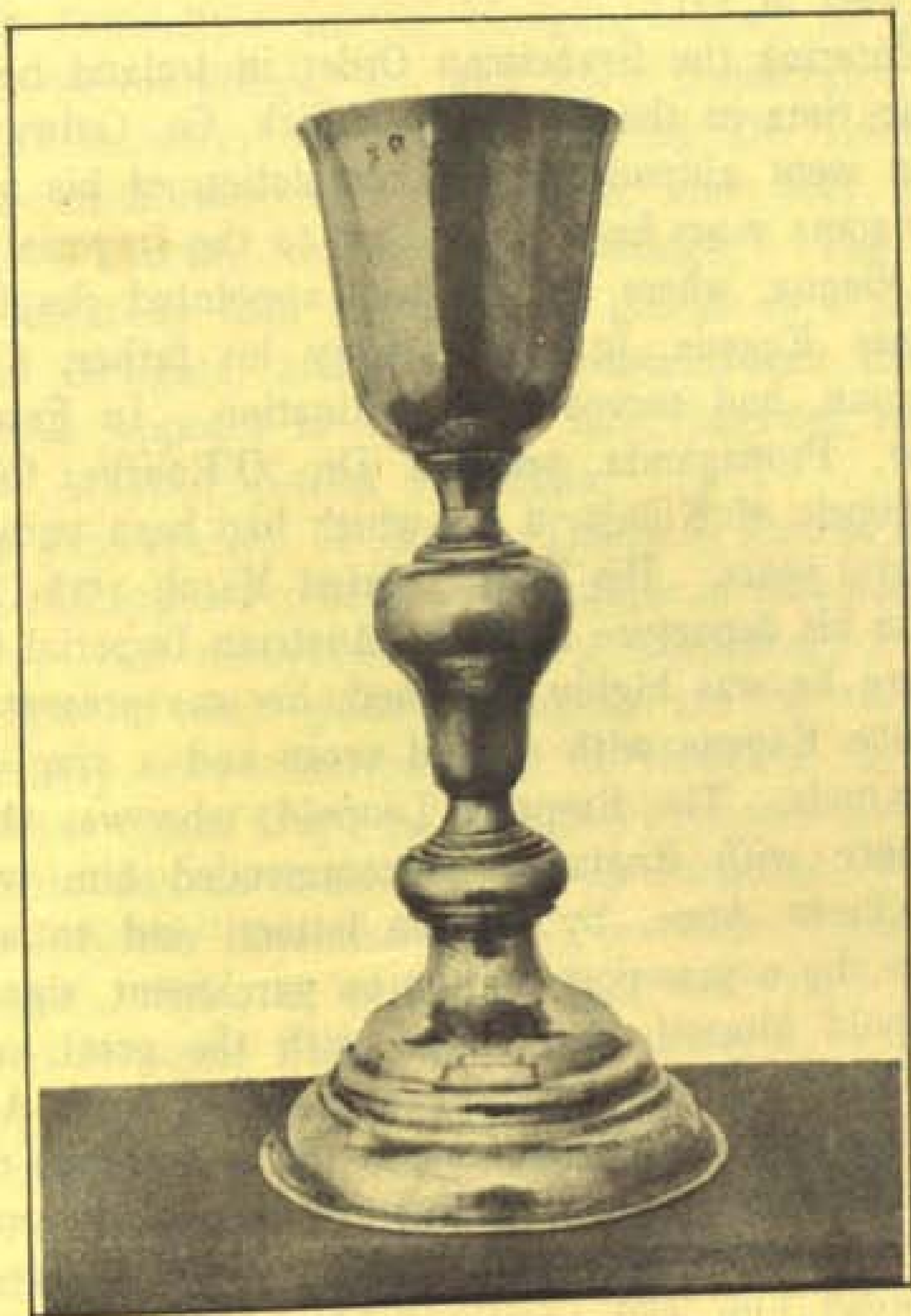
which may be translated:

Pray for the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Lord Thadeus O'Rourke, Bishop of Killala, who caused me to be made for the Convent of St. Patrick's Rock, in the year 1722.

Dr. Thady Francis O'Rourke was a Franciscan belonging to the monastery of Dromahaire. On August 24, 1707, he was consecrated Bishop of Killala, and for a quarter of a century afterwards was obliged to adopt various disguises and to live in hiding in the neighbourhood of Loch Gill and Dromahaire. Spies were ever on his track, and a report dated March 3rd, 1713, has it that "Timothy Ruork, formerly a Franciscan friar of the Convent of Milick, near Banahir, in the County of Gallway," was travelling through his Diocese of Killa under an assumed name—"Mr. Fielding."\* In a sheaf of depositions taken at Sligo on November 4th, 1712, it is reported that the Titular Bishop of Killala, "one Rourke," was busily engaged in the highly treasonable practice of ordaining young priests. After this the bishop appears to have lived mostly at Dromahaire, where he seems to have had better security. In 1718 he was living in a thatched cabin near the ruined monastery where in the same year he instructed

\* Burke, *Irish Priests in the Penal Times*, p. 214.

his relative, the famous Charles O'Connor of Belanagar, in the rudiments of the classics. The O'Connor Don, in whose possession the chalice is now preserved, is a descendant of Charles O'Connor.\*



BISHOP THADY O'ROURKE'S CHALICE (1722)

The remarkable career of Bishop Thady O'Rourke deserves to be better remembered than it is to-day. Born in, or about, the year 1658, he was the son of Captain Tiernan O'Rourke, who after 1691 accompanied the Irish army to the Continent where he

\* For the photograph of the chalice, here reproduced, I must acknowledge the courtesy of The O'Connor Don.



was killed in the battle of Luzara in 1702 ; his mother, Isabel MacDonogh, was a sister of the famous Counsellor, Terence MacDonogh, of Creevagh, County Sligo, an eminent Catholic lawyer, and the only Catholic then allowed to practise at the Irish Bar—he died in 1713.

Entering the Franciscan Order in Ireland he spent some time in the Friary of Millick, Co. Galway, and then went abroad for the completion of his studies. For some years he was attached to the Imperial Court in Vienna, where he had been appointed chaplain to Prince Eugene, in whose army his father, Captain Tiernan, had served with distinction. In February, 1707, Propaganda selected Dr. O'Rourke for the bishopric of Killala, a see which had been vacant for several years. His Brief is dated March 15th, 1707.\*

On his departure from the Austrian Imperial Court, where he was highly esteemed, he was presented by Prince Eugene with a gold cross and a ring set in diamonds. The Emperor Leopold, who was then in alliance with England, "recommended him warmly to Queen Anne, by private letters, and to all his allies, by a pass-port written on parchment, signed by Leopold himself, and sealed with the great seal of the Empire."† Travelling as a priest from Austria on his way to Ireland, and in the worst days of the Penal enactments, this Imperial pass-port procured for him an audience with Queen Anne who graciously received him and presented him with letters for a safe journey to Ireland. A unique experience, indeed!

The difficulty of receiving consecration in Ireland was then a formidable one. There were at the time only two bishops in all Ireland : Archbishop Comerford

\* A copy of James III's petition to the Pope asking for Dr. O'Rourke's appointment to the see of Killala is in Renehan's *Collections on Irish Church History*, p. 298.

† *Memoirs of Charles O'Connor*. Many of the Kilmore priests of the period appear to have received ordination from Bishop O'Rourke.

of Cashel, old and infirm and with a price on his head, and Bishop Patrick Donnelly of Dromore, then a prisoner in Newgate, Dublin. Arriving in Dublin Dr. O'Rourke, provided with his royal recommendations, appears to have readily procured access to Bishop Donnelly's cell in Newgate where, in those dismal surroundings, he was duly consecrated by Bishop Donnelly, the assistants being Dr. Edmund Byrne, Archbishop-elect of Dublin, and Very Rev. Fergus O'Ferrall, Archdeacon of Ardagh.\* The new Irish hierarchy had, therefore, its genesis in a prison cell in Newgate, and the newly-consecrated Bishop O'Rourke appears to have, in turn, imposed hands on the Archbishop-elect of Dublin.

The consecration of Bishop Thady O'Rourke in a prison cell appears to be an event unique in ecclesiastical history. But many extraordinary happenings within the walls of that gloomy dungeon are on record.† Gilbert (*op. cit.*) describes how in Newgate and the notorious "Black Dog" prison bribery reigned supreme and there was an entire absence of discipline. Burke in his *Hibernia Dominicana* refers to Father Dominick MacEgan, O.P., a prisoner, who celebrated Mass daily in Newgate from 1700 until his death in 1713. During that period when the Penal laws closed up the churches, the Catholics of Dublin usually assisted at Father MacEgan's Mass in the prison. A consecration ceremony could, therefore, be performed there with comparative security. The jailer of Newgate, the illiterate John Morrison, could be sufficiently bribed to ignore such proceedings.

\* Most Rev. N. Donnelly, "The Diocese of Dublin in the Eighteenth Century," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 1890, vol. xi., pp. 921-924; Very Rev. Reginald Walsh, O.P., "Glimpses of the Penal Times," *op. cit.*, 1907, vol. xxii., pp. 248-254; 1909, vol. xxv., pp. 404-407; 1911, vol. xxx., pp. 384-386. Cf. Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, vol. ii., p. 178.

For some useful notes I am indebted to Rev. Charles O'Connor, S.J., M.A., and to Right Rev. Msgr. Richard Brady, Loretto Heights College, Colorado, U.S.A.

† Vide Gilbert, *History of Dublin*, vol. i., p. 266.



Arriving in his western diocese Bishop Thady had to go in hiding ; recommendations from the Emperor of Austria and Queen Anne had little influence with the fanatical government officials of the west. During the greater part of his episcopate he lived with his relatives, the O'Conors, but under assumed names. In the *Diary* of Charles O'Connor, of Belanagar, under date 1717, there is an entry referring to *an Geraltach*, i.e., Fitzgerald, one of the Bishop's aliases. This Charles O'Connor was a remarkable man and a splendid Gaelic and classical scholar ; the Bishop appears to have been his *grand*-uncle rather than his uncle as is usually stated. Dr. O'Rourke's episcopal ring was preserved at Clonalis, but was lost, only temporarily let us hope, about twelve years ago.

Bishop O'Rourke died on March 2nd, 1734, at the age of 76, and was interred in Dromahaire monastery. A horizontal monument displaying a mitre, crozier and missal, marks his last resting place. The inscription is as follows :

*Here Lyeth ye Body of Thady  
O'Rourke, B. of Killalla, who  
Departed ys Life March ye 2nd 1734.  
Aged 76.  
Filiz atq reguz princeps Thadeo  
triumphis.  
Regria petens cali dispiciensque  
soli.*

An inscription at the base records that the monument was restored by Rev. Cormac MacSharry, P.P., Dromahaire, in 1883. The inscription appears to have been then deepened or re-cut, which accounts for the rather archaic Latinity. The Latin portion, reconstructed by the late Canon Carrigan, should read as follows : " Filius atque regum princeps Thadaeus triumphis Regna petens coeli despiciensque soli,"

which may be translated, "Thady, descendant and spiritual director of kings, has succeeded in gaining a



CARVINGS IN CLOISTERS, DROMAHAIRE

heavenly, and in contemning an earthly, kingdom." It is probable that the errors in the Latin were due to



the worn condition of the original inscription, and that the stonecutter of 1883 was unacquainted with Latin grammar.

The ruins of the monastery are very extensive and the numerous carved slabs are deserving of close examination.\* On one of the bays near the middle of the north side of the cloister arcade are three interesting carvings, first closely examined by the late H. S. Crawford. The first of these represents a monk in his habit and marked with the *stigmata*, evidently representing St. Francis. The right hand holds back the robe to show the wound in the side, and the left points to a scroll across the lower part of the figure. This scroll carries an inscription which has not been deciphered. As Mr. Crawford points out the inscription seems to have been left unfinished. The second figure represents St. Francis in a pulpit, with a cross of unusual form placed upright beside him, and birds perched in a tree close by.† The stem of the tree is turned into a knotted cord springing from the lower part of the pulpit. The third design is a foliage pattern, probably representing a convolvulus. In the cloisters may be observed single letters (about ten in all) incised on many of the pillars. The original order of these letters is now lost, as the pillars on which they are cut had fallen and have been re-erected. Mr. Crawford conjectures that they may have formed an alphabet like those found on tiles in other places.

Outside the nave, to the south, is the monument to "O'Donnell Hugh," who died in 1754. It is locally known as the "Earl's Tombstone." It displays a large shield on which is a hand holding a cross, a coronet is placed above, and the supporters are a bull and a leopard. The motto is—*In hoc Signo Vences* (sic).

\* Cf. *Journal of the Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in Ireland*, vol. ix.

† This refers to the well-known legend of St. Francis.

The monument of Daniel O'Boyle, died 1771, stands in the transept. It bears at the top the letters I.H.S., with sun, moon and two stars and another luminary, probably the Star of Bethlehem.

In 1880 the monastery was vested in the Commissioners of Public Works, and valuable work has since been done to preserve the building from further decay.\* Even in its ruins this great O'Rourke foundation, one of the last founded before the Dissolution, cannot fail to impress the visitor.†

After the Williamite confiscations some of the O'Rourkes fled to France with the "Wild Geese" and served under Patrick Sarsfield. In 1760 two of the family, John and Cornelius, went from France to Russia, where they received commissions in the army of the Empress, Elizabeth I. High rank, titles, and decorations awaited them in the armies of the Czars, and their descendants still retain these titles.

In 1922 a Russian prelate, Count Edward O'Rourke, was appointed by the Holy See Bishop of Pergame and Apostolic Administrator of the Free City of Danzig. Bishop Count O'Rourke, who is descended from one of these exiles, was born at Basin, in the Diocese of Minsk, Poland, on October 26th, 1876. His career has been a notable one and worthy of the noble Breiffne family

\* An excellent account, with plans and drawings of the existing ruins, entitled *The Ecclesiastical Remains at Creevelea Abbey, County Leitrim*, is published in the eighty-second Annual Report of the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland (Dublin, 1913-14. Second Edition. Revised, 1925.)

† A lucid article on the scenic beauties of Drumlease and Dromahaire, written by my friend the late Rev. Joseph B. Meehan, P.P., M.R.I.A., appeared in the *Catholic Bulletin* (Dublin), May and July, 1912. Father Meehan, who was born at Manorhamilton, on December 6, 1863, founded in 1919 the *Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, and was a leading authority on Breiffne history. A popular volume, *Dysert-Diarrada; or Irish Place names, Their Beauty and Their Degradation*, appeared (anonymously) from his pen in 1919. His death, which occurred at Killinkere on October 18, 1926, was an irreparable loss. To his guidance and encouragement in the fields of historical research I owe much, and his wonderful library was always at my disposal. Ar lám óir óé go raib a anam.



to which he belongs. He is usually known as the "Irish Bishop of Danzig," and it is significant that he should have been chosen to govern that important diocese on the Baltic coast.

Bishop Count O'Rourke is in appearance a typical Irishman and, although many generations of his ancestors have never known Ireland yet he speaks the Gaelic language of his forefathers. His mother-tongue is Russian, but he is also a fluent speaker of German, which is the language of his diocese. He is thoroughly conversant with French and English. In the history of the ancient kingdom of Breiffne he takes a very deep interest and has paid visits to Dromahaire, where he collected materials for a history of his family. In 1925 he published, in Russian, a very interesting work, *Documents and Materials for the History of the O'Rourke Family* (Danzig, Printed as a Manuscript). Portions in English are extracts from the Irish Annals dealing with the early history of the family. A diocesan history of Danzig, published in German in that city, appeared in 1926 and contains an account of the O'Rourke family. The Frontispiece of the book is a photograph of the bishop. The present Diocese of Danzig was created in 1925, and Bishop O'Rourke has since then presided over it. In 1925 the Holy See entrusted him with the special task of ministering to the spiritual and temporal needs of the emigrant Russian children of Danzig. In this work he has been eminently successful, and the labours of this "Irish Bishop of Danzig" will long be remembered in the history of his diocese on the shores of the Baltic.\*

\* Some important documents relating to the history of the O'Rourkes have recently been discovered in the Public Record Office, Vienna. The search was instituted by Bishop Count O'Rourke, who has forwarded a list of the documents—which have never been published—to Mr. Vincent Keany, Manorhamilton. The list includes original letters of Bishop Thady O'Rourke and other members of the family in the period 1727 to 1743; a Patent of Nobility for Owen O'Rourke conferring on him the title of Baron O'Rourke of Carha.

## LAVEY.

In the *Martyrology of Donegal* the festival of St. Derlugha, Virgin, of Lemmagh, is entered on February 10th. The *Martyrology of Tallaght* calls this place Lemnaigh, and O'Donovan equates it with the present parish of Lavey.\* The same *Martyrologies*, at February 19th, have St. Feichin Mac Ua Chainche of Lemmach. Hennessy agrees with O'Donovan in identifying this place with the present Lavey.

The name is not of ecclesiastical origin, but is understood to be *leamair* (*Leamhaidh*), i.e., a place abounding in *elm* trees, a species which enters largely into our early place-names. The older forms of the name are in agreement with this derivation; *Lawye*—1590 Inquisition; *Lawy*—1609 and 1654 maps.

The ancient parish church was in the townland of Lavey and the site, marked by an ancient cemetery, is adjacent to where the present Protestant edifice now stands. The original building, which occupied an angle of the cemetery, has now disappeared, but the foundations can still be traced. When the late Canon O'Hanlon visited Lavey, in June, 1876, he found that the church measured 30 feet in length by 16 in width; but he states that only the foundations then remained. The walls were three feet in thickness, showing that the

in Co. Leitrim, dated Boulogne, May 24th, 1727; a Patent of Nobility for Owen O'Rourke conferring on him the title of Viscount of Breiffne, dated Rome, July 13th, 1731, and signed by James III. There is also a catalogue of O'Rourke's library. The Bishop of Danzig surmises that this Viscount O'Rourke died in Vienna in 1743, or 1744, and that his papers were confiscated by the Austrian Government. The texts of these documents when available should prove valuable contributions to the history of Breiffne O'Rourke, and I have undertaken, with the kind co-operation of Bishop Count O'Rourke and Mr. Vincent Keany, to edit and prepare them for publication.

\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*, Cavan, May 28, 1836. The name, as O'Donovan noted, is pronounced "Le-aw-ee," the "l" being very liquid, the "m" pronounced like "w" nasal, and the "agh" in the termination like "igh" in "high." The original Gaelic pronunciation is retained locally.



church belonged to a very early period. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries this ancient parish church was utilised for Protestant services, and its walls were torn down about a century ago to furnish materials for the construction of the present Protestant church. Some quaint and curious inscriptions may be read in the much neglected cemetery ; the seventeenth century O'Reilly tomb is worthy of note. On the various monumental slabs may be seen the Coats of Arms of local families, MacCabes, Smiths, etc.

The parish church of Lavey was a dependency of the Abbey of Fore. The *Rawlinson MS.* (1608) has "the parish church of Leimeigh" belonging to "the said Abbay of Foure." The parish is not mentioned in the Papal Annates and the identity of the patron in early times is somewhat uncertain. O'Donovan's inquiries in 1836 failed to elicit any information on the matter. There is no local tradition which would connect any of the saints mentioned by the Martyrologists with the parish. Of course we cannot identify with certainty the place called Lemmagh with this parish ; but the probability is very strong.

According to the *Rawlinson MS.* an annual fair was held at "Leymeigh" on July 14th. The word *fair* ("fayre" in manuscript) at that time was applied to an open-air festival, and had a much more extended meaning than the word as used in modern times. In medieval times those fairs were connected with the celebrations in honour of patron saints. The Lavey fair was the survival of some such patron.

St. Dympna, whose festival occurs on May 15th, is associated, traditionally, with Lavey parish. She was the daughter of a pagan king of Oirghialla (Oriel), a territory which extended over a great part of southern Ulster but later on was confined to the counties of Monaghan, Armagh, Louth and portion of Tyrone. The district of Clogher, County Tyrone, is believed to

have been the place of her birth. The details of her life have been minutely recorded by eminent historians.\* Having fled from her father's pagan household Dympna and her companions travelled to Belgium, where they lived for some time in seclusion. Here at length her father discovered her and failing to induce her to return home he was seized with frenzy and slew her with his own hand. This occurred in the sixth or early seventh century. The relics of St. Dympna are still preserved in a magnificent silver reliquary in the church of Gheel, a town about twenty-five miles east of the city of Antwerp.

The saint's name, Dympna, is a Latinised form of the Gaelic *Damhnait* (*Damhnait*) which is still popular as a female Christian name (usually written "Daphne" or "Davnet") in Cavan and Monaghan.

In the townland of Corrawillin, about a mile to the south of the old parish church of Lavey, are the foundations of a small oratory locally known as St. Daphne's Oratory, or Station. This is pointed out as the ravine, then enclosed with woods, where Dympna and her companions took refuge on their flight. The position of this oratory is in many respects unique. It was erected on a small rocky eminence on the bank of a stream which flows through the ravine, and just overlooks a small cascade. The stream has its origin in a small lake in Lavey townland and the cataract is called *Eas Damhnait*, i.e., the waterfall of St. Dympna. In the last century Stations were performed here on the festival of the saint and also on St. John's Eve. Some large stone slabs which are around were considered by O'Donovan to have been stone Altars, but they were evidently some of the flagstones of which the walls were built.

The oratory is a remarkable structure and belongs to the early Christian period. It is rectangular,

\* O'Hanlon, *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. v.



measuring 34 feet in length and 16 in width, and the walls are about 3 feet in thickness. The dimensions correspond approximately with those of the ancient parish church. It may be concluded from the traditions of the parish that St. Dympna was patroness

### URNEY

The parish church of Urney was dedicated to St. Brigid. The parish name does not seem to be of ecclesiastical origin, but is, I believe, derived from the *Earnaidhe*, a tribe which inhabited the district before the coming of Christianity and which has also given its name to Loch Erne.

The *Martyrology of Donegal* enters the festival of St. Cognat, Virgin, of Earnaidhe, on February 11th. Most probably she belonged to this place.

The parish church of Urney, now in ruins, was situated on the north bank of the River Erne; an ancient cemetery surrounds it. It was a dependency of the Abbey of Fore. The ruined church measures thirty-nine feet in length by nineteen and a half feet in width, and is now grown over with ivy. Stone steps from a walled passage in the interior of the church rise to the level of the side walls, and evidently led to upper chambers. At the west end of the church are two cells, each measuring twenty-nine feet by ten, which seem to have been the cellars of a residence which was attached to the church. In the early years of the last century one of these cells was used as a school. From the existing ruins we can infer that this church must have been a very substantial and beautiful structure before its suppression.

The period during which St. Cognat flourished is not recorded.

## ENNISKEEN.

The parish of Enniskeen in East Breiffne, on the borders of County Meath, is in Meath diocese.\* It forms part of Clankee barony, County Cavan, sometimes in State Papers called the barony of Enniskeen. The O'Reilly Castle of Muff was in this parish.

St. Ernin, or Arney, of Inis-caoin is entered in the *Martyrologies* on July 13th. The church was a dependency of Ceanannus (Kells). No traces of the building have survived, but its site is marked by the cemetery in the townland of Enniskeen, about a mile south of the present town of Kingscourt. Near the site of the old church is St. Arney's Holy Well—*Tobar Árne*—now partly dried up, especially during the summer months. Until a century ago pilgrimages took place at this Well on the festival of St. Arney. On a rock close by Mass was celebrated during the Penal times. The period during which St. Arney flourished has not been recorded by the hagiologists.

The Cavan *Inquisition* of 1590 found that the church of "Inneskyn" containing 2 polls or cartrons was valued at 2 shillings per annum. The 1609 map of Clankee has "Iniskene," with ruined church marked. Norden's sixteenth century map (MS. in Trinity College, Dublin) has "Temp. Enyskyne" (i.e., church of Enniskeen) and shows the church. According to the *Rawlinson MS.* an annual fair was held at "Iniskein" on July 18th. This must refer to the pattern in honour of St. Arney.

In the *Fiants* of Elizabeth, dated 1586, the place is called "Eniskine," and again "Enyskyne." The district must have been then thickly populated, judging from the long list of native owners in the *Fiants* of that year. In the list is "Donell O'Doeran of Tullegalkhork, priest," who was very likely the pastor in that year.

\* Cf. Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. ii, pp. 298, *et seq.*



As a townland name Tullegalkhork is now obsolete ; it is the " Tulligallocher " of the 1609 map and was identical, in part at least, with the present Mullanacross.

The family of Mac Echey \* held considerable property in the parish in 1586 when their names are recorded in the *Fiants* of that year. The townlands of " Cabbraghe," " Enyskyne," " Donery," " Cormye," and others, belonged to them. The Flemings of Slane, County Meath, were the lords of the soil, and some families of the name were then living in Tullegalkhork. In 1666 the Flemings were dispossessed and Enniskeen passed into the possession of the Earl of Anglesey and other adventurers.

The present parish church of Enniskeen is at Kingscourt, which is in the townland of Dunaree ; *Dún a' Ríog*, i.e., the fort or residence of the king. The 1586 lists have the forms " Donery " and " Donerye." The " Doonrie " of the 1609 map gives the correct pronunciation of the name. The town of Kingscourt is modern ; *Kingsfort* would have been a more correct anglicisation of the ancient name. The *Rawlinson MS.* has " Bally Dronnery." The circular rath, or fort, which gave the townland its title is pointed out west of the town. Who the king, or chieftain, was who gave his name to the place cannot now be discovered ; but he obviously belonged to the *Feara Cúle* race, which inhabited these districts before the time of St. Patrick.

#### DRUMGOON.

The old parish church of Drumgoon was dedicated to St. Patrick ; a cemetery in the townland of the same name marks its site. In the earliest records of the

\* According to O'Donovan the O'Reillys of the Barony of Clankee—*Clann Caich*—had adopted the name of *Mac Caich*, Mac Kee or Mac Kay, but they were compelled to resume their true name, O'Reilly, by Primate Hugh O'Reilly in 1645. In the *Fiants* the form Mac Echey, of Clankee Barony, shows that the adopted name was then in general use.

parish it is called Drumgoon, *alias* Magheranure, the latter title being derived from the district of Magheranure—*Macaire an Iubair*, i.e., the plain of the yew-trees—where the town of Cootehill now stands.

In the *Register* of Primate Sweteman, sub anno 1366, it is recorded that Nimee Mac Molmartyn was Prebend of "Macherinebair," and again in 1367 we find him referred to as Vicar of Kilmore. From a Papal document of 1427 we learn that David Omochan was rector of "Drumiguyn, alias de Macariambair." \* In other documents of the same year similar forms are given. The Papal Annates of 1491 have an entry referring to St. Patrick's church of "Druymghin." A Bull of Pope Alexander VI, dated 1501, has "St. Patrick's of Druymduyn, alias plebs de Macharembuhyr." †

The entry in Sweteman's *Register*, just referred to, is the earliest so far discovered. The plain which gave the district its title was much more extensive than the present townland of Magheranure, where the site of the old church is marked by the cemetery, now seldom used. The site adjoins the present Church Street, Cootehill, and near the entrance gate some traces of the early church may be detected. The walls have long since been demolished to provide materials and a site for the massive but unsightly mausoleum of the once arrogant family of Coote, who secured possession at the time of the Cromwellian settlement. The merciless domination of the Cootes in the dark years of the eighteenth century, when they crushed the people with relentless exactions, will perpetuate their name as the synonym for tyranny and oppression. The mausoleum is now crumbling, ‡ and the Cootes are

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 232.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 254.

‡ I have been informed that during the Anglo-Irish War, about 1921, quantities of lead were removed from the mausoleum and utilised locally in the manufacture of bullets! *Sic transit gloria mundi*.



gone—gone with a vengeance—to the accompaniment of the execrations of a people whom they plundered and destroyed.

The present town of Cootehill dates only from the second half of the seventeenth century. The original proprietors were the O'Reillys, who resided at Munnily, later known as Bellamont Forest. This place is the "Moyinlle" of the 1609 Plantation map, and the "Monily" of the Down Survey. The present townland of Munnily, on which portion of the town is built, covers only a comparatively small area, but the early maps show it as a strip extending along the Monaghan border; hence its name *munnille*, i.e., an elongated strip of land shaped like a sleeve.

There is a tradition that the last O'Reilly was hanged by Coote from a tree in the demesne. Thomas Coote\* was Governor of Coleraine, County Derry, and married Frances Hill, of Hillsborough, County Down. From this double surname the town was named "Coote-Hill," which is the form used in some early eighteenth century inscriptions around the site of the old church.

Under its title *macáipe an iudáir* we have several early references to this place. The *Fiants* of Elizabeth, sub anno 1586, have "Magherenewre," which gives, at least, the correct pronunciation. The 1609 map has "Magherie," and the *Down Survey* has "Maghe"; on the map of the *Down Survey* there is a ruin, evidently the church, shown in the townland. Like the church itself, all the early monuments have been obliterated.

Which of Drumgoon or Magheranure may claim to be the earlier foundation cannot now be decided; but I think that Drumgoon must be awarded the honour. With the rise of the present town of Cootehill it was convenient that the parish church should be established there. Early in the last century a church was built

† This Thomas Coote died November 25, 1671, and was buried in Christ Church, Dublin.

which served as parish church until a few years ago, when the present splendid edifice (dedicated in 1930) was raised on a new and more prominent site.

The patron of the present parish church is St. Michael, and as the tradition seems to have come down from early times we may assume that St. Michael was patron of the early church of Magheranure. It is an interesting coincidence that the new parish church should have been erected in Magheranure, which was the site of an earlier church and a recognised *alias* for Drumgoon as early as the fourteenth century.

The parish church of Drumgoon belonged to the bishopric. According to the *Inquisition* of 1609 the parson and vicar were collative by the bishop. The *Rawlinson MS.* has "the parish church of Dromgawney there is in this church a parson and viccar [vicar] endowed."

Drumgoon is not a name of ecclesiastical origin. Joyce suggests *Druim Gamhan* (*Druim Gamhan*), i.e., the ridge of the calves, but some of the earlier spellings of the name do not support this conclusion. The 1590 *Inquisition* has "Dromgowna," which agrees with the "Dromgone" of the 1609 return and also with the "Dromgawney" of *Rawlinson* (1608). An entry in the Diary of Friar Turlough O'Mellan—*Cin Lae O Meallain*—dated October, 1646, has it that the Scotch of the North attacked the people of Oirghialla, drove them to the woods of Drumgoon, burned houses and haggards and plundered up to the woods of Killann. Moybolg was also plundered. The extract is as follows :\*

\* *Cin Lae O Meallain*, An Irish Diary of the Confederate Wars, 1641-1647. The text of this valuable *Diary* is printed in *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 3, pp. 1-49 (1931). It has also been reproduced in the *County Louth Archaeological Journal* in its annual issues from 1923 to 1930. The original manuscript belonged to Viscount O'Neill, who loaned it to Dr. Reeves for a transcript by O'Curry for the Royal Irish Academy. Another copy by O'Donovan is in Trinity College Library. The original manuscript disappeared from the Academy, but was recently located in the Library of Cork University College.



Canḡadap ap Óirḡiallaib, asur iad as teicead go foitriḡ Óruim-úin. Do loḡḡad 'r do creacac a teigte asur a n-aiḡairc 'rḡo foitriḡ cill anna. Do loirḡeac tuac muige-bolḡ.

Friar O'Mellan is a reliable authority on Ulster place-names and his *Druim Duin*, i.e., the ridge of the fort, is most likely correct. This is supported by the "Droumdone" of the *Fiants* of Eliz., 1586, and the "Drumdoon" of the 1609 map. This in the spoken language would become Drumgoon. O'Donovan expresses no opinion on the meaning of the name, but observes that it is pronounced "Drum Gún," which is phonetically correct. Following the weighty authority of Father Turlough O'Mellan we may accept Óruim Úin, rather than Óruim ḡaman, as the correct form of the name. The local pronunciation of the name confirms this. On the ridge from which the townland takes its name may be observed some circular raths, or duns, where in pagan times some important personages must have resided.

The district of Drumgoon is now served by St. Patrick's church, Maudabawn.

#### RAFFONY

Raffony, now a townland at the western extremity of Mullagh parish, formed a distinct ecclesiastical unit in ancient and medieval times. The older parochial division is now incorporated partly in Mullagh and partly in Lurgan and Killinkere parishes.

The Cavan *Inquisition* of 1590 reported that the church of "Rahawna" was possessed of one poll of land; in this case a poll, the old Breiffne land unit, represented approximately 25 acres of arable land. The *Inquisition* held at Cavan in 1609 returns "Rahone, 1 poll, value 1s. 4d.," and included in the parish of Mullagh. At the close of the sixteenth century Raffony,

with its church and lands, shared the common fate of confiscation. In 1605 there was granted by James I to John Kinge of Dublin, *inter alia*, "in Rahony,  $\frac{1}{4}$  poll, parcel of the estate of Brian Mc Conin [O'Connell] attainted." \* The district of Raffony had been the patrimony of the O'Connells of East Breiffne, a branch of the O'Connells of Fermanagh mentioned in the *O'Reilly Pedigree*. They were the Erenachs, or wardens, of the church which, in accordance with medieval custom, they endowed with lands for its maintenance. The forfeiture of the property of Brian O'Connell † in 1605 entailed the dissolution of the church lands, and the ecclesiastical importance of Raffony came to an end. In the following year, 1606, the church lands of "Rathawna" were, *inter alia*, leased for a term of 21 years to Sir Garrett Moore of Mellifont, Co. Louth, at an annual rent of 2s. 6d.

On the 1609 Plantation Map of Castlerahan barony the church lands of "Rahony" are shown, but the church itself is not marked. From this we may infer that the church had already been in ruins and that its lands, comparatively small in extent, had already become absorbed in the general scheme of confiscation. But its status as a parish church had then already passed out of recognition.

The *Rawlinson MS.* which contains an inventory of the church lands of Cavan in 1608, has "Rahawnagh containing 1 polle." In the *Commonwealth Grants* the lands of "Rachonacke" are described as "church lands

\* *Patent Rolls*, 3 James I. The forms Conin, Connin, and Coninge, peculiar to the *spoken* language, are also found in the *Hearth Tax Rolls* (1664) for the district. The same forms occur in the eighteenth century Parish Registers of Lurgan and elsewhere; also in monumental inscriptions of the same period. In such instances the names were phonetically rendered. This interchange of the liquid consonants "l" and "n" is a peculiarity of the spoken language, and appears to be common to most European languages. It follows a universally recognised phonetic law. See Max Muller, "Phonetic Change" *Lectures on the Science of Language*, Second Series.

† He was the ancestor of the present writer.



belonging to the [Protestant] Bishop of Killmore." \* Sir William Petty's *Down Survey* Map (1654) has "Rahonack," marked as church lands, belonging to the Established Church; but the church itself is not indicated. As a general rule, however, Petty's Maps only show the parish churches.

The ruined church of Raffony extends east to west in accordance with the conventional Irish orientation; the ancient cemetery surrounds it. The greater part of the structure has long since been demolished, and the building materials removed. The walls, standing about four feet in height, are sufficient to show its original plan. The church measured fifty-seven feet in total length by twenty in breadth. Its dimensions are above the average for those of medieval churches. A transverse wall, about ten feet from the west end, divides the church into two parts; but this wall seems to have been erected in comparatively recent times. The church appears to belong to the fourteenth, or fifteenth, century, but its style of architecture cannot now be determined from the scanty remains. An aged ash tree at the east end marks the site of the altar.

The early tombs which occupied the interior of the church, commemorating its Erenachs and early pastors have, like the church itself, been obliterated. The vandalism of the eighteenth century completed the work of confiscation of the preceding century. In the adjoining townland of Quilca lived the family of Sheridan, socially and intellectually brilliant, hospitable, but very eccentric, a Protestant branch of the West Breiffne family; it is said that they removed the materials of the old church for building purposes. But vandalism was the spirit of the age.

No seventeenth century, or earlier, inscriptions can now be traced, but it is probable that some of the early monuments are buried under the accumulated debris.

† *Books of Survey and Distribution* (1641).

The earliest inscribed slab, commemorating a member of the Malan (Mallon)\* family is dated 1731; it reads as follows:—

[PRAY FOR] THE SOUL OF  
— MALAN WHO DIED JU  
NE THE 29<sup>th</sup> 1731 AGED 22 YE  
ARS.

Another upright slab belonging to the same family bears the following inscription:—

PRAY FOR THE  
SOVL OF BRYAN  
MALAN WHO DIED  
MAY 27<sup>th</sup> 1742 AGED  
78 YEARS  
AND ALSO ROSE MALAN  
ALIAS GARGAN WHO DIED  
JVNE 15<sup>th</sup> 1742  
AGED  
38 YEARS.

The following inscription is on an upright slab:—

PRAY FOR THE  
SOUL OF  
OWEN LOGAN  
WHO DIED  
JUNE THE 13<sup>th</sup>  
1733  
AGED  
29 YEARS

These inscriptions are of interest as they constitute the sole records which survive of the persons to whom they refer. East of the church is an upright slab dated

\* Very Rev. Patrick E. Mallon, P.P., V.F., the present pastor of Kinawley, belongs to this branch of the family.



1761 commemorating James O'Connell; it reads as follows:—

HERE LIES THE BODY  
OF JAMES CONNIN  
DIED JULY 13' 1761  
AGED 52 YEARS.



ST. BRIGID'S WELL, RAFFONY

Alongside the east gable is the monument, undated, asking a prayer for Hugh Daly and Rose Smyth, "when departed. Natives of this parish." This monument was erected during the lifetime of the persons mentioned, a custom by no means uncommon in Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

St. Brigid was Patroness of the church. Her Holy Well, still a place of pilgrimage on her festival, February 1st, is a few perches east of the cemetery.\* In 1609

\* About 1912 the late Father J. B. Meehan, then C.C. of Mullagh, with characteristic antiquarian zeal, had the Well renovated and a stone arch constructed over it.

the church lands of Raffony were included in Mullagh parish, which was a dependency of the Abbey of Fore, Co. Westmeath. From this we may infer that Raffony was also a dependency of Fore. An entry dated July 24th, 1542, in the *Register of Primate Dowdall*, refers to Patrick Maconaym (O'Connell) who was then a Canon of the Cathedral of Kilmore. From the context, which is concerned with the vicarage of Moybolge and the collation of a Patrick Magerrigan to the same, it seems most probable that Patrick Maconaym was attached to Raffony.

The name Raffony is not of ecclesiastical origin. The various forms of the name, just quoted from early documents, suggest that it is *Raitneac* (*Raithneach*), i.e., a place abounding in ferns. As the common fern still grows in abundance in the townland, and must have grown there still more luxuriantly in early times, the designation is a suitable one.\* On the hilltop, east of the church, is a dolmen (a Breton word signifying "stone table"), or Stone Age monument, known by the traditional name *leaba Diarmada agus Grainne*, connected with which is the well-known legend, universal in Ireland, of Diarmait and Grainne.

#### MULLAGH : ST. CILLIAN

The parish of Mullagh, adjoining the Meath border, is dedicated to St. Cillian † whose festival is on July 8th. From early times Mullagh was a place of historical importance, and as the seat of a branch of the O'Reillys it is mentioned in the *Annals*. The O'Reilly Castle,

\* *Rát pánaíó*, i.e., the rath of the slope, has also been suggested to me, but all the older spellings—with the probable exception of the "Ravanagh" of the 1664 *Hearth Tax Rolls*—support the derivation in the text. It will be remembered that most of the early forms are phonetic renderings. The Cavan townland List, circa 1709, has "Rahony," agreeing with the other early forms.

† The name is spelled in various ways, *Killian*, *Kilian*, and *Cilian*. The form *Cillian*, which is the Gaelic, is preferable. There is no *K* in Gaelic.



of which no traces now remain, was on the western shore of Mullagh Lake. Elsewhere I have compiled the history, civil and ecclesiastical, of this parish,\* but its connection with St. Cillian, the apostle and martyr of Franconia, in Germany, is of special interest in the history of our diocese.

Two great missionary names stand out prominently in Breiffne history, Mogue and Cillian. With the labours of the former we are already acquainted, and it now remains to summarise briefly the life of St. Cillian, whose missionary labours in Central Europe is written largely in the ecclesiastical history of Germany and Italy, but whose early years were, it seems beyond the region of doubt, spent in the district of Mullagh.

Of St. Cillian's early life, date of birth, parentage, or place of education, history preserves no details. Although several *Lives* of him are extant, some of them of ancient date, they do not refer to any particulars of his birth or parentage. Beyond the fact that he was born in Ireland the *Lives* are silent regarding his early career. Neither are we informed of the particular race to which he belonged. Many excellent monographs on St. Cillian have appeared in Germany, but these are concerned only with his labours in that country. However, it is admitted by all that when a youth he left Ireland and took up his abode in Franconia.

In the absence of historical records we can only rely on tradition, and there is a persistent tradition from time immemorial that he was born in Mullagh parish. That he was a native of Breiffne and belonged to the Ui-Briuin race may be accepted as facts—the only tolerably certain facts of his early life. The comparative paucity of biographical details concerning him will not appear so strange when it is understood that he left Ireland at an early age and that all his missionary

\* *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. i, No. 2, 1921.

labours lay in a foreign land. This early severance of his connection with Ireland is the obvious explanation of the remarkable silence of Irish hagiology concerning him.

By inference we may ascribe his birth to about the year 640. We are not informed where he was educated, but it may have been Ceanannus or Drumlane—most probably the former. Traditionally he is not connected with either of these monasteries, nor is there any tradition that he performed missionary labours anywhere in Ireland. It is said that his missionary career began about the year 686, but it must have commenced earlier. Accompanied by two companions, St. Colman and St. Totnan, he sailed from Ireland and landed on the shores of France. How long they remained there it would be useless to speculate, but they travelled towards the province of Franconia, or North Bavaria, and reached the place where now stands the great cathedral city of Wurzburg, on the River Main. At that time it was only a small village with a castle, in which resided a nobleman named Prince Gosport, who was ruler of the territory. The Prince hospitably received St. Cillian and his companions and was converted to Christianity. This was St. Cillian's first missionary triumph on Franconian soil. But the consort of Prince Gosport, Geilana by name, had no leanings towards Christianity and resented the labours of the missionaries. She was vicious, malignant, and hostile and determined to have Cillian and his companions assassinated. One day in the absence of the Prince she hired assassins to execute her revengeful scheme and the martyrdom of St. Cillian and his companions was accomplished. This occurred on July 8th, 689.

According to some authorities his martyrdom took place in the year 688, but it is much more likely to have taken place a year later. In 1889 the twelfth centenary



of his death was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony in Wurzburg, and in the German lives of the saint the year 689 is generally accepted as the date of his death. There is some evidence to show that the saint visited Rome during the pontificate of Pope Conon (686-687).

For an account of St Cillian's life the reader must be referred to the several excellent biographies which are available. A good account in English is given in Canon O'Hanlon's *Lives*, vol. vii.\*

Throughout Germany and especially in Franconia there are numerous churches dedicated to St. Cillian. His name is familiar over Central Europe and few of the Irish Saints abroad are so universally honoured or so widely known. About the year 752, by order of Pope Zachary, the remains of the martyrs were translated to a shrine at Mount Saint Mary, near Wurzburg. On the erection of the present Cathedral of Wurzburg a special shrine was prepared for the remains of the martyrs and in this magnificent silver casket under the High Altar they now repose. Thus in that foreign land beyond the Rhine one of Europe's most imposing Cathedrals is deemed the only fitting monument to this great missionary apostle from our own Breiffne.

Every year in the city of Wurzburg (which has a population of over 86,000), and throughout the Catholic Province of Bavaria, St. Cillian's festival on July 8th is celebrated with elaborate ceremony, and the shrine containing the relics of the saint and his companions is visited annually by thousands of pilgrims. This special veneration, which persists after the passage of twelve centuries, is a proof, if such be needed, of the deep regard in which the German people have always held St. Cillian, who only a few years before his death had arrived a stranger in their country. Judging from

\* See also *The Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Cilian" *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, s.v. "Kilian."

the accounts of the centenary celebrations of 1889, these must have been held on a scale unprecedented even in that old cathedral city. In connection with these celebrations there was a big output of works, in German, dealing with St. Cillian's life and labours.

An ancient illuminated copy, in Irish handwriting, of the Latin Gospels, belonging to St. Cillian, is preserved among the treasures in the Library of the University of Wurzburg. It is believed that he had it in his possession at the time of his assassination and certain stains, or colourations, which are still visible on the cover and sides of the book, are popularly believed to be traces of his blood.

St. Burckard, consecrated Bishop of Wurzburg in 741, built a church on the spot where St. Cillian and his companions were martyred. After the death of St. Cillian—the "Apostle of the Franks"—Wurzburg became a stronghold of Christianity and the centre of German art and culture. The martyrdom of St. Cillian and his companions has been the subject of many pictures. An early painting depicting the scene and dating from about 1490 is in the Wagner Museum at Wurzburg. In 1506 bust statues of the martyrs were carved by the famous Gothic artist, Tilman Riemenschneider, as part of an altar-piece for the High Altar of the Cathedral: the statues are now in the Neumünster Church. Quite recently, in 1933, a painting which has been ascribed to the early sixteenth century was discovered by Professor Knapp and purchased for the Wurzburg University Museum. It has been recognised as the work of Grünewald, a great but mysterious artist—even his real name was not remembered—and Germany's greatest painter.

The picture [says a recent writer] is a diptych, showing in the left hand panel one executioner with raised hand holding a sword, about to strike one of the two youthful companions of Kilian [Cillian]. On



the ground is the stretched figure of Kilian, with mitred head separated from his body. In the right-hand panel the other Saint is kneeling, awaiting the blow from the other assassin, who holds the sword in his left hand. An open book lies on the ground. There is a rich landscape background, with a castle on a high hill lofty trees, expanses of water, and distant mountains.\*

In Italy his name is venerated. In a prominent position in the great Cathedral of Milan I have seen the handsome statue of the saint, which is the work of a leading Italian sculptor. The name of St. Cillian ranks high in the long list of Irish missionaries on the Continent. The visitor to Wurzburg who enters the imposing cathedral and looks upon the magnificent and costly shrine which encloses the bodies of these Irish martyrs and observes the crowds of pilgrims visiting that shrine will realise the depth of the veneration in which St. Cillian is held on the Continent. In an especial manner the visitor from Kilmore will feel justly proud.

In the parish of Mullagh, of which he is Patron, St. Cillian's festival was always observed by the people, and it is stated, traditionally, that it was kept as a holyday of obligation until the close of the eighteenth century. On that day, at St. Cillian's Well, in the townland of Cloughbally-beg, large crowds used assemble to honour the Patron. The Holy Well, which is overshadowed by a few whitethorns, is still visited on July 8th, but the pilgrimage has largely fallen into disuse. The origin of this pilgrimage is lost in the mists of antiquity, but the traditional connection of the saint with the parish and Holy Well has been maintained unbroken down the centuries. It continued through the Penal times and on the vigil of the festival stations

\* *Studies*. Vol xxiii., No. 89., p. 147.

were performed at the Well. In the troubled years of the early nineteenth century these gatherings gave rise to grave abuses and, as happened in many other places, the clergy were compelled to take action and suppress the pilgrimage. The Penal Laws had so demoralised the people that many fell an easy prey to the fomentors of civil strife and the promoters of secret societies, and the agents of disunion were not slow to take advantage of these gatherings to create faction fights and further their own pernicious schemes. The then pastor of Mullagh, Rev. Felix MacCabe (1794-1816), a giant in his generation, took prompt action and advised the people to suspend the pilgrimage. It was revived afterwards but never regained its old-time popularity.

The parish church of Mullagh, erected in 1858, is dedicated to St. Cillian. It is interesting to note that Cillian as a Christian name is still heard in the parish. In his well-known poem dealing with St. Cillian, John Keegan Casey \* records the tradition that Mullagh was his birthplace.

“ Nursed beneath an Irish mountain by an Irish  
 mother's hand  
 Where the mild Borora whispers to the meadows of  
 the land,  
 Taught the music of the harper and the anthems of  
 the blest,  
 Cillian grew as grows the ash-tree by the ruins of  
 the west.

\* Better known by his pseudonym of “ Leo ” was born in 1846 at Mount Dalton, Co. Westmeath, and died in 1870. The poem which is a lengthy one was first published in 1866 in a collection of Poems entitled *A Wreath of Shamrocks: Ballads, Songs and Legends*, by John Keegan Casey, pp. 116-131. The Borora is a river flowing on the southern border of Mullagh Parish, and forming the south eastern boundary between Cavan and Meath.



“ Winter stars that light in splendour Eire’s calm and  
solcmn sky,  
Might have borrowed their chaste brightness from the  
gleaming of his eye.  
The young lily bending lowly when the dew is in  
the air,  
Was a type of his meek spirit when his young lips  
moved in prayer.”

That Mullagh was the birthplace of St. Cillian seems to be beyond the possibility of doubt, and we cannot ignore the persistent tradition of centuries. No other place has ever claimed him. In Breiffne his memory has never faded, and the shining silver casket under the wonderful High Altar of Wurzburg is the tribute of Franconia to one of the greatest missionaries of the seventh century.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE AUGUSTINIANS IN KILMORE

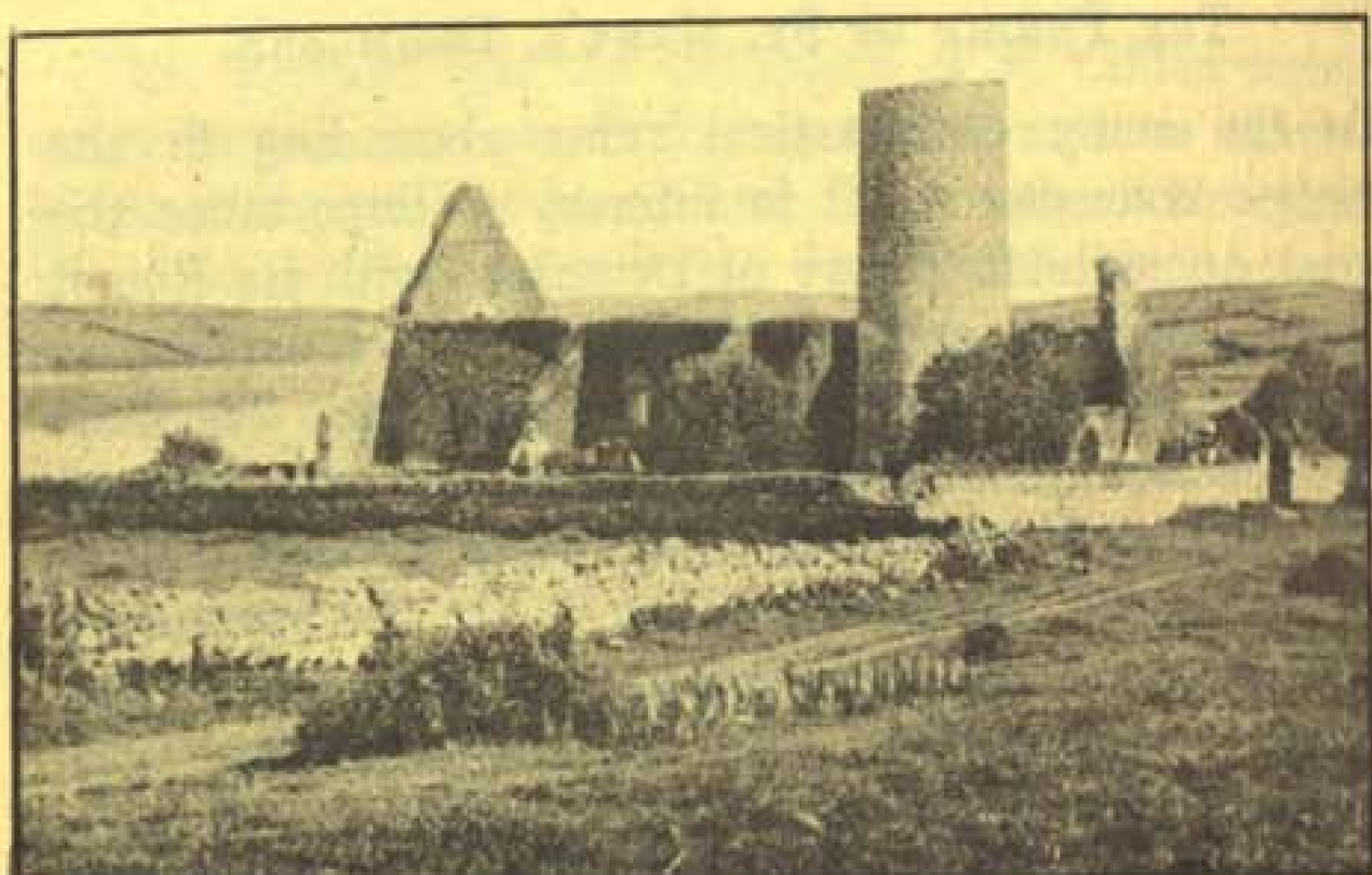
## THE PRIORY OF ST. MARY'S, DRUMLANE.

OF the many ecclesiastical ruins abounding in the diocese none can equal in interest or importance the great Augustinian Priory of Drumlane with its Round Tower—the only structure of its kind now existing in Kilmore. “The man,” wrote Dr. Johnson, “is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force on the plains of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.” On the confines of both Breiffnes, east and west, and on the broad ridge—*Drum leatán*—which gave the district its title, surrounded by rich pastures and a chain of small lakes, rise the ruins of the church and priory with the Round Tower, the guardian of the ages, all redolent with Catholic tradition and teeming with early Christian associations.

Although the name of St. Mogue is inseparably connected with Drumlane, yet there are many reasons for concluding that the foundation is older than his time and that the founder was the great St. Columbkille himself. The exact date of its foundation cannot now be fixed with certainty, but the historical evidence leads to the conclusion that it belongs to the early part of the sixth century. The great veneration which always has been, and still is, paid to St. Mogue in Drumlane, where his name is remembered with all due honour and respect, may account for the tradition of his having been its founder. But the older *Lives* of St. Mogue, *divus tutelaris utriusque Breffniae*, make it



clear that the monastery of Drumlane was already in existence at the time of his birth, that is, *circa* 555. This conclusion is supported by a passage in one of the *Lives*, edited by Rev. Charles Plummer, where it is stated that St. Mogue's parents, before his birth, had visited the monastery of Drumlane where a vision foretold them of the future sanctity of their son.



Photo]

DRUMLANE PRIORY AND ROUND TOWER

[Mason

The Abbey of Ceanannus, or Kells, Co. Meath, was founded by St. Columbkille about the year 550. It is on record that he visited the monastery of Snamh-Luthir (Slanore) which his disciple, St. Colman, had already established. It is evident that St. Columbkille had close connections with Breiffne. On the island of *Inis Mor* in Loch Gamhna (Gowna) there is a ruined church dedicated to St. Columbkille.\* The ruin which is called *Teampull Choluim Cille* is in Ardagh diocese and the parish title is Columbkille. The island is also known as *Oilean na Naomh*, i.e., Saints' Island, and

\* O'Curry, *Manuscript Materials*, p. 111.

many interesting traditions regarding this island sanctuary are still current in the neighbourhood.

Convincing evidence in support of the view that St. Columbkille himself was the founder of Drumlane is afforded by the close connection which existed in the succeeding centuries between Ceanannus and Drumlane. Alemand in his *Monasticon Hibernicum* \* states specifically that Drumlane was a dependency of Ceanannus, and that the monks of Drumlane claimed they had the "Latin version of the Four Evangelists made by St. Columb their founder." A Bull of Pope Eugenius IV, dated 1436, authorises Patrick O'Farrelly, then Vicar of St. Brigid's parish church of Urney, to be admitted to the conventual priory of St. Mary's, Drumlane, "a dependency of the Monastery of St. Mary, Kells, of the same order, in the Diocese of Meath."†

The following Roman document, a Papal mandate of 1456, illustrates very clearly the relations between the two monasteries:—

To the dean and archdeacon of Ardagh and Eugenius Orodachain, a canon of the same, mandate to summon the below named bishop and others concerned, and to collate and assign to Peter Magaurughan [Magauran], a canon of the Augustinian Priory of St. Mary, Drumlane, in the Diocese of Kilmore, the said Priory, conventual and with cure of souls, dependent on the Monastery of St. Mary without the walls of the town of Kenlys [Ceanannus, or Kells] in the Diocese of Meath.‡

The passage already quoted from Alemand's *Monasticon* is positive regarding the Columban foundation of Drumlane. Again, the close connection, as shown in medieval Roman documents, which always existed between the Augustinian monasteries of Drumlane and

\* Printed in Paris in 1690, and dedicated to King James II.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 250.

‡ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, Callixtus III, July, 1456.



Ceanannus is indicative of the strong traditional bonds—which had their origin in history—connecting them with the rules of, and veneration for, their common founder, St. Columbkille.

St. Danem of Drumlane is commemorated in the Irish Martyrologies on November 12th. Other early saints mentioned in connection with Drumlane are Indem, whose name occurs in the *Book of Leinster*, and Fintan and Indecht, who are mentioned in the *Book of Lecan*. No particulars of the lives of any of these saints have been preserved, nor are we informed of the precise periods during which they lived. They are not even remembered traditionally in Drumlane, where the name of St. Mogue has eclipsed them all.

The Canons Regular of St. Augustine were first established in the Lateran Church, Rome, in 1062, by Pope Alexander II.\* In 1105 they established a monastery at Colchester in England, and according to Lanigan they reached Ireland about 1134.† It is recorded, however, that the convent of Canons Regular of Lisgool ‡ on Loch Erne was founded by the Maguires in the year 1106, on the site of an older monastery, as in the case of Drumlane. The Augustinian foundations in Ireland were numerous and wealthy. At the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion there were nearly 200 Augustinian monasteries and convents in Ireland. But the members, although living in community, did not all follow any uniform rule. Later on, by Papal Decree, many of them renounced private property, and these became known as the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. Clones, Devenish, Lisgool and Loch Derg belonged to the Order. In 1394 Pope Boniface IX sent Francis de Cappagono, Prior of the Augustinian Monastery of

\* Lanigan, *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, vol. i, p. 189.

† *Op. cit.*, vol. iv, p. 106.

‡ *The Friaries of Lisgool and Gaula on Lough Erne*, by Canon McKenna, p. 6.

Sienna, to Ireland, with plenary powers to visit the monasteries and make inquiries regarding their organisation.

The medieval church and college of All Hallows, where Trinity College, Dublin, now stands, was an Augustinian foundation, the Prior of which was a Spiritual Peer of the Realm, as were also the Priors of Christ Church, Louth, Ceanannus, Newtown, Raphoe, and others. The Anglo-Normans, in their territory of the Pale, endowed and enriched the monasteries but generally expelled the Irish monks and introduced English monks instead. De Lacy, for example, made the Augustinian monastery of Duleek subject to that of Llanthony in Monmouthshire. The monastery of Ceanannus, also endowed by De Lacy, was given in charge of English monks, and the Irish monks expelled. The monastery of "St. Mary without the walls," mentioned in the Papal document of 1456 and elsewhere, appears to refer to the temporary foundation established somewhere near Ceanannus by the expelled Irish monks who were forbidden by Anglo-Norman law to reside within the walls of the newly fortified town. Drumlane, of course, never came within the sphere of Anglo-Norman influence.

Long before the coming of the Anglo-Normans many of the Irish monasteries had already adopted the rule of St. Augustine. There was, as Lanigan observes, a certain affinity between the rule of the new Canons arriving in Ireland in the eleventh century and the older Irish rule which was based on the system introduced by St. Patrick and brought from Tours and Lerins. The Irish monks of the early Christian centuries were, as Alemand observes, Canons Regular of some rule; hence on the introduction of the Augustinian Canons, whose rule bore a similarity to their own, they had no difficulty in adopting the newer constitution.



The O'Farrellys\* were the Coarbs of Drumlane from the days of St. Mogue himself. In an ancient *Life of St. Maedoc*, edited by Plummer, we are told that the saint, whose name is connected with every phase of Drumlane's early history, before his death baptised Urcain, son of Oilhill, and named him *Faircellach*. This Faircellach he placed in the coarbship of the church, and it is a striking fact that for a thousand years afterwards the O'Farrellys remained the spiritual and temporal rulers of Drumlane. The family is still numerically strong in the district. In the cemetery there still survive remnants of the O'Farrelly tomb with its elaborate decorations. Another prominent Drumlane family, the MacGaherans, were Erenachs of the monastery.

In the several Irish *Annals* are records of the *obits* of the Abbots of Drumlane. Dubhinsi O'Farrelly, abbot, died in 1025, according to the *Four Masters*. Conaig O'Farrelly, Erenach of Drumlane, died in 1059. The *Annals of Loch Cé* enter the death of Muiredach, son of Maelbrighde † O'Farrelly, Coarb of St. Mogue, in 1257.

Drumlane was burned in 1246, and in 1261 Hugh O'Connor, son of Felim, King of Connacht, raided Breiffne and suffered defeat in the battle of Drumlane. Drumlane, situated as it was on the boundary dividing East from West Breiffne, suffered considerably from the warfare carried on in the twelfth century between the ruling princes, O'Rourke and O'Reilly. In 1314 Rory, son of Cathal O'Connor, defeated the O'Reillys in another battle of Drumlane.‡ Still another O'Connor raid on Drumlane is recorded in 1338, when Aedh (son

\* The O is sometimes dropped, and the name further abbreviated to Farley.

† *maol* *Bríge*, i.e., Servant of St. Brigid, a popular Christian name in early times.

‡ *Annals of the Four Masters; Annals of Ulster; Annals of Loch Cé.*

of Rory who had led the foray of 1314) was mortally wounded. In the *Annals* Drumlane is sometimes known by an alternative name "Bolgan" or "Bolcan," evidently the survival of an ancient tribal name.

The *Four Masters* record the death of "Nicholas (O'Farrelly) son of the Coarb of St. Maidoc," sub anno 1325. In 1343 John MacDuibhne, archdeacon of Drumlane, died. Niall O'Farrelly was killed, according to the *Annals of Ulster*, in 1357, on the eve of his appointment to the Abbacy of Drumlane. In 1366 William Oferallaich (O'Farrelly), "comarb of St. Medoc," and Adam Mac Tiarnan, "dean of Drumleachan," were commissioned by the Primate, Archbishop Sweteman, to assist the Chancellor of Armagh, Master \* Peter Okerbyllan (O'Carolan) in completing the visitation of Kilmore.† In December of the same year the Bishop of Kilmore was commanded to summon all dignitaries in the Deaneries of Drumlane and Dartra‡ to appear in the church of "St. Medoc of Drumlechan" (Sweteman's *Register*). William O'Farrelly died in 1368 as appears from the following entry in the *Annals of Ulster* under that year:—

The successor of Moedhoc—and he was the archdeacon of Breiffne likewise—a man full of the grace of the Holy Spirit and of charity and of humanity died . . .

Toward the end of the same year his successor, Muiredach O'Farrelly, also passed away. In 1407 there is a record of the burial of John, son of Teige O'Rourke, at Drumlane. He died at Moylurg (the district around Boyle, Co. Roscommon) and his appears to be the only record of an O'Rourke interment at Drumlane.

In January, 1401, a mandate was issued from Rome

\* Master was then a clerical title.

† Lawlor, *A Calendar of the Register of Archbishop Sweteman*—Proc. Royal Irish Academy, vol. xxix.

‡ Rossinver.



directing the Archdeacon of Kilmore, and others, to remove Maurice O'Farrelly, and to assign to David O'Farrelly, a priest of Kilmore Diocese, the vicarage of Drumlane, the vicars of which had been accustomed to pay a yearly cess to the Augustinian House of St. Mary, Drumlane, "whose value does not exceed 7 marks, void by the death of William O'Farrelly." \* It appears that the right of Coarbship belonged to the family of David but that another branch of the family has intruded themselves. David's claim, however, did not succeed. Later on he was appointed to the Bishopric of Kilmore on the basis of what seems to have been a false report of the death of the ruling bishop, Nicholas MacBrady. David died in Rome in 1410.

Philip O'Reilly, Dean of Drumlane, was *inter alios*, drowned in Loch Sighlenn (Loch Sheelin) in 1418. In 1436 Patrick O'Farrelly was, by Papal Bull, appointed Prior of Drumlane. This Patrick had been collated in 1427 to the vicarage of the parish church of St. Feidhlimidh, Kilmore, and a short time later was appointed perpetual vicar of St. Brigid's, Urney. Signifying his intention of joining the Augustinian Canons he was, in due course, to resign the vicarage of Urney. The Bull of 1436 reads as follows:—

The conventual priory of St. Mary of Drumlane, a house of Austin Canons in the Diocese of Triburnia [Kilmore] being now void by the demise without the Roman court (*curia*) of Peter Magaumragan [Magaunan] and reserved to the apostolic see, Pope Eugene IV having heard that Patrick Ofairceallaich, at that time perpetual vicar of the parish church of St. Brigid of Nurnaig [Urney] in this diocese, desired [to be admitted] in same priory with the convent of the same *sub regulari habitu virtutum Domine famulari*, sent letters commanding the Bishop and Dean of Clogher and John Osithigi, Canon of the same, if

\* *Calendar of Papal Letters*, vol. v, p. 452.

said Patrick should be fit and no canonical hindrance bars the way, to have him received there by apostolic authority, provided that said priory is not thereby overburdened, as a canon and brother, to see that the religious habit shall, as is customary there, be given to him, that he shall be maintained, like the rest of the canons, at the expense of said priory, and be treated with sincere charity in the Lord. Moreover, should he desire to make the religious profession wont to be made by the canons there, to receive and admit it, and when he has been admitted as a canon, has received the habit, and made his profession as above . . . should they find said priory vacant as aforesaid, or in any other way, . . . provided no other had a specially acquired right therein, to confer it on and assign it to said Patrick, with all its rights and appurtenances, as is more fully mentioned in the aforesaid letters.\*

Patrick O'Farrelly died in 1443, or early in 1444, as appears from the Bull of Pope Eugenius IV appointing as his successor Thady Magauran, who had been vicar of St. Feidhlimidh's Parish Church, Kilmore.† In 1455 Thady was promoted to the Bishopric of Kilmore by Pope Calixtus III, and his successor as Prior of Drumlane was another Peter Magaurughan (Magauran).

Cormac Magauran, a Canon of Drumlane, was appointed Bishop of Ardagh in November, 1444. On the death of Peter Magauran, the predecessor of Patrick O'Farrelly, this Cormac claimed the right of succession and the matter was referred to Rome. The Pope issued a mandate to the Archdeacon of Hainault, in Liege, to summon Cormac and others concerned and to have his claims examined.‡ The matter seems to have been adjusted to the satisfaction of all concerned and Cormac, in his appointment to the Bishopric of

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 249.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 251.

‡ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, vol. viii, p. 585.



Ardagh, is styled "Prior of the house of S. Mary of Drymlethan, O.S.A. (Regular Canons) in the Diocese of Kilmore, *cui de litterarum scientia, vite mundicia, honestate morum.*" \* Cormac resigned his See in 1467, and most probably re-entered the cloister.

During the first half of the fifteenth century appeals were made for alms towards the repair of the monastery and the erection of new buildings. The *Calendar of Papal Letters*, sub anno 1431, has the following entry:—

Relaxation of three years and three quarantines of enjoined penance to penitents, who, on the feast of the Assumption, visit the church of the Augustinian Monastery of St. Mary, the Virgin, Druimleathan, in the Diocese of Kilmore, and give alms for the building (*ad fabricam*) of a cloister, refectory, and several other necessary edifices.

Later on, in 1436, a further appeal was made for alms for the repair of the church and further Indulgences were granted by Pope Eugenius IV to those who subscribed and fulfilled the other prescribed conditions. This was a period of rebuilding and reconstruction in the diocese; at the same time the Premonstratensian Canons on Trinity Island were restoring and enlarging their church and Pope Martin V, in 1427, granted a similar Indulgence to those who helped in the work.

The following letter, dated September 6th, 1438, from Bishop Donatus O'Gowan of Kilmore, refers to the granting of the Coarbship of Drumlane to Nicholas O'Farrelly:—

To all the Faithful of Christ who shall see or hear this letter, Donat, by the Grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Triburnia eternal health in the Lord.

Be it known unto you all, that whereas by the death of the late Muran O'Farally, of worthy memory,

———— \* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 185.

Comurban and principal Herenach of all the lands of the sept of Munter-Farally,\* the said Comurbanship and Erenachie is at present rightfully and actually vacant. We, Bishop Donat, aforesaid, give, grant, and by this our present Charter confirm, that Comurbanship of the Church of St. Medoc of Drumlane of our diocese, and the Erenachie of the said lands, with all the lands, natives upon them, and all other emoluments of right or custom appertaining to the same, to our beloved in Christ Nicholas O'Farally, clerk of said diocese, and native of said lands, including the arable parts, and the non-arable hill and dale, pastures, meadows, grass, woods, fisheries, mills, and all other their appurtenances universally, and with all their limitations, belonging, of right or custom, to the said Comurbanship, and the Erenachie aforesaid; to have and to hold them, from us and our Successors, as largely and liberally as ever his predecessors held, or ought to have held them, for a perpetual possession. He paying, thereupon, to us and our Successors, such rents and tributes as are customary, as well as [being responsible for] all other burdens ordinary and extraordinary, and the services which are due and customary. Given at the cemetery of the House of the Friars Minor of Cavan, of the diocese aforesaid, the sixth day of the month of September, A.D. 1438.†

Throughout the *Annals* are occasional references to the deaths of the Canons and Coarbs of Drumlane. John O'Farrelly, a canon, died in 1484, and in the same year died a priest named Brian O'Farrelly. According to the *Four Masters* this Brian had commenced the building of an anchorite's cell in the Great Church of Drumlane. Mag-Tighernain, a canon of the college (i.e. the clerical body) of Drumlane, died in 1490, as

\* This was the district ruled over by the O'Farrellys and was around Drumlane.

† This letter is given in the *Register* of Primate Swayne of Armagh. It is printed in King's *Early History of the Primacy of Armagh*, p. 37.



recorded by the *Annals of Ulster*. In some of the *Annals*, e.g., the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, sub anno, 1391, we read of the "town of Drumlane," and tradition is positive that a town existed there in the Middle Ages. In 1476 Cormac Magauran, Prior of Drumlane, was promoted to the Bishopric of Kilmore, but his appointment was afterwards annulled. The *Four Masters*, sub anno, 1512, record the death of Hugh O'Maelmocheirghe—the modern surname Early—who was drowned in that year.

The suppression and confiscation of the monastery followed in the sixteenth century. It has been shown on an earlier page that in the year 1306 the income of the Prior of Drumlane was assessed at 3 marks. At the same time the incomes of the Priors of Fore and Kells, from their Kilmore lands, were 11 and 5 marks, respectively. In 1436 the income of Drumlane was estimated as amounting to about 20 to 25 marks. An *Inquisition*, held at Cavan, in 1590, found that the Termon or Hospital of Drumlane, containing 32 polls, were worth 32 shillings per annum. A later *Inquisition*, held in 1609, found that:—

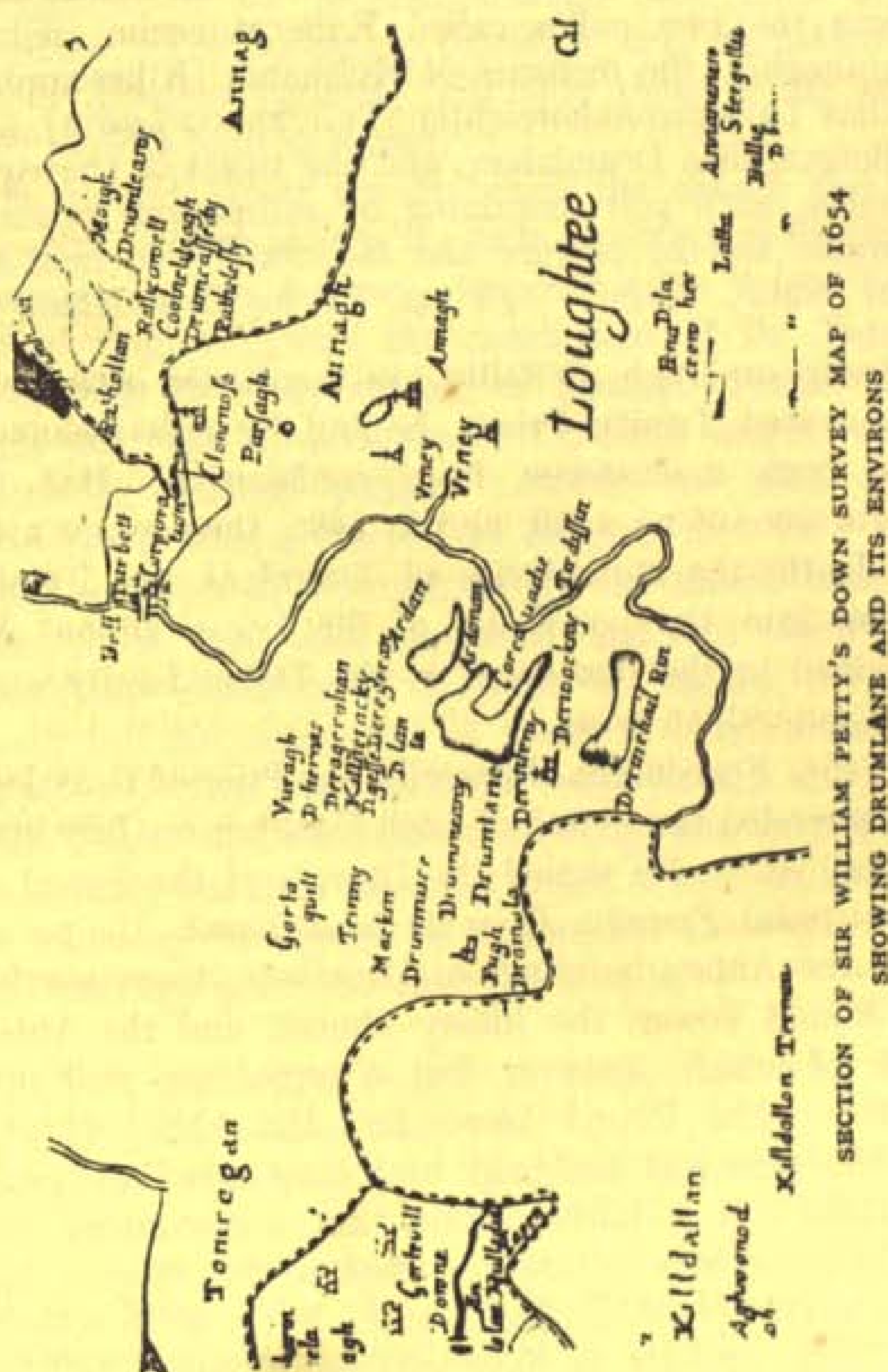
Dromlaghan parish, containing 32 polls, the parsonage is inappropriate to the late abbey of Dromlaghan, and the vicarage of Bolgan alias Dromlaghan-collative, the tithes are paid in kind, and the tithes of 30 polls of termon land and 7 polls of abbey land and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the remaining tithes are paid to the abbey, and the remainder to the vicar who is to pay the bishop  $\frac{1}{2}$  mark.\*

In the *Rawlinson Manuscripts*, dated 1608, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, furnishing particulars of the ecclesiastical lands in Ulster, is the following entry:—

Dromdaghan [*recte* Dromlaghan] 32 polls lyeinge neere the church of Dromlaghan; there belongeth to this church a chaple called Balgan [i.e. Bolgan].

\* *Patent Rolls*, James I.

In 1570 the monastery and its possessions passed into the hands of the English crown and the importance of this great Augustinian establishment began to wane.



On February 1st of that year a lease was granted to Hugh O'Reilly, "Chief of his Nation," of

the site of Canons of the B.V.M. of Drumlahan in O'Reylle's country in the Breny (Breiffne), 8 polls of



land near Drumlahen, viz., Polle Dyrremehill [Derry-vehil], Polle Ardonan [Ardonan], Polle Drumlean [Drumlane], Dyrrykyrekhan [Derrygeeraghan], Polle Nahowrye [Uragh], Polle Drumghes [Drumgesh], and the two polles called Kyllecraaneghe [Kilnacraanagh]; the rectories of Kylshanra [Killeshandra] alias Tullaghconkhoreighter [Tullyhunco Lower] and Bolgan alias Drumlahan, and the tithes of the eight polles, each poll containing by estimation 30 acres arable and 20 pasture and mountain. To hold for 21 years; rent . . . £8 14s. 8d. for Drumlahan.\*

Aodh, or Hugh, O'Reilly, as mentioned elsewhere, also rented Trinity Priory, hoping by this means to save both monasteries from confiscation. But his efforts were of no avail, and in 1586, three years after his death, the monasteries of Drumlane and Trinity passed into the possession of Sir Lucas Dillon and remained in the possession of the Dillon family until the Cromwellian wars.

In 1651 Feardorcha O'Farrelly was Prior of Drumlane and attended the Synod of Loch Uachtair on July 29th of that year. He signed the Decrees of the Synod as *Ferdinandus Ferially, Prior de Druimleamh*.

Of the Abbey buildings of Drumlane, there survive the Round Tower, the Abbey church, and the Abbey itself, of which, however, but a crumbling wall now remains. The Round Tower and the Abbey church are the principal buildings and may now be briefly described. It is fairly certain that a monastery was in existence here before the time of St. Mogue, but there have survived no traces of it. In the sixth century St. Mogue appears to have established his church on the ancient site. The Round Tower, which seems to belong to the close of the tenth, or the beginning of the eleventh, century would indicate that at that period

\* Lease under Commission dated September 26, 1570. *Fiants* of Eliz., 1570.

Drumlane witnessed the erection of newer buildings, evidently to replace, or improve on, the structures erected by St. Mogue. Lastly, the church erected by the Canons of St. Augustine when they took over Drumlane. The buildings, therefore, may be assigned to four different periods; but only those of the two latter periods have survived.

The Round Tower stands beside the church and is of special interest as it is the only structure of its class remaining in the diocese. Regarding the origin and uses of Round Towers the conclusions of Dr. Petrie are familiar to every student of history. Petrie concludes that the Towers are of Christian origin, were erected at various periods between the fifth and thirteenth centuries, served as belfries, and were the keeps, or places of strength, where the sacred vessels, books, relics, etc., were deposited, and into which the ecclesiastics could retire in case of sudden attack. A very full discussion will be found in Petrie's *Round Towers of Ireland*, the standard work on the subject.

The Tower of Drumlane is about 45 feet in height, considerably less than the usual height of such buildings. The following description of it from the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* gives the essential details:—

The tower when viewed in connection with the church . . . inclines the observer to consider the opinion, that one object of these buildings was defence, as having some plausibility; and this is confirmed by the very remarkable mode of building adopted in the tower; for the lower part, to the height of twenty-two feet, is constructed of carefully wrought sandstone, and is equal in execution to the tower of Devenish itself, the stones being fitted to their places with great care. The doorway, which is in this part of the structure, partakes of the same skilful and admirable workmanship, being formed of stone of the full thickness of the walls, which in this



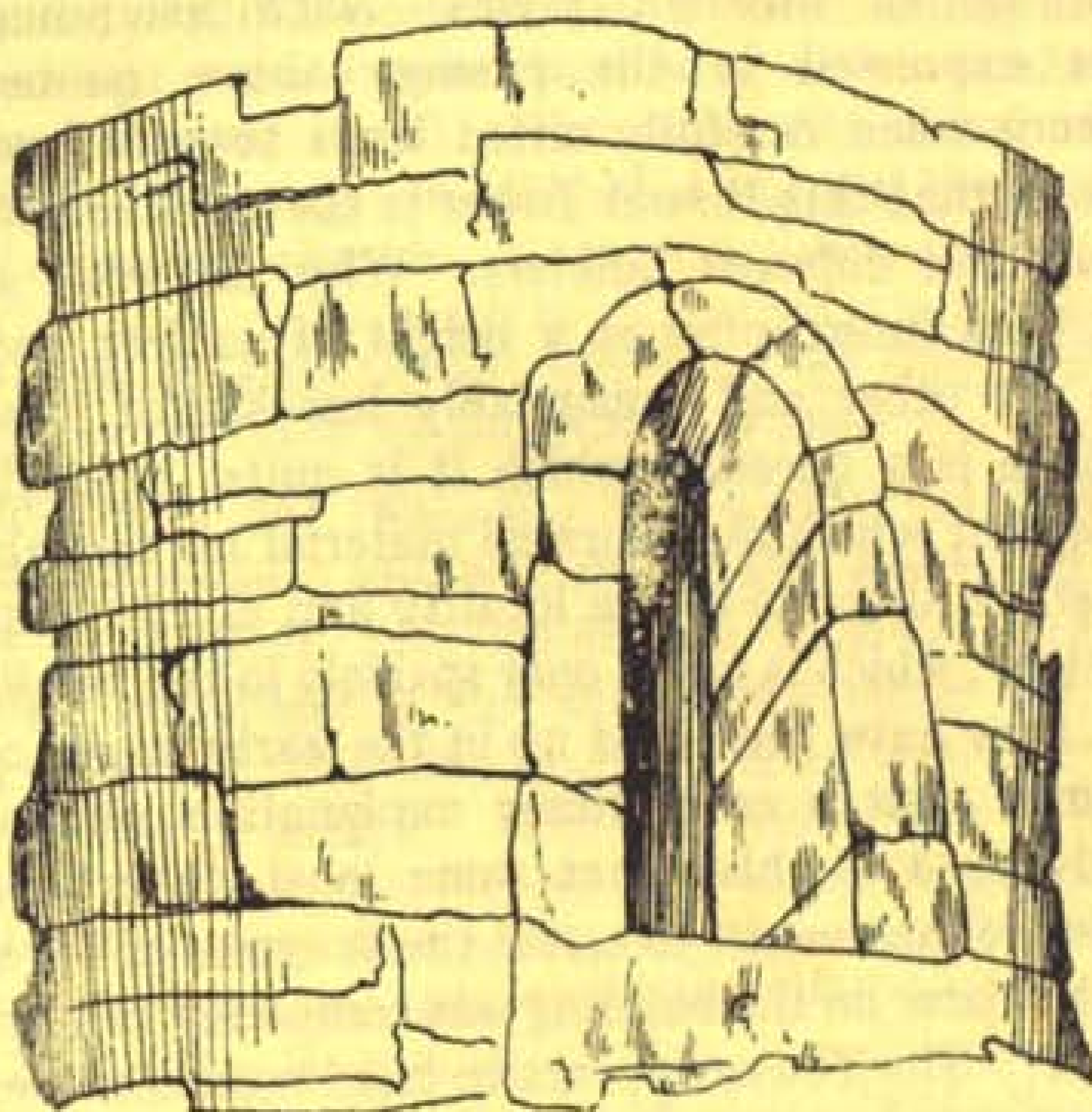
part is three feet three inches. Its architrave projects boldly three or four inches from the general line of the ashlar, and the top, which is arched, is keyed in a workmanlike manner, as shown in the accompanying sketch.

In the upper part of what now remains of this building, a peculiarity of construction is observed which deserves to be noticed. After the point already mentioned is reached, a change takes place both in the material and workmanship, the remainder of the tower being built of coarse work of the meanest description. As there is no evidence whatever of the lower portion having been repaired or cased, at a period subsequent to its erection, there is little doubt that this work, at least what remains of it, now stands as originally erected; another mystery connected with Round Towers.

The probable solution is, that the object of the builder was to make the structure a place of defence, and this was fully attained by the plan pursued; for the lower portion would have resisted a degree of violence quite sufficient to destroy the upper part. It may also be noticed that the height of the ashlar-work reaches to about the same elevation as the walls of the church. If the parts had been reversed, the conclusion would have been that the building was the work of different periods: one part exhibiting the first efforts of a rude people and the other showing unmistakeable evidence of an advanced state of architecture. Of this tower about 45 feet only now remain. Its exterior circumference at the base is 52 feet; at the same part the internal diameter is ten feet six inches; and, as already mentioned, the thickness of the wall, measured at the door, is three feet three inches. The entrance itself, which is several feet above the ground, is five feet six inches in height, and two feet wide at the sill, tapering to one foot eight inches and a half at the spring of the arch. Above the door, in the upper part of the tower, a small angular-headed window is observed, the top

formed in a most simple manner, by two pieces of sandstone inclined towards one another and meeting at the top.\*

The entrance to the Tower is about nine feet above the ground. This was for greater security, as in the event of a raid on the monastery the ecclesiastics could



DOOR OF DRUMLANE TOWER.

[*Breifne Antiq. Journal*]

ascend to the entrance by means of a ladder, which was then drawn up and the position of the entrance ensured that no attackers could rush it. The wisdom of the builders, in an age of raids and sudden forays, is immediately apparent. This Round Tower presents

\* Vol. v, pp. 110 and 116.



some unique features. Perhaps the most striking feature is the different styles of building. For a height of twenty-two feet the building is of sandstone and compares favourably with any other example of its class in Ireland. But the upper part is composed of rough rubble masonry, comparing very unfavourably with that of the lower portion. An examination of the windows in the upper and lower parts show that even these are of different styles. Notwithstanding the views expressed in the passage above quoted the evidence when carefully sifted leads to only one conclusion : that this Round Tower is the work of different periods and different builders. Why the work should have been interrupted at a height of 22 feet and laid aside for other and presumably less skilful hands to complete is a question which it is quite impossible to answer but which may furnish material for speculation. Limestone abounds in the locality and all the available sandstone, which is found only sparsely in the neighbourhood, may have been used up in the early stages of the building. But a more likely explanation which may be advanced is this : that some local disturbance or civil strife intervened to arrest the progress of the work, and that later on the building was completed in a hurried manner. The Tower appears to have been considerably higher in early times but was hardly at any time as high as similar structures elsewhere. It is far below the average height, which is about 90 feet. The magnificent specimen at Ceanannus, Co. Meath, is well known. The Drumlane Tower is an inferior example, but that its builders got their inspiration from Ceanannus is evident from the close connection existing between the monasteries.

O'Donovan, in his *Ordnance Survey Letters*, writing from Belturbet on May 14th, 1836, refers to some local traditions concerning the Drumlane Tower which were then current.

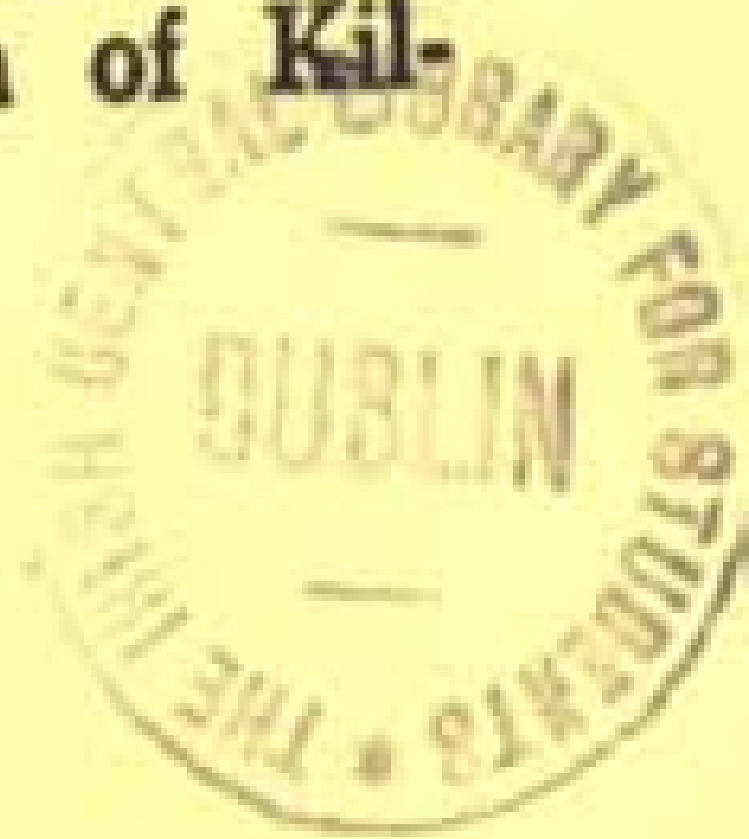
Drumlane [he writes], however, is so imposing that I am tempted to write a few words about it. It is called by the Irish *Druim Leathan*—Dorsum Latum—a name which is not of ecclesiastical origin, but which alludes to a beautiful ridge in the townland.

The constant tradition of the country is that the "Round Steeple" was built for a "Belfry." Dean Richardson's story of an anchorite living on the top of it is not now known in the country, and old Kennedy of Killycar House, a very intelligent old gentleman, now in the 82nd year of his age, states that he never heard of an anchorite living in the steeple, although he did of a hermit living in a cell near the church.

Writing in 1844, in his notes to the *Four Masters*, O'Donovan returns to the same subject.

The late Mr. Kennedy [he writes], of Killycar, near Drumlane, who was maternally descended from the O'Farrells, told the Editor, in May, 1836, that this *Cloch-Angcoire*, or anchorite's stone domicile, was a small, low, stone cell, situated near the great church of Drumlane. Harris, in his edition of *Ware's Antiquities*, p. 135, states that *Cloch-Angcoire* was the Irish name for the Round Tower of Drumlane; but Mr. Kennedy, who knew the Irish language and the tradition of Drumlane better than Harris, told the Editor that the Round Tower of Drumlane was always called *Cloigteac* [i.e., bell house] in Irish, and that he always understood that it was the Irish term for belfry, and added that the round steeple at Drumlane was originally built, and always, till about two centuries since, used as a belfry.

The theory, never seriously considered by historians, that Irish Round Towers were constructed for anchorites, or Pillar Saints like St. Simeon Stylites, the Syrian monk of the fifth century, who is reputed to have preached from a pillar near Antioch, was propounded by Rev. John Richardson, Protestant Dean of Kil-





macduagh and Rector of Belturbet, who died in 1747. Dean Richardson was a good Gaelic scholar, he wrote an Irish Grammar and translated the Book of Common Prayer into Irish, but his theory of the origin of the Towers appears to have been based on nothing more substantial than the tradition of a hermit having built a cell near the church. The Dean then reached the rather far fetched conclusion that the Tower was nothing more or less than the actual cell.

The tradition of the hermit obviously was historical and referred to the priest, Brian O'Farrelly, whose death in 1484 has already been noted. The stone cell of the anchorite was situated near the church and was a low, small building, as was explained to O'Donovan by Mr. Kennedy of Killycar, whose grandfather saw the building or at least the remains of it. This Mr. Kennedy of Killycar House, who gave O'Donovan much useful information concerning the locality, was a retired East Indian Civil Servant and a very learned man. Towards the end of his life he lived with his relatives in Dublin, where he died at an advanced age. His remains were interred at Drumlane.

Dean Richardson's theory was swallowed with avidity by Walter Harris, editor of *Ware's Antiquities*, and in later times by Milner, King, and others. These absurdities were finally disposed of by Dr. Petrie in his classic work: referring to the tradition of the anchorite living on the Tower of Drumlane, he says that "it scarcely deserves comment."

Two Belfast archaeologists, Getty and Grattan, made some excavations in the interior of the Round Tower in July, 1844.\* Having cleared away a mass of debris they reached a solid clay floor, under which, on further digging, they discovered some human bones as well as the bones of animals. The search revealed nothing of interest or historical value. Traces of previous excava-

\* Getty, *The Round Towers of Ulster*.

tions were observed but local inquiry furnished the solution ; a short time previously some local treasure-seekers in response to a dream had been excavating for buried treasure in the interior, emulating the *Argonautae* in quest of the *Golden Fleece*—this time the ubiquitous but elusive "crock of gold" !

There is a tradition that the silver bell which was once suspended in the Tower is now at the bottom of the adjoining lake, where it was deposited for safety in the days when raids on monasteries were frequent.

When viewed from a distance the Tower, owing to the two different styles of masonry, presents the appearance of two separate cylinders of masonry superimposed. The arch of the doorway consists of three voussoirs and displays skilled workmanship. The recesses for a door are in the inner jambs. The arches of the windows, which are in the upper portion, belong to a different style.

On the eastern arc of the Tower, about six feet above the ground, is the weather-worn "Cock and Hen" carving, the origin and interpretation of which must be referred to authorities on semi-mystical legendary lore. The carving was observed by O'Donovan, who facetiously remarks that these emblems "would set O'Brien mad" had the latter known of their existence ; this refers, of course, to Henry O'Brien's ludicrous and fantastic theories of the pagan origin of the Towers as propounded in his work *The Round Towers of Ireland* (second edition, 1834), a worthless production which was never taken seriously. The legend of the "Cock and Pot," by which name it is usually known, is based on an apocryphal anecdote relating to Judas Iscariot which at an early period passed into Irish literature and folklore. Of the legend there exist numerous versions, widespread both in East and West, and it appears to be as old as Christianity itself ; in brief it is as follows : Judas returning home found his wife (or his mother, according to the



*Leabhar Breac* version) cooking the bird for dinner. She upbraided him and declared her belief in the Resurrection. Judas was angry and declared that the Resurrection was as unlikely as that the bird which she was cooking should come to life; whereupon, the bird flew out of the pot, clapped its wings and crowed thrice.

Of the great antiquity of the legend there is abundant evidence. It is to be found in the *Leabhar Breac*, one of our earliest Gaelic manuscripts. A Latin version in a twelfth century manuscript in Jesus College, Oxford, agrees in general with the *Leabhar Breac* version. In an early Irish poem on the Crucifixion the sister of Judas rather than his wife, is mentioned \*—a variation from the Greek version of the *Acta Pilati*.† A Northumbrian poem of the fourteenth century entitled *Cursor Mundi* refers to the legend of the "Cock and Pot." ‡ It is curious and interesting that this legend, which occurs in so many forms in the apocryphal writings of the East, should have entered so largely into early Irish literature and tradition, and should survive to the present day. Dr Douglas Hyde heard a Gaelic version of it in Co. Galway, but the guard at the Tomb figures instead of the wife of Judas.§ Another Gaelic version was heard on the borders of Donegal and Sligo.

That a legend so widespread in ancient and modern times should have found representation in sculpture is not surprising. It is to be found on monumental slabs in many parts of Ireland, e.g., on the Plunket Altar Tomb, dated 1531, at Rathmore, Co. Meath, || and on the FitzEustace Altar Tomb, dated 1496, at New

\* *Eriu*, vol. iii, pp. 194-199.

† Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, p. 290.

‡ *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vol. xxxvii, p. 241.

§ Hyde, *Legends of Saints and Sinners*, pp. 76-78.

|| *Journal of the Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead*, vol. vii, p. 435.

Abbey, Co. Kildare.\* On Irish monuments it always forms one of the emblems of the Crucifixion and this, collated with the several versions of the Judas legend in apocryphal history and tradition, all of which agree in the essentials, leads to the conclusion that it was universally adopted in early times as a symbol of the Resurrection.

In many cases the figures are so worn with age that the details are now difficult to decipher. Well preserved examples of the "Cock and Pot" may be seen on the MacCreagh Altar Tomb, dated 1557, at Lismore, Co. Waterford, and on the Purcell monument, dated 1549, in St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny. In Co. Roscommon an example occurs on the Crucifixion slab at St. Ronan's Well, Taghmaconnell. Monumental slabs in almost every part of Ireland, even those belonging to a period as late as the close of the eighteenth century, show the bird in association with the emblems of the Passion. The figure of a bird which is displayed on some Irish seventeenth century chalices seems to refer to the same subject.

The legend permeates the apocryphal literature of many nations and the writings concerning it are very numerous.† The Drumlane carving is unique, inasmuch as it is the only example, as far as I can discover, where the emblem is associated with a Round Tower. Again, assuming that the Round Tower belongs to the tenth century, this would seem to be the earliest representation of the legend yet discovered in Ireland. As a Christian symbol it seems to date from the introduction of Christianity and to have become very popular as a monumental device.

The church of Drumlane is roofless, but otherwise the building is in a good state of preservation. Its

\* *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society*, vol. iii, p. 304.

† E.g., *Eriu*, vol. iii; *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxxiv, p. 311, and vol. xlix, p. 155.



internal measurements are 89 feet in length by 20 feet in breadth, showing that it was one of Breiffne's most spacious churches. The plan is rectangular and the building most probably belongs to the thirteenth century; it evidently replaced the older edifice which dated from the time of St. Mogue. There seems to have been no division into nave and chancel—at any rate there are now no traces of such a division. The church was without aisles, transept, or annexes. A very remarkable feature of the building is the massive buttresses disposed somewhat irregularly and presenting triangular side-elevations. The exact purpose served by these buttresses has not been fully explained, but it is likely that some of them were necessitated owing to the construction of vaults or tombs in the interior of the church which would have tended to weaken the walls. Another, and a more plausible explanation, is that the nature of the soil may have caused in the walls a tendency to sag. Some of the buttresses appear to be as old as the building itself and this would indicate that the builders of the church adopted them as a precautionary measure against sagging. Probably both these reasons rendered necessary the construction of the buttresses.

In the early part of the eighteenth century portion of the east end of the ruined church was re-roofed and utilised for Protestant services. A view of the church and Round Tower in 1793 is shown in *Grose's Antiquities*. The sculptured tombs of the Abbots which once adorned the interior of the church were brushed aside and no traces of them now remain in their original positions. The once splendid east window has also suffered from the ravages of time; even its stone mullions have disappeared. Authorities have dated this window to about the year 1350. The two-light window under a horizontal hood in the north wall appears to belong to the close of the same century.

Portion of the west gable has been demolished but its doorway remains. This doorway displays the nail-head or dog-tooth moulding, and its keystone is a finely carved mitred head. Three large windows, evidently modern, are on the south wall; two smaller ones are on the north wall. Besides the principal door, which is on the west gable there is a smaller door on each of the north and south sides.\*

Drumlane Abbey, which was the residence of the priests who tended the church, is situated a short distance from the church and Round Tower. Of this building only a wall remains, but a wing projecting eastward seems to have been attached to its north end. In 1431, as appears from a Papal document already quoted, an appeal was made for alms for the erection of a cloister and other additions.

Surrounding the ruined church and Round Tower is an extensive cemetery, still in use, where repose the ashes of the O'Farrellys, O'Reillys, Magaghrans, and other great Breiffne families. Fragments of broken tombs are scattered around, most probably the debris of the tombs which once occupied places in the interior of the church. The sculptured slabstone with its interlaced ornamentation, which belonged to the O'Farrelly tomb, is an example of the sculptor's art as practised in early times in Drumlane.

\* For an interesting account of Drumlane by Rev. Patrick O'Reilly, P.P., Knockbride, see the *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. ii, No. 2 (1924) and No. 3 (1925-26).



## CHAPTER IX

## ST. MOGUE IN DRUMLANE AND ROSSINVER

ST. MOGUE, or Moaethog, which is the correct form of his name, was a native of Breiffne and was born about the year 555 on the island of *Inis Breachmhaigh*—*inir breacmhaig*—now known as Port Island, or St. Mogue's Island, in Templeport Lake.\* This lake is in Templeport parish and in the historic territory of Magh Sleacht. Locally the island is sometimes called *Inch*, a survival of the older *inir breacmhaig* or *Insula Breaghmuighe*, as it is given by Colgan † and also in the early Lives of St. Mogue. On this island are some remains of a stone-roofed oratory or church, one of St. Mogue's earliest ecclesiastical foundations.

Joyce and other writers have erroneously equated the *Inis Breachmhaigh* of St. Mogue with Brackley Island, in Brackley Lake, which is also in Templeport parish. "It [i.e., Brackley Lake]," writes Joyce, "contains a little island on which the celebrated St. Maidoc of Ferns was born." ‡ But the *Inis Breachmhaigh* of Templeport Lake, which was Mogue's birth-place, is quite distinct from Brackley Island § in the

\* "In insula autem Breccrimaige sanctus Aidus natus est. Et in terra illa, in qua natus est, lux non defuit in ea usque in hodiernum diem"—Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. ii, p. 295. O'Donovan correctly identifies Colgan's "Insula Breaghmuighe" with the island "now called Port Island and Mogue's Island" in the Parish of Templeport and Barony of Tullyhaw.

† *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, p. 200.

‡ *Irish Names of Places*, vol. i, p. 482.

§ The island in Brackley lake does not appear to be remembered by any distinctive Gaelic name; it is now usually known by a modern name the "Baron's Island" from a studio erected there in the early part of the last cent. by the Baron De Trent, who was then residing in the neighbourho

lake of the same name; the latter place has no connection, historical or traditional, with the saint. Reeves and later writers who were unacquainted with the local topography merely confused the names of the places.

The original name of the plain around the present Templeport was *breac-maig*, pronounced "Breaghy"; hence "Breaghy Lake" and "Breaghy Island." The name is not of ecclesiastical origin and belongs to a period prior to the introduction of Christianity: *breac-maig* signifies the "wolf plain." Joyce confuses "Breaghy" and "Brackley," owing to similarity of name, an error which he adopts from Dr. Reeves. Again, Joyce explains Brackley as "wolf-field," but here again he is in error, as the name is certainly *breactac*, i.e., speckled land.

The church now in ruins on Inis Breachmhaigh was founded by St. Mogue on his native island just a mile from Kilnavart, where the parish church of Templeport was later on established. In mediaeval times, as shown by our early ecclesiastical records, Inis Breachmhaigh, under its various Latinised forms, was an *alias* for Templeport parish. A Roman document of 1414 has "Insula Brechungy alias Tempullapuret," \* and another document of 1426 refers to the parish church of "Inis-brechiruigy alias Tempullapuyrt." † These references show that the principal church of Magh Sleacht was then on Inis Breachmhaigh, i.e., St. Mogue's Island. But the church of Kilnavart, founded by St. Patrick himself, was at least a century and a half older than St. Mogue's island sanctuary. The great veneration paid to St. Mogue ensured that his church should be maintained as the parish church. But its situation was found to be too inconvenient, and later on, probably about the fourteenth century, the centre of parochial jurisdiction was transferred to Kilnavart, where it has since remained.

\* *De Annals Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 245.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 231.



St. Mogue was one of Ireland's greatest church-founders, and the Ui-Briuin race to which he belonged always held him in great veneration, a veneration which despite the passage of thirteen centuries is still a living force in Breiffne. His father belonged to the race of Colla Uais, descended from Conn of the Hundred Battles, and was therefore a scion of the great ruling dynasty of Tara, which swayed the royal sceptre for over five hundred years. According to the Martyrologies the mother of the saint was Eithne of the race of Amhalghaidh, son of Fiachra.

In his youth St. Mogue was delivered as a hostage to the Ard-Ri, Ainmire, who released him after a short time.\* Then he went to St. Finian's famous school at Clonard where he met St. Molaise of Devenish, with whom he formed a life-long friendship. The following story of their youthful days is recorded in various *Lives* of both saints. Towards the end of their school-days the two friends were seated one day in the shade of two trees discussing their future, and praying for direction whether they should remain together or work apart. Thereupon the tree which shaded Molaise inclined towards the north and that under which Mogue sat inclined to the south.† Molaise, going north, founded the monastery of Devenish, in Loch Erne, and Mogue, going south, founded the monastery of Ferns, in the present Co. Wexford.

The missionary labours of St. Mogue extended to England and Wales where he founded many churches and where his name is indelibly stamped on the place-names of the districts where he laboured.‡ Portmadoc and Tremadoc in Caernarvon are named after him. Returning to Ireland he founded the monastery of Ferns and was the first bishop of that See.

\* Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. ii, p. 143.

† Canon McKenna, *Devenish : Its History, Antiquities and Traditions*. Second Edition, Enniskillen, 1931.

‡ Rees, *Essay on the Welsh Saints*, p. 227.

In the Diocese of Ferns, of which he is Patron, he is generally known by another name—*Aidan*.<sup>\*</sup> The origin of the latter name is as follows. At his baptism the saint was christened *Aedh*, but during his childhood he was called *Mo-Aedh-Og*, a term of endearment; *Mo-* is a prefix and *-Og* is a suffix, which considerably changed the form of the name. In all the early *Annals* and *Martyrologies* he is known by this name—*Moaedhog*. Later writers who used Latin, and not finding the name *Moaedhog* easily adaptable for Latinisation took the original form of the name *Aedh* and Latinised it *Aedan*, from which, by abbreviation, *Aedan* and later *Aidan* was formed. This form of the name, usually adopted in Ferns Diocese but not in Kilmore, was, strange to say, first popularised by non-Catholic writers who, unacquainted with the Gaelic form of the name, relied on Latin sources which led them, quite unwittingly, to perpetuate an incorrect form. In his native Breiffne the saint is known by no other name than *Moaedhog* (usually abbreviated to *Mogue*), and neither history nor tradition knows of the form *Aidan*. The older Irish *Litanies*, in the *Book of Leinster* and in the *Leabhar Breac*, have "Maedoc Ferna," i.e., St. Mogue of Ferns. In the modern *Litany of Irish Saints* Mogue is unaccountably omitted and the form *Aidan* is substituted which conceals the saint's identity from the great majority of our people, especially in Breiffne.

St. Mogue is numbered among the "Twelve Apostles of Erin," † and his festival is celebrated on January 31st, which as "St. Mogue's Day" has always been fittingly

<sup>\*</sup> Not to be confused with another saint of the same name, Aidan, apostle of the Northumbrians and first bishop of Lindisfarne, whose festival is on August 31. St. Aidan of Lindisfarne was an Irish missionary who died in 651.

† The saints known as the "Twelve Apostles of Ireland" are:—Ruadhan of Lorrha; Moaedhog of Ferns; Feichin of Fore; Fraech the Presbyter; Becan MacCula; Bishop MacCarthainn of Clogher; Mochta of Louth; Mochuda, the Devout; Molaise of Devenish; Columchille; Cainnech, the Pious; Tighearnach of Clones.



observed in Breiffne and especially in his native parish of Templeport. As a Christian name in Breiffne, as well as in Ferns and eastern Ireland, "Mogue" has always been popular. In Wexford, however, by a peculiar transformation, it sometimes becomes "Moses," which here, however, is not of Biblical origin, as is sometimes supposed, but a mere corruption of the old Gaelic name.

In the townland of Derrintinny, about a mile to the east of Drumlane monastery, is St. Mogue's Holy Well, still a place of pilgrimage. According to popular belief an imprint of the saint's knee was believed to be visible on a flag-stone called *ṡlón moaeóḡ*, i.e., St. Mogue's knee, beside this Well. Another Holy Well dedicated to St. Mogue is in the townland of Kilnacross in Kildallan parish; this is certainly the Well at which St. Mogue baptised Aodh Dubh, king of Breiffne and ancestor of the Uí-Briuin race.

The island of Inishmuck, beside Drumlane, is called in Gaelic *inir moaeóḡ*, i.e., St. Mogue's Island.\*

Two interesting Latin *Lives* of St. Mogue, edited and annotated by Rev. Charles Plummer, M.A., Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in his *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Two vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), have enhanced our knowledge of the life and activities of the saint. The *Lives* are entitled *Vita Sancti Maedoc Episcopi de Ferna* (vol. ii., pp. 141-163) and *Vita Sancti Aidvi sive Maedoc* (vol. ii., pp. 295-311). An Irish *Life*, *Betha Maedoc Ferna*, is published in Dr. Plummer's later work, *Bethada Naem nEreann* ("Lives of the Irish Saints")—Oxford, 1922, vol. i., pp. 183-290. In vol. ii. Dr. Plummer gives translations and learned annotations†

According to the *Betha Maedoc Ferna* St. Mogue, when a young man went from Drumlane to the territory

\* Not *inir muc*, as the modern pronunciation of the name might suggest.

† Cf. Dr. Plummer's paper in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, vol. v., p. 428.

of Leinster when he cured the king, Brandubh, of a severe illness, and the king in return granted him lands on which he established the monastery of Ferns. Visiting Wales on a few occasions he became intimately associated with St. David of Menevia. When at length, after a long and arduous missionary career, he found death approaching, he left Ferns and returned to Drumlane "in the maturity of his age and days" (*Op. cit.*, ii., p. 201). At Drumlane Mogue had

A strange and wondrous vision . . . to wit, all the ramifications of the family of Aedh Finn [the progenitor of the families of O'Rourke and O'Reilly] simultaneously, and their genealogical branches, and ramifications of relationship, and further the name of every king and every great chief of them who should obtain sovereignty and authority to the end of the world (*Op. cit.*, p. 227).

An angel having, through St. Columbkille, interpreted the vision, commanded that St. Mogue should raise

Another honourable place in addition to Drumlane . . . and this will be one of the three most lasting fires of entertainment in Ui-Briuin, to wit, the fire of this place, whence Maedoc saw the vision, Drumlane; and Cuillin na bFer or Rossinver, and Cell Mor Feidlimid [Kilmore].

St. Mogue then went to Rossinver, the older name of which was *Cuillin na bFer*, where he erected "a strong and ample oratory, and a fair-built quadrangular regular church in preparation for his resurrection" (*Op. cit.*, p. 228).

At Rossinver, which is in the extreme north-west of the present Co. Leitrim, St. Mogue died. On his death-bed he sent an urgent message to his cousin, St. Dallan of Kildallan, to come and "be witness to his [testamentary] disposition in respect to his relics and high insignia." "Take my blessing with thee eastwards," he said to



Dallan, "to the men of Breiffne." Moreover, he commissioned Dallan to convey special blessings to the "family of Maolmordha" (the O'Reillys), the "descendants of Dunchad" (Tullyhunco, the patrimony of the Mastersons and MacKiernans) and "the house of Eochaid" (Tullyhaw, the patrimony of the Magaurans).

St. Mogue chose Rossinver as the place of his death and burial. Before leaving Drumlane for the last time he appointed Faircellach, the progenitor of the O'Farrelly's, to the Coarbship of Drumlane.

The saint was buried in the church of Rossinver. Many of our leading authorities have assumed that he died at Ferns and was buried there. In fact, Ware, Ussher, and Lanigan, followed by Canon O'Hanlon and later writers, have accepted without question the conclusion that he died in the monastery of Ferns and rests there. But it must be pointed out that the evidence in support of this is wanting. In the *Life* of St. Mogue copied in 1629 by the illustrious Michael O'Clery, one of the *Four Masters*, from an older book written by Fintan O'Cuirnin for Partholan O'Fergus, one of the hereditary Erenachs of Rossinver, it is stated clearly and explicitly that the saint died at Rossinver and was buried there. The longer Irish *Life*, edited by Plummer, is a faithful transcript of the O'Clery MSS. preserved in the Royal Library, Brussels; furthermore, the O'Clery MS. was collated by Plummer with two other Irish *Lives* of St. Mogue, viz., a MS. *Life* written by James Maguire in 1721 and another *Life* compiled by Hugh O'Daly in 1737. Maguire's MS. is preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, and O'Daly's is in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. Other *Lives*, as Plummer says, certainly give the impression, though they do not actually state, that he was buried at Ferns. It is important to note that none of the early *Lives* mention Ferns as his burial place; only one of them

makes a positive statement on the point and Rossinver is the place mentioned. The evidence of the O'Clery MS. is conclusive. The O'Cuirnins were the hereditary historians of the O'Rourkes. In 1416 their precious collection of manuscripts was destroyed by fire on Church Island in Loch Gill and the loss was irreparable for the early history of Breiffne. The family of O'Fergus, or Ferguson, the Erenachs of Rossinver, played an important part in the history of Rossinver, and still reside there.

Authorities differ slightly regarding the date of St. Mogue's death. Neither of the two Irish *Lives* suggests a date, but the *Four Masters*, Colgan, Archdall, and others, give 624. Lanigan, Ussher, Ware and O'Curry incline to 632, which is the date now accepted by most authorities.

Rossinver is a parish in north Co. Leitrim, on the north-east corner of Loch Melvin. In the early part of the last century the extensive parish of Rossinver was sub-divided into the three smaller parishes of Ballaghmeehan, Kinlough and Glenade. The present parish of Ballaghmeehan contains the ruined church and old cemetery of Rossinver; situated on the eastern shore of Loch Melvin, the ancient *Loch Meilghe*, the church, once a spacious edifice, is now a crumbling ruin. Some monumental slabs of great antiquity and deserving of further examination are strewn around the cemetery; some of them are now partly covered by the accumulated soil. Somewhere within the precincts of this venerable sanctuary, this 'fair-built quadrangular regular church,' rests the great St. Mogue. At the period of the Reformation, when the church was confiscated and passed out of Catholic hands, his tomb was brushed aside, and, as happened in many other places, its location was forgotten. St. Mogue was Patron of the church and parish. In the immediate vicinity of the church is his Holy Well. The *Martyrologies* enter on January 5th



a St. Maccoige of Rosinbhir ; as O'Donovan shows he is identical with St. Mogue. The veneration for the saint continues as popular at Rossinver as at Drumlane.

Rossinver—*Ros-inbhir*, i.e., the peninsula of the river mouth—is chiefly in the barony of Rosclogher, Co Leitrim ; a small portion extends into the barony of Carbury, Co. Sligo. It is the most northerly parish in the diocese and for a few miles skirts the Atlantic seaboard. The district is associated with the Fomorian and the followers of Partholan, those legendary prehistoric peoples who inhabited the coasts of Ireland and were essentially maritime races. An older name for Rossinver was *Cuillin na bFer*, which is found in the old *Life* of St. Mogue, quoted above. The men (*Fer*) who gave their name to this then wooded district along the Atlantic must have belonged to some of those early races.

The barony of Rosclogher is approximately co-extensive with the ancient territory of Dartry, or Dartree which belonged to the family of Mac Clancy ; it was usually called *Dar Traighe Mhic Fhlannchaidh*, or Mac Clancy's Dartry. This territory, "formidable in its mountains and fastnesses," provides some of Ireland's most picturesque scenery and abounds in Gaelic traditions. In the seventeenth century, when the power and influence of the Mac Clancys dwindled, their territory of Dartry was curtailed also. O'Donovan, writing in 1836, when local tradition appears to have been singularly well informed, defined the territory of Dartry as extending

from Glack Townland on the east to Bunduff on the west, a distance of about six miles, and from Mullanaleck Townland on the north, to Aghanlish Townland on the south, a distance of about three miles.

The ancient title of Dartry is still generally applied to the district. In mediaeval times Dartry was an alias

for Rossinver. In the Papal Annates *sub anno* 1505 the parish is called "Rossinvir alias plebis Dartrair."\* In the *Will* of Bishop Richardson, dated 1752, the parish is, again, named Dartree. The Mac Clancys had castles at Dun Cairbre (now Duncarbry) and Rosclogher, the sites of which may still be seen. Surrounded by steep and rugged mountains and approachable only through narrow ravines these strongholds remained intact until the seventeenth century. In 1588, when the Spanish Armada was storm scattered and wrecked on these rocky western coasts, the Mac Clancys saved many of the Spaniards and sheltered them—a fact which aroused the fury of Elizabeth's government and hastened the confiscation of Dartry.

In 1538 the Annalists record the *obit* of Mac Flannchadha, heir to the chieftainship of Dar Traighe, who died at Dun Cairbre. The O'Ferguses, or O'Fergusons, were Erenachs of Rossinver, and the O'Meehans were Erenachs of Ballaghmeehan. The *obit* of "O'Mithidhein an Bhealaigh, Coarb of St. Molaise" is entered in the *Annals* *sub anno* 1439. St. Molaise (of Devenish) was Patron of Ballaghmeehan, where his Holy Well is in the townland of Derrynahimmirk. Beside the church of Rossinver, and within a few perches of St. Mogue's Well, is another Holy Well dedicated to St. Caillin, probably St. Caillin of Fenagh.

On the shore of Loch Melvin was a church called Doire Melle, founded by St. Tighernach for his mother St. Melle. The islands in the lake have many ecclesiastical associations. On the island called *Inis Teampuill*, i.e., church island, are the ruins of a church of great antiquity. It was founded by St. Sinell who, according to Colgan and other authorities, was St. Patrick's bell-founder. But there were two St. Sinells, and it is not easy now to distinguish them with certainty. Another island, *Inis Caoin*, i.e., the beautiful island, has some

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 241.



traces of an early church, the foundations of which may be detected. The Friars' Garden, *ḡarrard na mḡratar*, is shown on the north-west side of the island. On the north-west side of the lake are three smaller islands called *Oileáin na naom*, i.e., the Islands of the Saints. The names of several saints connected with the district occur in the Irish *Martyrologies*. St. Siadhail of Ceann Locha (Kinlough), who died in 794, is entered on March 8th, and on March 31st we find Melle, or Mella, above mentioned, who died in 787. The festival of St. Sinell, most probably of Loch Melvin, occurs on November 11th. He died in 597.

The River Bonnet, the *Buannadium Fluvium* of Colgan, rises in Glenade Loch and flows around Drumlease parish, which it separates from the parishes of Cloonlogher, Killargy, and Killenummery, in Co. Leitrim, and from Killery parish, in Co. Sligo. The Gaelic form of Glenade is *ḡleann éada*, i.e., the Glen of Jealousy, concerning the origin of which there are local legends. Clearly, however, the name refers to the legendary jealousy of Partholan and his wife, Dealnait, and is connected with the pre-historic settlements. The glen is very picturesque and is about four miles in length, "from Aghanlish Townland to Sracloithreen Bridge," according to O'Donovan.

At the village of Tullaghan, on the coast at the extreme north-west of ancient Rossinver, is a Stone Cross, which is interesting, as it is the only representative of its class now surviving in the diocese.\* The Cross is on a small

\* Some smaller ones, but much inferior in design and rudely constructed, may be mentioned. In the townland of Cargagh, in Killinkere Parish, is the shaft of a Cross with traces of an inscription, but the top is missing. In a secluded valley near the village of Killarga there is a rudely constructed cross standing over a holy well. The Cross discovered on Trinity Island is described elsewhere. The ancient Market Cross of Cavan has long since disappeared. Neither at Kilmore nor at Drumlane, where such objects must certainly have existed, are any traces now to be found. But in many cases such crosses, if not too unwieldy, were buried in the soil to prevent desecration and their location afterwards forgotten.

hillock beside the road at the village, two miles west of Bundoran, on the Sligo road, and is near the site of Mac Clancy's castle of Duncarbry. It is a plain Latin

*Photo]*

THE CROSS OF TULLAGHAN

*[Mason*

Cross, fourteen feet in height, the head rather small in proportion to the base. The Cross does not now occupy its original position. It was discovered, after a storm, upon the neighbouring shore, "where it had lain from time immemorial, covered and hidden by



sand and shingle." \* An inscription on the base refers to its removal and re-erection. The inscription is as follows: "Erected by Thos. Dickson, A.D. 1778." This Mr. Dickson was a local landowner who at his own expense had the modern base constructed and the Cross implanted on it.

The original position of the Cross was somewhat unusual, but there is evidence of extensive coast erosion all along the two and a half miles of Co. Leitrim which borders the Atlantic. At the mouth of the River Drowse and near Tullaghan are visible at low tide the stumps of once mighty oaks, now almost swallowed up in the sands. These are the remnants of a submerged oak forest. A geological examination of the shore line here reveals further evidence of coast erosion in comparatively recent times. It is quite evident that originally the Cross stood at some distance inland before the land was gradually encroached upon by the mountainous breakers of the stormy Bay of Donegal.

In 1778 the Cross was already being submerged and its recovery from such a position gave rise to the local tradition that it had been washed up by the sea.

The learned MacFirbis, in his *Book of Genealogies*, refers to "Maodoc of Ferns Mor, of Rosinver, and of Drumlane." A stanza in the O'Clery MS., edited by Plummer, runs as follows:—

"The high churches of Maedoc ás these,  
Drumlane and Ferns,  
And virginal Rossinver,  
Heaven to every one who shall honour them."

\* *Journal*, R. S. A. I., vol. xxvi, p. 299. The Cross was discovered by workmen who were engaged in raising sand and stones on the shore. A pleasant cliff walk westward from Bundoran leads to the village of Tullaghan, and the district abounds with the rude stone monuments of Neolithic races. Owing to coast erosion many of these monuments have long since disappeared beneath the waves.

I have been informed locally that Duncarbry castle owes its present dilapidated condition to the vandalism of a land agent who removed the stones from the castle to provide building materials for the erection of cottages on the Dickson estate.

Besides the churches of Templeport, Drumlane and Rossinver in Breiffne, and Ferns in Co. Wexford, St. Mogue is patron of churches in Fermanagh, Waterford and Limerick, as well as of churches in Wales and Scotland.

### THE BREAC MOAEDHOG

According to an ancient MS. biography of St. Molaise of Devenish, preserved in the Royal Irish Academy and published by O'Grady in his *Silva Gadelica*, the saint went on a pilgrimage to Rome from which he returned carrying with him some clay from the tombs of the Apostles together with some precious relics bestowed on him by Pope John III (560-573), including "relics of SS. Peter, Paul, Lawrence, Clement, Stephen, of the garments of the Blessed Virgin, of St. Martin, and other relics." Returning to Ireland he visited his friend St. Mogue, with whom he shared his treasures. The shrine or reliquary—known as the *Breac Mogue*—in which these relics were kept, was for long one of the most treasured possessions of Drumlane monastery. The origin of the name is thus explained in the MS. *Irish Life of St. Molasius of Devenish*, published by O'Grady in his *Silva Gadelica*. St. Mogue, on receiving the gifts from St. Molaise, thus expressed his gratitude: "you have given me such a variety of objects that I am speckled (*breac*) all over with them." The reliquary was, therefore, named the *Breac Moaethog*, i.e., the Speckled of Mogue. This legend is as old at least, as the thirteenth century when the MS. was written. Probably we must not interpret the word *breac* too literally; "enriched" or "endowed" would better express the original meaning.

After the confiscation of the monastery the shrine remained in the possession of the MacGaghan family, where it survived the plundering of the Penal times. Early in the eighteenth century it passed into the



possession of the parish priest of Drumlane. The shrine was an object of great reverence and, as in the case of similar shrines elsewhere, it was used for the administration of oaths in lieu of a Testament. According to popular belief the person who would dare take a false oath upon it was inevitably visited by some visible judgment—a belief which, no doubt, was founded on fact. Hence the veracity of a testimony sworn on the *Breac* was beyond the region of doubt, and has passed into a Breiffne proverb—"as true as if sworn on the *Breac*." The shrine was often carried long distances for the administration of oaths, and to ensure its safe return a guarantee of one guinea was deposited with the parish priest of Drumlane, who was its custodian. In 1846 it was borrowed for the last time, for the borrower sold it to a Dublin jeweller, from whom it was purchased by the great antiquarian, Dr. Petrie. On the death of the latter it passed into the National Museum, Dublin, where it is now to be seen.

The shrine is a bronze case  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches in height and  $8\frac{7}{8}$  inches in length; the breadth of the base is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches. It is shaped like a cottage, or early church, with a high pitched gabled roof, and bears a resemblance to the oratory well-known as "St Columbkille's House," at Ceanannus, Co. Meath. It was believed, traditionally, in Drumlane, that the shrine resembled in shape the church of Drumlane, which, for a variety of reasons, seems very probable. The early Irish shrines belonged to two main types, those made to contain primary relics and those which were intended to preserve such articles as books or bells. Regarding the first type there are two principal kinds: those made in the shape of early tombs or oratories, and also those shaped like the object to be enclosed.\* The house-shaped reliquaries, to which the *Breac Mogue* belongs, resemble small cottages with hipped roofs and ridged with

\* Romilly Allen, *Celtic Art in Pagan and Christian Times*, p. 210.

curiously shaped finials. The caps of Irish Stone Crosses have the same shape as have also some early tombs. The Temple of Jerusalem is represented in the same way in the *Book of Kells*. The shrine known as the *Model of Solomon's Temple*, which was stolen from Clonmacnoise in 1129, evidently belonged to this type.

The *Breac Mogue* is an early form of shrine, and the case is believed to belong to a period not later than the ninth century. The front of the shrine, including the slope of the roof, was decorated with 21 or 22 figures of saints embossed in high relief. Of these figures 11 still remain. The ends were similarly decorated with figures, but of these only one, a harper, has survived. The ornamentation belongs to a later period than the shrine itself and has been attributed to the eleventh century.\*

The shrine of St. Mogue [writes Canon O'Hanlon] is formed like an ancient Irish *cill* or church. Its sides were covered with exquisitely formed figures of ecclesiastics, habited in seventh or eighth century costumes . . . Besides the figures, a great variety of ornamental designs, executed in brown and variegated enamel, may be seen. By competent critics this shrine has been pronounced to be the oldest, and the Irish workmanship the most interesting of its class known to remain in the world.†

Regarding the figures which are embossed on the sides of the shrine the same authority continues :

In it are depicted Christ with the Apostles, Peter and Paul. The Redeemer holds in His right hand the Book of the Law, and in the left a vase, closely resembling in form some old Irish chalices, yet preserved in the Royal Irish Academy ; while in the arcade or where He stands are birds, symbolical of the angelic choir, St. Paul is at the right hand of

\* *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, vol. xxxi (1919), p. 236.

† *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. i, January 31.



Christ, with a sword in the right and a sceptre in his left hand. St. Peter stands at the left of Christ—this in many ancient monuments being the post of highest honour, with a sceptre in the right and a crozier in his left hand.

The *Breac Mogue* was bequeathed to Drumlane, together with other relics, by the saint, in his will or disposition, of which St. Dallan was witness :

I further leave the bell of the brooch and the bell of the hours to Drumlane, together with the other illustrious and potent relic, namely, my beautiful wonder-working reliquary, which travelled with me to every place [and] in which are relics of the saints and patriarchs.\*

The *Polaire*, or leather satchel in which the shrine was carried, is also preserved with it in the National Museum. Such leathern cases for the preservation of sacred books, bells, shrines, and other reliquaries, were very common in Ireland and many examples have been preserved. Dr. Petrie writes of the *Polaire* :

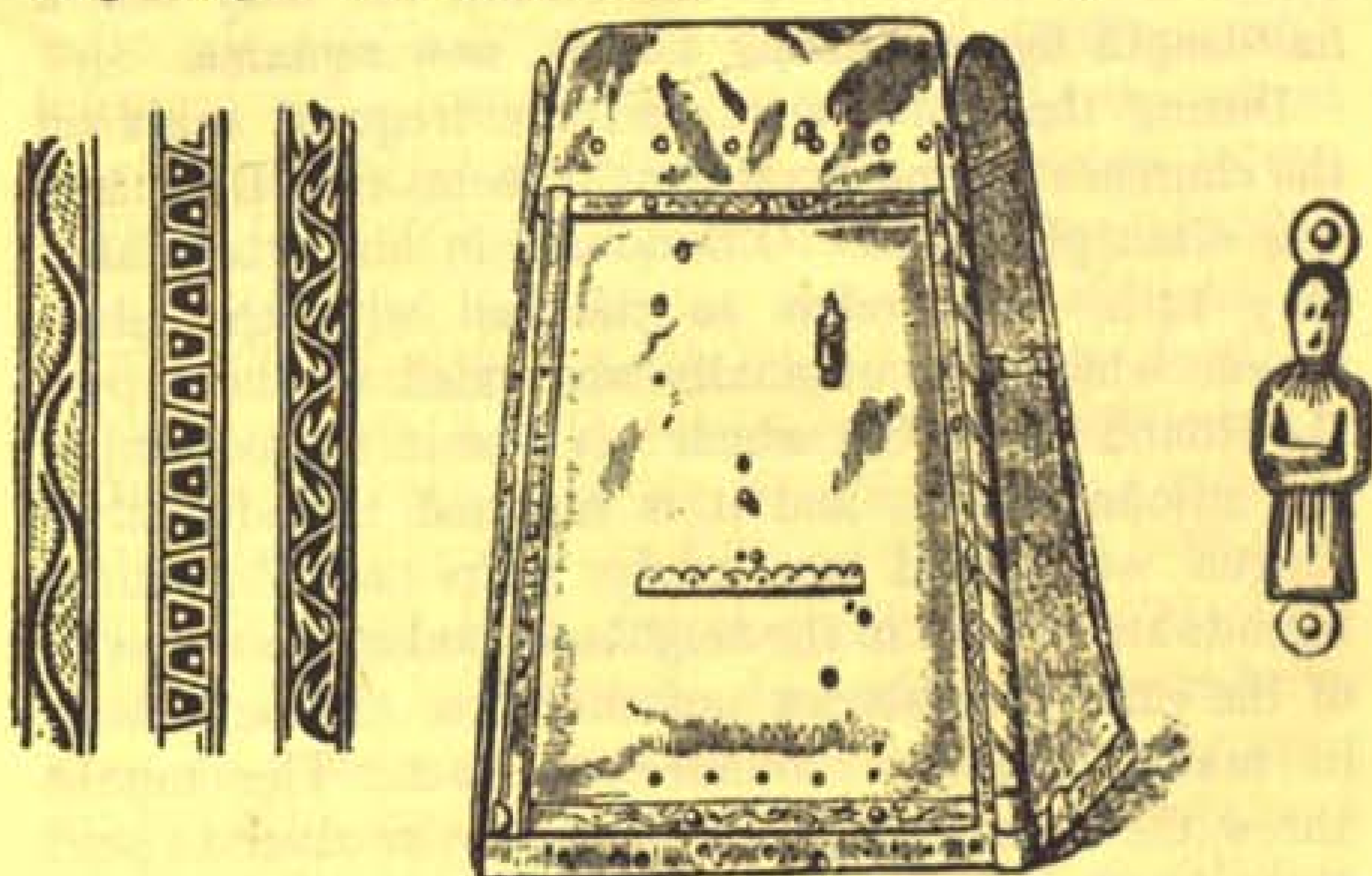
As a specimen of earlier and more beautiful work of this kind, I am tempted to present an outline of one of the sides of the leather case of the shrine of St. Maidoc or Aidan, the first Bishop of Ferns, the age of which, in the opinion of some of the most skilful antiquaries of Great Britain, can hardly be later than the eighth century.†

Another very interesting relic of St. Mogue is the *Clog Mogue*, or the Shrine of St. Mogue's Bell. One of the traditions connected with this bell is that it

\* Plummer, vol. ii, p. 258. For a detailed description of this magnificent Breiffne shrine the following works may be consulted : Stokes, *The Breac Maelog* ; Coffey, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Christian Period* ; Canon O'Hanlon, *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. i : Stokes, *Early Christian Art*, p. 90 ; Stokes, *Archæologia*, vol. xliii (1867), p. 135 ; Anderson, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. xlv (1909-1910), p. 266 ; *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society* (Cavan), vol. ii (1924), p. 140.

† *Round Towers of Ireland*, p. 332 ; Buckley, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xlv (1915), p. 301.

was presented by St. Caillin of Fenagh to the infant Mogue on the occasion of the latter's baptism. St. Mogue in his will presented the bell to his native Inis Breachmhaigh—the parish of Templeport—where its hereditary custodians were the Magaurans. Like the Breac, it became a talisman upon which oaths were sworn, especially in cases where an oath on the Testament could not be relied upon. A false oath on the *Clog Mogue* was believed to be followed by a visible



THE SHRINE OF THE BELL OF ST. MOAEDHOG

manifestation of Divine wrath, and some remarkable confirmations of this belief are still related by the people. For the long span of 1,200 years the shrine remained in the possession of the Magauran family, until about 1833, when the last Magauran keeper died, and his son-in-law, a man named Kelleher, sold it to the Rev. Marcus Beresford. Later on it was presented to the Library of Armagh, where it is now preserved.\*

\* A detailed description of the *Clog Mogue*, with some account of its history and traditions, is given by Dr. Reeves in the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. viii (1863), p. 441. It is also described in the account of Irish Bells and Bell Shrines given in the supplement to Ellacombe's *Church Bells of Devon*, p. 347.



Of the bell itself only three fragments exist, two of which are attached to the case. The shrine is nine inches in height and the base measures seven inches by five inches; it is greatly injured and the top is lost. It is composed of bronze plates joined at the angles by rounded strips marked with rope-mouldings. The ornamentation consists of silver bands bearing various scroll patterns. Several figures were formerly attached to the front of the Shrine, but only one, a half-length figure, holding a book, now remains.

During the Norse wars and the frequent raids on the churches around Loch Erne it seems that Drumlane was often plundered. O'Donovan, in his letter dated May 14th, 1836, refers to the bell with the silver tongue which was originally suspended at the top of the Round Tower but which "is now in the bottom of the adjoining lake, and it is reported that its silver tongue was found not many years ago." Similar legends are current in the neighbourhood of the majority of the early monasteries and churches. These legends in many cases are founded on fact. The monks threw the bells into an adjoining lake or river to save them from spoliation. The Franciscans, when leaving their confiscated monastery of Ross-Errily in 1656, deposited the convent bell in the adjoining river. In 1891 the Loch Erne Shrine was discovered by fishermen in the Lower Lake and drawn up at the end of a line. Probably some of Drumlane's treasures may similarly be rescued from the depths of the adjoining lakes.

The apocryphal legend, that St. Mogue would judge the people of Breiffne on the Last Day, is expressed in the following stanza from the O'Clery manuscript:

"Over the men of Breifne, as is right,  
To save them from the wrath of the Creator,  
In Drumlane, on his own sacred soil,  
Gentle Maedoc is judge."

## CHAPTER X

## KILMORE IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

THE DIOCESAN SCHEMES AS OUTLINED AT THE SYNODS  
OF RATHBREASAIL AND CEANANNUS

THE main purpose of the Synod of Rathbreasail,\* held A.D. 1111, was to establish definitely the extent and boundaries of the Irish dioceses. Previous to this time every chief territory was ruled over by a bishop whose episcopal jurisdiction was exercised over an area of somewhat indefinite extent. This does not imply that diocesan government was unknown in Ireland before this time, but it is certain that diocesan topography was often indefinite or ill-defined. Bishops were sometimes attached to the principal early monastic establishments, and Breiffne had within its boundaries some important foundations over which bishops must have occasionally presided; but these bishops can hardly have exercised plenary episcopal jurisdiction beyond the precincts of their respective monasteries. For instance, in our Irish *Calendars* there is a reference to a Bishop Siric of Magh Bolg (Moybolge), whose festival occurs on November 26th. Evidently the church of Moybolge had a bishop in residence at different periods, likewise Drumlane, Drumreilly, and probably others.

\* This name is now obsolete. Some authorities have identified it with Mountrath, but it is now fairly well established that it lay north of Cashel and was in the neighbourhood of Templemore, County Tipperary. A townland, Clonbrassil, in the Parish of Drom and Inch, about three miles southwest of Templemore, in Cashel Archdiocese, most likely represents the Rathbreasail of Magh Mossaid.

Regarding the exact date of the Synod Keating gives 1110 and in another copy 1115. Lanigan has 1118. That 1111 must be accepted as correct is evident from the entries relative to the event in the *Annals of Ulster*, *Annals of Loch Cé*, and the *Chronicon Scotorum*.



The place of the Ui-Briuin diocese (i.e., Kilmore) in the diocesan scheme proposed at the Synod of Rathbreasail is not positively defined in the Acts of the synod, as far as they are recorded by Father Geoffrey Keating.\* The question of the status of the diocese in that scheme has never been satisfactorily explained, and it will be well, therefore, to examine the facts and see what conclusions may be drawn.

For an account of the acts of the synod our sole authority is Keating, who summarised his information from the *Book of Chuain Eidhneach*, a work which cannot now be traced and is most probably lost.

Before the date of this synod there appear to have been about sixty episcopal seats in Ireland having resident bishops,† and it was now proposed to reduce the number to twenty-six.

*Leath Chuinn*, that is the northern portion of Ireland including Connacht, was assigned twelve bishops together with the Primate of Armagh. *Leath Mhogha*, that is, the southern portion of Ireland, was also assigned twelve bishops, with the Metropolitan whose seat was at Cashel. The ecclesiastical provinces of Armagh and Cashel followed therefore the ancient political division of Ireland into *Leath Chuinn* and *Leath Mhogha*, the boundary line running, very approximately, from Dublin to Clarinbridge, Co. Galway, that is to the western terminus of the *Eiscir Riada* or line of low sandhills stretching across the country from Dublin to Galway. North of this boundary line was *Leath Chuinn*, i.e., Conn's half,‡ and south of it lay *Leath Mhogha*, i.e., the half of Owen, alias Mogh Nuadhat. The personages here referred to, Conn of the Hundred Battles and Owen, were second century monarchs.

\* *Vide* Rev. Dr. Dineen's *Keating*, vol. iii.

† An estimate based on an early Roman document quoted in Archdeacon Malone's *Church History of Ireland*, vol. i, p. 9.

‡ The southern portion of County Galway and a portion of Offaly, still in Meath diocese, were included in the northern ecclesiastical province, that is, in *Leath Chuinn*.

The See of Dublin, with the Sees of Limerick and Waterford, was under the jurisdiction of Canterbury, in England. This will not appear so strange when we remember that the cities of Dublin, Limerick and Waterford were Norse, or Danish, foundations, and that the newly converted Norsemen living in these cities did not, for a long time afterwards, unite with the Irish, but maintained their own distinct religious communities and appointed their own bishops, whom they sent to Canterbury for consecration. But these Norse Bishoprics were limited to the cities mentioned, and their immediate vicinities. The synod arranged to have them absorbed into the Irish scheme, which followed soon after.\*

The Rathbreasail scheme proposed to have not more than two Metropolitans, Armagh and Cashel.†

The Sees for *Leath Chuinn*, the Primacy of Armagh, were allocated thus:—

ULSTER.—*Ard Macha* [Armagh]; *Clochar* [Clogher]; *Ard Sratha* [Ardstraw, the ancient territory of the Cinel Eoghain, now ecclesiastically united with Derry. Ardstraw is in the barony of Lower Strabane, Co. Tyrone]; *Doire* or *Raith Bhoth* [Derry or Raphoe; the territory of the Cinel Conaill; in 1152 Derry was made a Cinel Eoghain See, and Ardstraw ceased to be a diocese]; *Coinnire* [Connor, together with the eastern half of Co. Derry]; *Dun da Leathghlas* [Down].

CONNACHT.—*Tuaim* [corresponds approximately with the present Elphin; distinct from Tuaim da Ghualann, the present Metropolitan See of Connacht. The Tuaim of the synod is, clearly, the present Tuam of Co. Roscommon, a few miles west of Lanesboro]; *Cluain*

\* The Diocese of Limerick was extended to include the present county. Waterford was amalgamated with Lismore. Dublin did not acquiesce in the scheme until later on. In 1216 Dublin was amalgamated with Glendaloch.

† For the topography of the Rathbreasail scheme see Rev. J. MacErlean, S.J., "Synod of Raith Breasail"—*Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. iii, pp. 1-33.



*Ferta* [Clonfert and Kilmacduagh] ; *Conga* [approximates to the present Diocese of Tuam, together with portion of Galway] ; *Ceall Aladh* [included Killala and Achonry with a portion of north Co. Sligo] ; *Ard Carna* or *Ardachadh* [Ardagh].

MEATH.—Daimhliag [Duleek] ; Cluain Ioraird [Clonard].

With the Sees for *Leath Mhogha* we are not here concerned, but in this enumeration of northern Sees, based on the acts of the synod as recorded by Keating, there is no provision for an Ui-Briuin diocese. But its absence from the list, probable reasons for which I will suggest later on, must not be understood to be in any way derogatory to the ecclesiastical status of the ancient See of St. Feidhlimidh. The boundaries of the several dioceses as defined by the synod are duly recorded, and the ecclesiastical map of Ireland based on these data would indicate quite clearly that Breiffne, although not definitely defined then, existed as a distinct geographical entity, over which no neighbouring bishop exercised jurisdiction, or on which no neighbouring diocese encroached. Furthermore, our records do not indicate any hiatus in the episcopacy of Breiffne. The episcopal succession in an almost continuous line from the early part of the twelfth century may be established from the various Irish *Annals*, that is, from a period (1136) only twenty-five years later than the Synod of Rathbreasail.

To account for the omission of the Breiffne, or Ui-Briuin See from the acts of the synod some writers have suggested that the neighbouring Diocese of Ard Carna or Ardachadh (Ardagh) may have included a portion of Breiffne. Such a view, even if acceptable, would only partially meet the case, as a large section of southern and eastern Breiffne would still be un-

accounted for. That the theory is untenable is shown by the boundary marks, or limits, of Ardagh, which are thus specified:—

From Ard Carna to Sliabh an Iarainn, and from Ceis Chorainn to Iobhair Coilltean.\*

Ard Carna is now Ardcarne, near Boyle, Co Roscommon; Sliabh an Iarainn, now Slieve-an-ierin, is the well known mountain on the eastern shore of Loch Allen, on the Cavan-Leitrim border; Ceis Chorainn is Keshcorran Mountain, a few miles from Ballymote, Co. Sligo. The location of Iobhair Coilltean presents some difficulties but one of our leading authorities on ancient topography, Mr. John P. Dalton, M.R.I.A., believes that it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Loch Derravaragh.† The name is long since obsolete, and in the various texts of Keating has several variants. Father Mac Erlean (*op. cit*) conjectures that it should read *Uparó Chuilleán* (*Urard Chuilleán*) and equates it with Cróssakiel,‡ in the parish of Kilskyre, near Ceanannus (Kells), Co. Meath. But, again, if the reading *Urchoillte* (*Urchoillte*) be correct he surmises that its probable location was somewhere on the borders of Longford and Westmeath, and suggests Newgrove, between Coole and Abbeylara, on the borders of the Dioceses of Meath and Ardagh. The name, under its various forms, indicates a wooded district.

Elsewhere in the list defining the boundaries of Clonard diocese is an almost similar name—*Urchuillten*, with several variants. This marked the northern

\* *Fairce Ard Carna nó Ardcarne—ó aró Carna go Sliabh an Iarainn agus ó Céir Chorainn go hUrchoilltén.*

† Dalton, "The Ancient Boundaries of the Dioceses of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise"—*Journal of the Ardagh and Clonmacnoise Antiquarian Society*, vol. i, No. 2 (1929).

‡ For further references see Rev. P. Walsh, "Some Placenames of Ancient Meath"—*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, vol. xxxii, p. 606 (1912).



boundary, and the position of Crossakiel would be strongly in favour of its being the same place.\*

A passage in the *Tain Bo Cualnge* (in *Lebor na Huidre*) refers to a place called *Iraird Chuillend* (*Iraird Chuillend*). The original scribe, Mael Muire, who was slain in 1106, indicates that the name *Iraird Chuillend* was then already obsolete, for he glosses it as follows: "it is to-day named Crossa Cail." It seems very probable that the *Iraird Chuillend* of the *Tain* is identical with the *Urchuillten*, marking the northern boundary of Clonard, and that Crossakiel is the place intended. It is unlikely that the *Iobhair Coilltean*, marking the boundary of Ardagh, denotes the same place. As an alternative for Crossakiel *Iraird Chuillend* was already obsolete in 1111, and at any rate Ardagh can hardly at any period have extended as far as Crossakiel; that diocese, which includes a section of Co. Cavan, terminates at Loch Sheelin.

Whatever doubts may exist regarding the location of the northern boundary of Clonard, or the eastern delimitation of Ardagh, it is quite certain that neither of these dioceses encroached on Kilmore. The most northerly point of Ardagh was then, as it is to-day, *Sliabh an Iarainn*. Clonard terminated at Crossakiel, assuming that this is the place referred to in the boundary list, in Kilskyre parish which stretches along the Kilmore boundary on the south.

The Diocese of Ardagh was not inhabited by any of the *Ui-Briuin* tribes. The *Ui-Briuin* who, about the thirteenth century, took possession of a small portion,

\* There is also a Newgrove situated to the east of Crossakiel, but the name—which is not applied to any particular townland—may be modern. The wooded district (*Coilltean*) or woods (*Coillte*) which gave its title to the ancient *Urchuillten* must have been of very considerable extent. Beside Crossakiel is the townland of Clonabreany, or Russagh—once a stronghold of the Plunket family: their tomb dated 1581 is in the old cemetery—which was always famous for its woods and the fertility of its soil. Russagh, or Russach, has its Gaelic form *Ror Eac*, i.e. the wood of the steeds.

viz., *Tir Tuathail* (now represented by Kilronan parish) of Ardagh were the *Ui-Briuin Seola*, a distinct people from the *Ui-Briuin Breiffne*.

Breiffne was then an integral part of the province of Connacht, to which, as already shown, the synod allocated five dioceses, viz., Tuaim, Cluain Ferta, Conga, Ceall Aladh and Ard Carna (or Ardachadh), but no provision was made for Breiffne; at least there is no diocesan unit in the list which would, even partially, represent the *Ui-Briuin* diocese. The boundaries of the other dioceses are clearly defined and Breiffne appears as a vacuum on the ecclesiastical map.

It might be suggested that, probably, some of the Ulster dioceses encroached on the *Ui-Briuin* territory. Here again the boundary marks rule out such a supposition. Clogher terminated at *Gabhail Luin*, now Galloon, on Upper Loch Erne, Co Fermanagh. Raphoe terminated at *Eas Ruaidh*, now Assaroe, on the River Erne, near Ballyshannon. *Eas Ruaidh* was also the boundary point of the Connacht diocese of Ceall Aladh, as then constituted. So it is quite clear that no neighbouring diocese, either of Ulster or Connacht, encroached on the territory of the *Ui-Briuin* of Breiffne.

The Meath dioceses were Cluain Ioraird (Clonard) and Daimhliag (Duleek), and as extensive church lands in Breiffne belonged to the monastery of Ceanannus (Kells) it might be supposed that portion, at least, of Breiffne was under the episcopal jurisdiction of Duleek, which then embraced a considerable portion of East Meath and had then absorbed the ancient Diocese of Ceanannus, which had existed as a diocesan unit up to the date of the Rathbreasail synod. But the specified boundaries of Duleek Diocese prove at once such a conclusion to be groundless. The boundaries were:—

From Sliabh Breagh to Carn Dúin Cuair and from Lochán na hImirne eastward to the ocean.



Sliabh Breagh is a range of hills north of Slane, and Carn Dúin Cuair has been identified with Rathcore, Co. Meath. With the location of Lochán na hÍmirime, on the western limit of the diocese, we are chiefly concerned here. This place has, so far, escaped identification, but I have no hesitation in equating it with Loughanleagh, a prominent mountain three miles south-east of Bailieboro and in Enniskeen parish. The highest peak, 1,119 feet in height, commands a magnificent view of the counties of Meath, Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, and several others. Loughanleagh is at the western extremity of Enniskeen parish, which is in Co. Cavan and borders the two Kilmore parishes of Killann and Moybolge. Enniskeen on its northern boundary stretches along the eastern confines of Clogher.\*

The mountain of Loughanleagh is a prominent physical feature of the landscape, and still marks the western boundary of Meath diocese. Its name is significant, as it retains at least the first portion of the name as recorded in the acts of the synod.

The name is given as *Lochán na nÍmirime* in the list, and of the last word there are variants, *nÍmirice* and *nÍmirime*, and a Latinised form *Hinnergensis*. Its meaning is uncertain. Father MacErlean (*op. cit.*) expresses the opinion that the various forms are merely the corrupt expansions of a contraction, and suggests *Lochán na nÍmiríde*, i.e., Lochan of East Meath, as the most probable interpretation of the original name. As the place was situated on the borders of ancient Meath the suggestion has much in its favour. Father MacErlean, however, identifies it with Loughan,† a parish in the barony of Upper Kells, Co. Meath, and

\* The Diocese of Clogher was bounded on the east by *Sliabh Beatha*, an error probably for *Sliabh Beitheach*, as Father MacErlean has observed. *Sliabh Beitheach* has not been identified, but I would suggest that it was identical with the hilly district in the northwest of Drumcondra Parish, that is, with Ardagh and Barley Hill.

† The former Parish of Loughan is now united with Castlekieran and Dulane, in the Union of Carnaross.

situated on the borders of Kilmore. This place would suit the conditions very well, but for the reasons which I have suggested Loughanleagh is far more likely. In the majority of cases the synod in defining diocesan boundaries selected prominent physical features, such as mountains, lakes or rivers. Wherever possible mountains were chosen. In olden times the mountains were the universal landmarks and from any particular point established direction. In modern times, owing to the use of maps and signposts, the importance of the mountains as landmarks is decreasing and, unfortunately, many of the mountain names are passing out of general use. The disappearance of these names is hastened by the fact that on the modern maps the names are seldom entered, not being political units, or if entered are given incorrectly. The study of local history and geography will help to counteract this.

Our oldest place-names, that is those which are least susceptible to change, are the names of mountains, lakes and rivers. There are several reasons for this; for instance, the significance of such names is not merely local. The names are in general use throughout large areas; for example, mountain names will be common to every part of the country from which a certain peak is visible, and a river, flowing for perhaps, a hundred miles, will be known by the same name throughout its course. The names, therefore, become established in the language of several territories and this gives them a permanency.

Loughanleagh \*—*loc an l.iasa*—signifies the lake of the physician. The name is derived from a lake which once existed on the summit and which was popularly believed to be efficacious in the cure of cutaneous diseases, and from many parts of Ulster

\* The name is not marked on the Ordnance Survey Maps, but is applied to a group of peaks—Cornasaus (1,029 feet) and Moyer (1,119 feet).



and Leinster people came to partake of its healing waters.\*

The boundaries of the ancient Diocese of Duleek show conclusively that the diocese stretched to the Breiffne border, but no further. Clonard reached, most likely, to Crossakiel, and stopped there. All the available evidence goes to show most convincingly that however we may otherwise account for the absence of the Ui-Briuin Diocese it was certainly not, either wholly or partially, absorbed by any of the adjoining dioceses. It is, in fact, a topographical vacuum on the ecclesiastical map of Ireland, as shown by the acts of the synod of Rathbreasail.

The Rathbreasail scheme was mainly provisional in its nature, and the provincial authorities were permitted to use their own discretion in adjusting diocesan boundaries. The acts make this clear:—

If the clergy of Connacht are agreeable to this partition we desire it, but if they do not agree to it let them make whatever partition they choose and we approve the partition that pleases them provided that there be in Connacht five bishoprics only.

That agreement was not reached is manifest from the fact that the scheme never became operative. But the boundaries as then defined have been retained, except in minor details, to the present day.

Forty-one years later, in 1152, another synod was

\* The person afflicted was bathed in the water, and then treated with mud poultices. Whether the reputed cures could bear authentication is a matter which I cannot offer to decide, but it may be well to point out that, as far as I have been able to discover, after exhaustive local inquiry, these ablutions had no religious significance whatsoever and the practice must have dated from pre-Christian times, a remnant of early Irish medical tradition. The name is now *canis a non canendo*, for the lake has disappeared—its waters, according to popular legend, having been polluted by a local landowner—and the medicinal properties of its waters may no longer be verified. A crop of semi-mythical legends abounds. The bed of the lake is now a morass, nearly dry in summer. It is a peat formation, and evidently the therapeutic value of peat mud is far from being a modern scientific discovery.

held, this time at Ceanannus (Kells), Co. Meath, and an entirely revised system was introduced. The Synod of Ceanannus, one of the most important ecclesiastical conventions in our history, was presided over by Cardinal John Paparo, Papal Legate of Eugenius III. Twenty-two bishops and a vast gathering of clergy attended this synod. One of the acts of the synod was to increase the number of bishoprics from 24 (as projected at Rathbreasail) to 34. In the Rathbreasail scheme, as already shown, provision was made for two archbishoprics, Armagh and Cashel, giving an aggregate of 26 episcopal Sees. The Synod of Ceanannus increased the number of archbishoprics from two to four—Dublin and Tuam were created archiepiscopal Sees—making a total of 38. Ceanannus itself, for example, one of the eight episcopal Sees of ancient Meath, lost its status in the Rathbreasail scheme, but was revived in 1152 and once more constituted a diocese. We have no record of the diocesan boundaries in the acts of the synod of 1152, but there is no reason for suspecting that any material changes were effected. There were diocesan amalgamations, but these did not connote readjustment of existing boundaries. Since the twelfth century there have been several examples of similar amalgamations, and the number of dioceses established in 1152 has been considerably reduced. In the early thirteenth century the Dioceses of Ceanannus, Duleek and Clonard, were fused together to form the present Diocese of Meath, but these amalgamations did not in any way disturb the existing boundary lines.

The names of the dioceses sanctioned at the Synod of Ceanannus are recorded by Keating \* but, strange though it may appear, there is no provision for an Ui-Briuin or Breiffne diocese. Until recent years Keating's list was the only one known to exist, but

\* *Vide* Col. John O'Mahony's *Keating*, p. 611.



the interesting discovery of a list, evidently contemporary, of Irish bishoprics, preserved in the Library of the School of Medicine at Montpellier, France, and since published with annotations by Dean Lawlor, is a valuable adjunct to our knowledge of the synod.\* Breiffne, however, is also omitted from the Montpellier list. This is best illustrated by a list of the dioceses in the suffragan Sees of Armagh and Tuam, that is, in Ulster and Connacht, and comparing with the Rathbreasail list already given.

The 38 dioceses established at the Synod of Ceanannus were equally divided between *Leath Chuinn* and *Leath Mhogha*, and distributed among the four ecclesiastical provinces as follows : Armagh, 11 ; Tuam, 8 ; Cashel, 13 ; Dublin, 6. In the Montpellier list the Sees of Armagh and Tuam, comprising *Leath Chuinn*, are enumerated as follows.

ARMAGH.—1. *Metropolitanus Armachie* [Armagh].  
 2. *Connarensis* [Connor]. 3. *Dundalehglas* [Down].  
 4. *Lugdunensis* [Louth].† 5. *Clunirand* [Clonard].  
 6. *Conannas* [Kells]. 7. *Arcdahad* [Ardagh]. 8. *Rathboth*  
 [Raphoe]. 9. *Rathlurig* [Maghera, Co. Derry].‡  
 10. *Damliagg* [Duleek]. 11. *Darnth* [Derry].

TUAM.—1. *Metropolitanus Tuatuensis* [the present See of Tuam].§ 2. *Mageo* [Mayo].|| 3. *Cellauid* [Killala].  
 4. *Rosconcomon* [Roscommon].¶ 5. *Culuanfat* [Clonfert].  
 6. *Aicbal* [Achonry]. 7. *Conairi* [Clonmacnoise].  
 8. *Celmunduach* [Kilmacduagh].

In Keating's enumeration only eight suffragan Sees are returned for Armagh, and the two missing ones, as

\* *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxxvi (1922).

† The County Louth portion of the Diocese is amalgamated with Armagh. The older name of the Diocese was Oirghialla (Oriell) and shortly after the time of the Synod it was replaced by Clogher which although recognised at Rathbreasail had been eliminated at Ceanannus.

‡ Now amalgamated with Derry.

§ Incorporated the Conga Diocese of the Rathbreasail list.

|| Mayo is now included in the Diocese of Tuam.

¶ Elphin.

shown by the Montpellier document, are Clonard and Ceanannus. Otherwise, except for some minor variations in spelling, the two lists are in complete agreement. Dean Lawlor inclines to the view that the names *Aicbal* and *Conairi* should be read as one word, which he equates with Achonry. But, as Mr. Dalton remarks, this would reduce the number of suffragan Sees in Tuam to seven. Clonmacnoise was constituted a bishopric at the Synod of Ceanannus; therefore, it is only reasonable to assume that the *Conairi* of the above list is merely a corrupt form of the name. *Aicbal* is evidently a corrupt form of *Achadh Chuingire*, now Achonry. In Keating's list we have *Acadh Conairi* and *Cluain-mic-Nois*; the former is Achonry. In Ware's list, compiled from the *Liber Censuum* the dioceses are named *Achad* and *Cinani*, respectively.

The omission of the Ui-Briuin Diocese from the lists is all the more extraordinary since among the 22 bishops attending the Synod of Ceanannus, and whose names are recorded by Keating, we have "Tuathal O'Connachtaigh, bishop of the Ui-Briuin." But this entry affords a historical proof that however we may account for the absence of the Ui-Briuin Diocese from the various lists yet the diocese was recognised with full diocesan status at the Synod of Ceanannus.

In 1172 a synod, presided over by Christian O'Conairce, Bishop of Lismore, was held at Cashel. It was attended by some of the Irish archbishops and their suffragans. The early chroniclers of the event—Abbot Benedict of Peterborough and Master Roger of Hovedon—give a list of 4 Metropolitan and 28 suffragan Sees, together with the names of some of the bishops who attended; but Breiffne is not represented in the list. According to Giraldus Cambrensis the synod was convened at the suggestion of Henry II, who was anxious to secure the loyalty of the Irish bishops. Whatever doubts we may entertain regarding the impartiality and veracity



of the prejudiced Cambrensis yet it seems that his account of the proceedings of this synod may be accepted as fairly reliable.\* The northern bishops did not attend the Synod—Gelasius the Primate was himself absent—but it is most probable that the roll of Irish bishops supplied by Christian represented the complete diocesan scheme.

A somewhat later list of Irish Sees compiled about the year 1180 for the information of the Roman *Curia* by the Papal Chamberlain, Cencius—afterwards Pope Honorius III—and preserved in his *Liber Censuum* was utilised by Sir James Ware.† This list had been specially prepared for the *Curia* in connection with Papal taxations. For the purpose of comparison with the earlier lists I will here enumerate the *Suffragan* Sees of Armagh and Tuam as compiled by Cencius:

ARMAGH.—1. *Conner* [Connor]. 2. *Dundalighlas* [Down]. 3. *Lugud* [Louth]. 4. *Cluainiard* [Clonard]. 5. *Connanas* [Kells]. 6. *Ardachad* [Ardagh]. 7. *Rathboth* [Raphoe]. 8. *Rathlurig* [Maghera, Co. Derry]. 9. *Damliag* [Duleek]. 10. *Darrich* [Derry].

TUAM.—1. *Magio* [Mayo]. 2. *Cellalaid* [Killala]. 3. *Rosscoman* [Roscommon or Elphin]. 4. *Cluanfert* [Clonfert]. 5. *Achad* [Achonry]. 6. *Cinani* [Clonmacnoise]. 7. *Cellmunduac* [Kilmacduagh].

There is a remarkable agreement between this list of Cencius and the Montpellier list, and both these in turn agree with the lists of Benedict of Peterborough and Roger of Hovedon. But the principal issue with which we are here concerned is this: that in none of these lists does the Breiffne Diocese find a place. This

\* *Hibernia Expugnata*, chap. 34; Cambrensis, *The Conquest of Ireland*, p. 232.

† Ware, *De Hibernia et Antiquitatibus ejus Disquisitiones*, London, 1650. See Ware's *Antiquities of Ireland* (chap. xvi), translated by Harris.

rules out the possibility that the omission in Keating's list might be ascribed to a mere scribal error.

There evidently existed some deep-seated causes which led to the Ui-Briuin diocese being ignored as an ecclesiastical unit in the twelfth century. Dean Lawlor suggests that the diocese may have been suppressed in 1152. It is true that the synod, as part of its re-organisation scheme, did suppress a few dioceses; furthermore, it was specified, in the case of some smaller or less important bishoprics, that on the deaths of their respective bishops their places were not to be filled but that these dioceses should be converted into rural deaneries. This appears from the acts of a diocesan synod held in 1216 at Newtown, near Trim, by Bishop Simon Rochfort of Meath. The following passage supplies evidence of this:—

Cum dominus Johannes Paparo, presbyter cardinalis tituli S. Laurentii in Damaso, summi pontificis et domini nostri Eugenii III. Legatus in Hibernia, in synodo generali tenta apud Kenanas in Media, anno gratiae MCLII, inter alias salubres constitutiones, tunc et ibidem factas, ordinaverit, ut decedentibus chorepiscopis, et exiliorum sedium episcopis in Hibernia, in eorum locum eligerentur et succederent archipresbyteri a diocesanis constituendi, qui cleri et plebis sollicitudinem gerant infra suos limites, et ut eorum sedes in totidem capita decanatum ruralium erigerentur.\*

The Diocese of "Kenanas"—Ceanannus, or Kells—became merged, about 1213, into the Diocese of Meath.† In 1216 the acts just quoted refer to Ceanannus, Trim, Skryne, Dunshaughlin, and Slane, all former episcopal seats, as rural deaneries.

\* Wilkin's *Concilia*, vol. i, p. 547.

† I have prepared a brief survey of the diocesan history of Ceanannus or Kells, for the revised and enlarged edition of the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* (New York).



In at least one case, viz., Annaghdown (*Enach Duin*), a diocese on the shores of Loch Corrib, Co. Galway, although intended for elimination from the diocesan scheme by both synods, Rathbreasail and Ceanannus, managed to survive until the middle of the sixteenth century when it was incorporated with Tuam. But I must dissent from Dean Lawlor's view that the Breiffne diocese, the country of the great ruling families of O'Rourke and O'Reilly, was marked out for suppression. Where is the evidence to sustain such a view? Bishop O'Connachtaigh, who was present at the synod of Ceanannus, ruled over the Ui-Briuin diocese until his death in 1179. In fact the episcopal succession from 1136 onwards admits of no hiatus, and there is nothing whatever to suggest any lacuna in the episcopal continuity of our ancient diocese. There is no evidence to suggest that it was ever intended, either at Rathbreasail or Ceanannus, that the diocese should be deprived of its status. Breiffne was essentially a part of Connacht and some of its chieftains, the O'Rourkes, had been chosen as kings of the western province. Sir James Ware erroneously describes Bishop O'Connachtaigh as "Bishop of Huambruin, that is, Enachdun,"\* The Diocese of Enach Duin, Annaghdown, to which I have just referred, was peopled by the Ui-Briuin Seola, a tribe quite distinct from, but often confused with, the Ui-Briuin Breiffne.

The historical data at our disposal is insufficient to warrant our ascribing, with certainty, specific reasons for the omission of the diocese from the twelfth century lists. The explanations which have hitherto been advanced to get over the difficulty may be grouped under three headings, viz. (a) scribal errors; (b) that it was intended to incorporate the diocese with some of those adjoining; (c) that the suppression of the

\* *Antiquities of Ireland*, chap. xvi.

diocese was contemplated ; but all these must be rejected as failing to provide satisfactory solutions.

The fact of the diocese being apparently ignored, or at least omitted, in the Acts of the Councils, is so remarkable that very definite reasons must have intervened to have prevented its inclusion. I believe that the solution of the problem must be sought for in the complex and tangled political circumstances obtaining at the time. A brief account of the political history of the time is necessary to illustrate the internal history of Breiffne at that period.

In the twelfth century there was many a clash of arms between the several little principalities into which the country was sub-divided and as a result ecclesiastical administration was often seriously hampered. King Malachy the Great died in 1022, and Donnchadh, son of Brian Boru, made many unsuccessful efforts to attain the High Kingship, but he failed to wield the sceptre, except in name, and died in Rome, where he had gone on pilgrimage in 1064. His nephew, Turlough O'Brien, grandson of Brian Boru, made a brilliant effort to sustain the power and dignity of the office of High King, and the annalists acknowledge him as "King of Erin." Pope Gregory VII in a letter to Turlough addresses him as "Terdelvacho inclyto regi Hiberniae." \* But on his death there resulted another struggle for royal supremacy. His son, Muirheartach, assumed the High Kingship but his right to the same was challenged by Domnall O'Lochlainn of Ailech, and a destructive warfare resulted which was prolonged for many years. In 1101 the warlike Muirheartach marched northwards and destroyed the great fortress of Ailech. Returning to Tara and then to Kincora he was proclaimed High King. The feud between Muirheartach and Domnall continued unabated, the Primate of

\* Ussher, *Veter. Epistol. Sylloge*.



Armagh—Mac Amalghaidh, who died in 1105—making persistent efforts to reconcile them but without avail. At length, in 1114, when a severe illness had prostrated O'Brien, O'Lochlainn, marching south through Breiffne and Connacht, invaded Muircheartach's own territory of Thomond. But in the following year, on recovery from his illness, Muircheartach reasserted himself and recaptured his Munster territory, but his dream of attaining to the High Kingship was never realised. Until his death in 1121, O'Lochlainn was the acknowledged High King of Ireland.

On the death of O'Lochlainn Turlough O'Conor, the ruler of Connacht, aspired to the High Kingship. This Turlough O'Conor, whose mother was a daughter of Turlough O'Brien, ascended the throne of Connacht in 1106. Fired with ambition he was crafty and cruel and plotted against friends and foes alike. Curiously enough his second wife, whom he married in 1131, was the daughter of Domnall O'Lochlainn, and he seems to have inherited all the bitterness and turbulence of the rulers of Thomond and Ailech. Not content with the High Kingship he planned to divide the country into petty kingships for his sons. This earned for him the most strenuous opposition of the rightful rulers and the result was, as stated in the *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno, 1126, "A storm of great war in Ireland." The Primate, Cellach, strove to bring peace and did much to mitigate the sufferings of the people; but his intervention failed to bring more than a temporary peace.

Tighernan O'Ruairc, who ruled over Breiffne for a period of over sixty years until he met his death in conflict in 1172, was another turbulent prince and one of the staunchest supporters of Turlough O'Conor. The wife of Tighernan was the daughter of Murchadh O'Melaghlin, King of Meath, who was likewise the father-in-law of Turlough. During his reign Tighernan on more than one occasion offered violence to the

dignitaries of the Church. One of the most disgraceful acts of his reign was the insult offered to Cellach, the Primate, when, in 1127, he placed the Primate and his retinue of clerics under arrest—an act for which he receives the severest censures of the Annalists. The *Annals of Loch Cé* describe it as “an ugly, ruthless, unprecedented deed, which earned the malediction of the men of Erin, both lay and clerical, for which no equal was found previously in Erin.” We have no record of the ecclesiastical sentence imposed on Tighernan for his misdeeds, but that such sentence was imposed we may take for certain. That his kingdom of Breiffne was ignored, ecclesiastically, at the early synods was, I suggest, an indication that the ecclesiastical sentence was not withdrawn and that the Breiffne diocese was under interdict during the greater part of Tighernan’s restless career. I submit this as the only explanation possible, with the limited data at our disposal, of the omission of the diocese from the Acts of the Synods. The saintly Cellach, who travelled through the country endeavouring to conciliate the warring factions, died in 1129; his successor was Muirchertach, who was, in turn, succeeded five years later by the great St. Malachy.

The succeeding events may be briefly described. In 1127 Turlough O’Conor expelled King Cormac MacCarthy from Munster and ravaged the territory of the O’Briens. A few years later the O’Briens joined with the MacCarthys and other Munster chieftains in a massed attack on Turlough’s territory of Connacht and in 1133 marched as far west as Mayo. Turlough continued to assert his right to the High Kingship and for a few years the goal of his ambition seemed in sight. But his hopes were shortlived. In 1136 Murtagh (Muirchertach) O’Lochlainn (grandson of the Muirchertach who died in 1121), became ruler of the territory of Cinel Eoghain and was now Turlough O’Conor’s most formidable rival for the arch-sovereignty



of Ireland. Like Turlough this Murtagh was an unscrupulous adventurer but appears to have surpassed him in military leadership. In 1150 Murtagh succeeded in defeating O'Connor, who was forced to surrender hostages to the conquering Murtagh. But Turlough's submission was merely temporary, and in 1154 he led an attack on the Cineal Eoghain, with a fleet this time. In a battle fought off the coast of Inishowen his forces were defeated and once again he was forced to submit to Murtagh. Dying in 1156 he was buried at Clonmacnoise. In an eulogy the *Four Masters* describe him as the "flood of glory and splendour of Ireland, the Augustus of the west of Europe." His reign over Connacht was fruitful though disturbed. Throughout his province he founded many monasteries and churches, liberally endowed Clonmacnoise, and founded the monastery of Cong the famous processional Cross of which is a testimony to his liberality.

O'Lochlainn's supremacy was now unchallenged and in 1161, at a great assembly of clergy and laity at Dervor,\* in Co. Meath, he received the hostages of the chieftains of the whole country and peace seemed assured. But an act of treachery which enraged the Ulster chieftains encompassed his downfall and he was slain at Letterluin in Co. Armagh in 1166. That he was a generous benefactor of churches and monasteries we possess ample evidence. In 1157 he attended the consecration of the Cistercian Church of Mellifont, Co. Louth, and handsomely endowed that religious foundation. He also presented the Charter of the Abbey of Newry.

The career of Tighernan O'Ruairc was a stormy one but probably a less warlike man would have failed to

\* *Δε νὰ Δαιρβρίγε*—the Ford of the Oakgrove—now Dervor, a townland on the Meath border in the Parish of Loughan, County Meath. In the twelfth century the name was applied to a larger district. The ford from which the townland took its name was on the River Blackwater at a point now crossed by a bridge.

maintain intact his principality of Breiffne against such rapacious neighbours. Judged apart from his faults, and they were many, he proved himself worthy of the Ui-Briuin race. In 1138 in alliance with Turlough O'Connor, he attacked Meath, and again in 1143 joined forces with Turlough in a massed attack on the same province imprisoned the ruler—Murchadh O'Melaghlin, father of Dervorgilla, wife of O'Ruairc—and O'Ruairc received a third part of that province as his spoil, another third being allotted to the notorious Diarmuid MacMurrough. O'Ruairc feigned loyalty to Henry II at a time when he knew full well that resistance would have been useless, but when that unscrupulous monarch granted Meath, or at least portion of it, to Hugh de Lacy and encroachments were threatened on the dominions of Tighernan, the "loyalty" of the latter proved unsubstantial. The claims of de Lacy were vigorously challenged by Tighernan who refused to surrender any of Meath territory. A conference was arranged between O'Ruairc and de Lacy and they met for an interview at Tlachta, now the Hill of Ward, near Athboy. The conference proved to be anything but an amicable one; quarrels arose and blows were freely exchanged. The followers of each chieftain rushed to the scene and a wholesale mêlée followed in which the aged but sturdy O'Ruairc was slain. That it was a premeditated act of treachery on the part of de Lacy is the opinion among many authorities including the *Four Masters* and other annalists. O'Ruairc's body was conveyed to Dublin, where, in accordance with the barbarous custom of the time, his head was cut off and placed over the gate of Dublin Castle—the Anglo-Norman stronghold. His body was gibbeted, feet upwards, at the north side of the city. Thus perished, in 1172, the great Breiffne chieftain who was de Lacy's only serious rival for the possession of Meath.

Repenting of the grave indiscretions of his earlier years,



Tighernan was a generous benefactor of the churches of Breiffne and Meath. In the *Chancery Miscellanea* of the Public Record Office, London, is a manuscript certificate by Bishop John Payne of Meath, dated 1498, of a Charter, issued to Navan Abbey about the year 1189 by John de Courcy, Justiciar of Ireland. The original Charter which when produced before Bishop Payne at Ardbraccan in 1498, was already much faded necessitating the preparation of a copy, belonged to the close of the twelfth century and confirmed to the church of St. Mary's, Navan, all the lands presented to it by the Irish "before the coming of the English," including the lands which had been presented by O'Ruairc.\* This sets at rest a point on which Ware was in error and Archdall in doubt, that the Abbey of Navan was in existence in pre-Norman times and that O'Ruairc, in whose portion of Meath it seems to have been situated, had bestowed lands on it. After the death of O'Ruairc, Navan was fortified by de Lacy, who granted the district to one of his followers, Joceline de Angelo, who rebuilt the Abbey.

The ecclesiastical map of Ireland, based on the Acts of the Synod of Rathbreasail would show that the Breiffne Diocese, although not specifically mentioned by name, had its boundaries clearly recognised. Although the synod omits to specify its boundaries we are enabled from contemporary sources to supply the omission. The *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 1296, refer to the diocese as extending from Druim-cliabh to Ceanannus, that is, from the boundary of the ancient Diocese of Drumcliff in north Co. Sligo, to the boundary of the Diocese of Kells in Meath. A similar entry, sub anno 1258, occurs in the *Annals of Loch Cé*.

There is no record of the diocesan boundaries as

\* E. St. John Brooks, "A Charter of John de Courcy to the Abbey of Navan." *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 1933.

defined by the Synod of 1152, but there is no evidence to suggest that any alterations were made from the Rathbreasail scheme or that subsequent amalgamations in any way altered their configurations. We may affirm without the slightest qualification that the limits of the Ui-Briuin diocese administered by Bishop O'Connachtaigh in the twelfth century corresponded in general outline with those of the diocese ruled over by his worthy successor to-day.

#### EPISCOPAL SUCCESSION IN EARLY TIMES.

To attempt a satisfactory reconstruction of the episcopal history of the Ui-Briuin Breiffne from the death of St. Feidhlimidh until the Synod of Rathbreasail would prove, in view of the paucity of our records, an unsatisfactory task. Some day when the records of our early ecclesiastical history are collected and critically examined such a task may be feasible; but a vast amount of historical research among unpublished manuscripts in Irish and Continental libraries—a truly herculean task—will have to be undertaken before that desired result may be achieved. But it is to be feared that for at least five centuries after the time of St. Feidhlimidh the links in the episcopal succession of Kilmore are irrecoverably lost. The name of his immediate successor in the See we do not know, but the salient points of our diocesan history for that period may be gleaned by inference from various sources.

St. Feidhlimidh is traditionally believed to have been a bishop and we may take it for granted that his successors to the See of Ui-Briuin Breiffne—as they were known by their territorial titles, in accordance with the custom of the period—had their episcopal seat at Kilmore. But the names of those bishops



cannot now be discovered and for a long period there is a lacuna in the episcopal history of our diocese. Most Irish Sees are similarly circumstanced and Kilmore is no exception in this respect ; the names of the early Bishops of Ardagh, Ardfert, Raphoe, Achonry, Clogher, etc., have vanished beyond hope of recall. Not until the twelfth century can we catalogue the names of the bishops who ruled over the See of St. Feidhlimidh.

In accordance with the monastic system of diocesan government which prevailed in early centuries in Ireland, the successors of St. Feidhlimidh in the monastery of Kilmore maintained episcopal jurisdiction over the territory of Breiffne. But it is most likely that in the period from the death of St. Feidhlimidh until the Synod of Rathbreasail the diocese was broken up into a number of smaller Sees, each having its own bishop dependent upon the successors of St. Feidhlimidh at Kilmore.

The territory of Breiffne, "from Druim-cliabh to Ceanannus," possessed within its borders a number of flourishing monasteries, e.g., Drumlane, Drumlease, Kildallan, Moybolge, and a few others, which must of necessity have had bishops in their communities from time to time. As I have already explained, the political basis of the early bishopric was the *civitas* or unit of self-government. In the Roman dominions the *civitas* was, in almost every case, urban ; but as St. Patrick discovered on his arrival, it was in Ireland essentially rural. The difference was an important one and St. Patrick had to adjust his episcopal stations in conformity with the *civitas* as existing in Ireland. In the territory of Breiffne there existed a large number of clans or social units each exercising its rule over a small but definite territory, and each of these clans as a self-governing community had a bishop to minister to its spiritual needs. This bishop was the ecclesiastical counterpart of the king or chieftain of the territory,

and his episcopal authority was supreme within the territorial jurisdiction of the clan.

The numerous religious foundations existing in Breiffne furnish evidence of the highly developed ecclesiastical organisation already existing in the twelfth century.



## CHAPTER XI

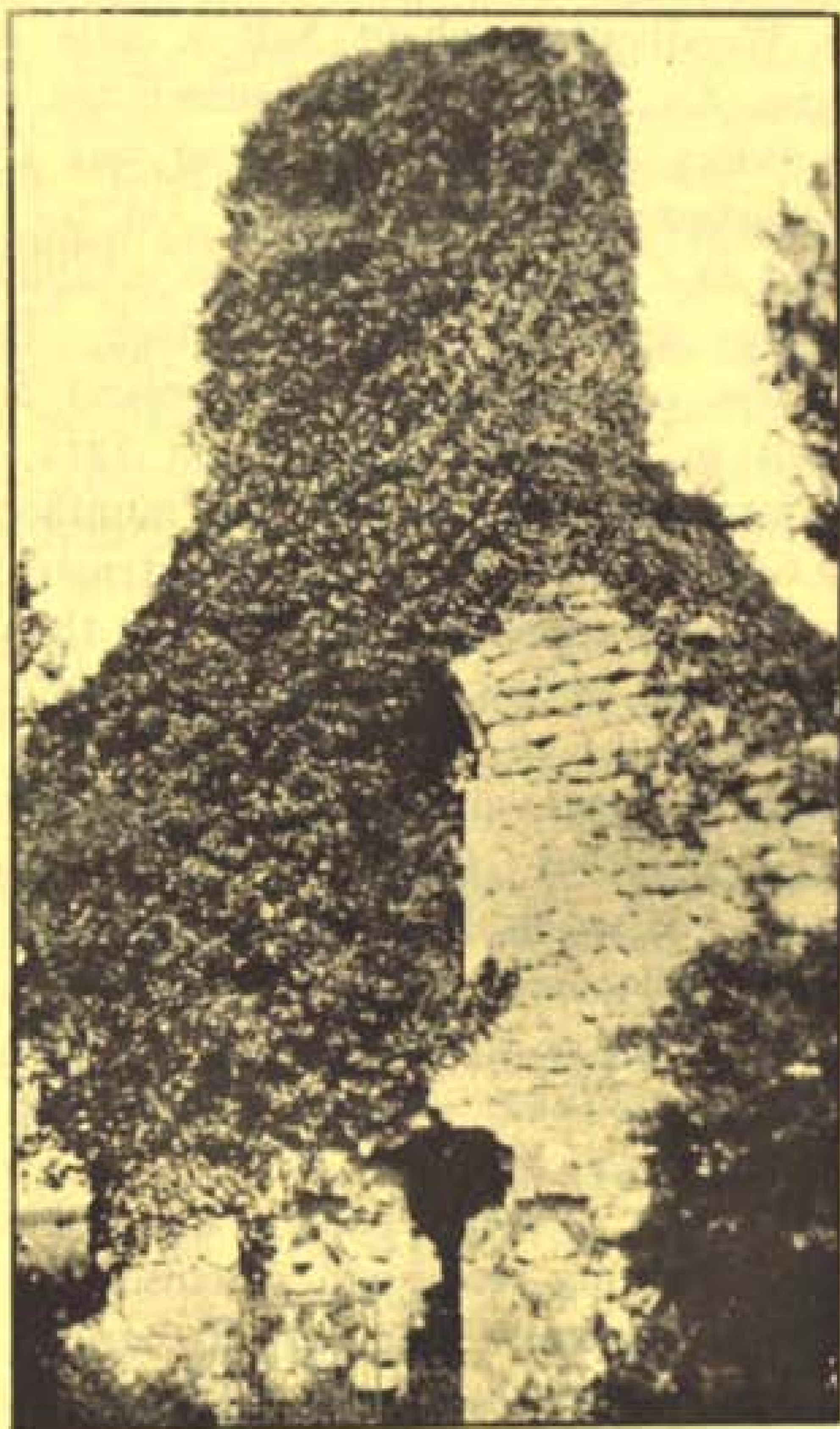
THE PREMONSTRATIENSIS IN KILMORE  
HOLY TRINITY PRIORY, LOCH UACHTAIR  
(Founded A.D. 1237)*Irish Premonstratensian Foundations*

THE Premonstratensian Canons, or the White Canons of the Order of Prémontré, were founded in the year 1120 by St. Norbert, Archbishop of Magdeburg, as a reformed branch of the great Augustinian Order. The first house was established at Prémontré—a short distance west of Laon, in the Department of Aisne, France—from which the title of the Order is derived. Soon afterwards the Order spread to England and Scotland, and sixty years after its foundation it reached Ireland. The first Scottish monastery for White Canons was established by James I of Scotland in 1125. Five years later—in 1130—the famous monastery of Dryburgh was founded. Until the Religious Revolt in the sixteenth century these houses figured largely in the ecclesiastical history of Scotland.

The first English house of the Order was founded in 1143 at Newhouse, near Brockelsby, in Lincolnshire. This was followed by Abbeys at Alnwick in 1147; Easby in 1152; Walbeck in 1153; Barlings in 1184, and Welford in 1185.

In the fifteenth century Ireland had eleven houses of the Order—nine for Canons and two for nuns. Although this chapter is primarily concerned with the history of the foundation on Trinity Island, in Loch Uachtair, yet a brief summary of the history of the

other Irish houses, with dates of foundation, is necessary in order to remove certain misconceptions regarding their history which are to be found in the writings of some



RUINS OF HOLY TRINITY PRIORY, LOCH UACHTAIR

historians. The absence of reliable data—made available only in recent years—has been responsible in the past for many erroneous conclusions. The history of Trinity Island, in Loch Uachtair, will be more clearly understood when considered as a link in the chain of Premonstratensian foundations in Ireland.





In order to indicate clearly its place in the Irish system we will first consider each house separately, proceeding in chronological order.

I. Goodbourne (or Woodbourne), on the left bank of the River Woodbourne, about half a mile west of Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim. It is sometimes referred to as the Priory of Carrickfergus, and was the first Irish Premonstratensian foundation.\* On the invitation of John de Courcy this house was established in 1180 and was colonised from Dryburgh. In 1205 de Courcy was compelled to leave Ireland and the Priory began to decline. However, in 1212, it was galvanised into new life through the munificence of Sir Alan de Galloway, who had received extensive grants of land in Ulster from King John. It was then raised to the dignity of an Abbey, dedicated to the Holy Cross under the patronage of the B.V.M. In the Papal Taxation of 1306 it was valued at £41 5s. 5d., indicating its flourishing condition. In 1542 it was dissolved and its last Abbot, Gillarath MacCaura, retired to Island Magee. Queen Elizabeth, in 1594, granted the Abbey to the Corporation of Carrickfergus. Shortly afterwards the buildings were dismantled and the stones removed for building elsewhere.

II. Holy Trinity Abbey, Tuam, was founded by William de Burgo in 1204, and colonised from the parent house of Prémontré. In 1215 Richard de Burgo endowed the Abbey and secured (in 1216) a safe conduct for four Canons to visit the Abbey of Prémontré in order to study the rules and observances of the Order. The *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1251, record that: "Gillachrist Ó Lachtnain, Abbot of the Trinity in Tuaim, was drowned in the sea of Erinn"—probably wrecked in a storm. The Abbey with its possessions was granted in 1578 by Queen Elizabeth to the town

\* See O'Laverty's *History of the Diocese of Down and Connor*, vol. iii p. 67 and 482.

of Athenry. In 1580 its last Abbot, John Kieran, was executed in Dublin.

III. St. Mary's Priory, Ballymore, Co. Westmeath, was founded by Walter de Lacy in 1218 for Norbertine nuns (or white nuns). The nuns abandoned it in 1470, and five years later it passed into the hands of the Austin Canons. In 1541 it was dissolved.

IV. St. John's Abbey, Annaghdown, Co. Galway, was founded about the year 1220. Thomas O'Malley, Abbot of this house, was Bishop of Annaghdown\* from 1247 until his death in 1250. The names of several abbots have been preserved. Towards the close of the fifteenth century, owing to its great poverty, it declined in importance and finally disappeared after the suppression in the reign of Henry VIII.

V. Holy Trinity Abbey, Loch Cé, Co. Roscommon, was the most important Irish Norbertine foundation, and became the mother house of several affiliated monasteries, including our own Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair, as we shall see later. The founder of the Abbey of Loch Cé was a distinguished Irish ecclesiastic, Clarus MacMaoilin O'Mulconry, Archdeacon of Elphin, one of the greatest church founders of the thirteenth century. The Abbey was founded in 1225 and colonised from Prémontré. The date of the foundation of this great Abbey of Loch Cé has been ascribed by some writers to 1215, but Clarus was already Archdeacon when it was founded, which implies that he was not very young. Yet, as he died in 1251, he would have lived to an extraordinarily old age, in the hypothesis that he founded the Abbey in 1215, and also supposing that he was advanced in years before he became

\* Enach Duin, or Annaghdown, was an ancient episcopal seat stretching along the shores of Loch Corrib. The Annals record the deaths of several bishops of Enach Duin in the thirteenth century. Papal Bulls relative to the diocese will be found in Hardiman's *H-iar Connacht*, p. 155. In the reign of Queen Mary the diocese was incorporated with Tuam.



Archdeacon. The most authentic historical sources have 1225 as the date of the foundation.

Murtogh MacDermot, Prince of the ancient territory of Magh-Luirg, \* who died in 1237, endowed the Abbey. In 1239 it was further enriched when :—

Lassairfhina, daughter of Cathal Crobhderg (O'Connor), wife of O'Domhnaill, gave a half-bally [leat-Daite] of her marriage portion, i.e., the half-bally of Ros-Birn,† to Clarus Mac Mailin and the community of Canons of Trinity Island in Loch Cé, in honour of the Trinity and Lady Mary in hoc anno.‡

The Annals record the *obits* of many of its Abbots from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The Abbey escaped dissolution (owing to the power and influence of the MacDermots) until 1594, when Queen Elizabeth granted it to Robert Harrison, "for ever, in free socage," at a rent of £26 13s. 4d. per annum.

The ruins of this once great Abbey may be seen on Trinity Island, in Loch Cé, a short distance from Boyle. This place has an especial interest for the Breiffne visitor on account of its having been the mother house of the Priory on our own Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair.

The comparative quiet and security [writes Archbishop Healy] which the islands of Lough Key [*recte* Loch Cé] afforded in turbulent times to persons anxious to shun the world, attracted solitaires even from the earliest Christian ages. Inis Mac Nerim was chosen by St. Columba as the site of a monastery which flourished down to the thirteenth century, if not later . . . But the old monastery on Trinity Island is by far the most interesting of the ancient monuments of Lough Key . . . The little island on which the monastery was built, not more than an

\* The district around Boyle, Co. Roscommon.

† Ros-beirne, near the mouth of Ballysodare River, Co. Sligo.

‡ *Annals of Loch Cé*, vol. i, p. 351. Hennessy's Edition.  
Lassairfhina died in 1282.

acre in extent, is within a quarter of a mile of the land, surrounded by the sheltering of a quiet bay, and was thus near enough for convenience, and yet far enough for safety.\*

VI. St. Mary's Priory, Galway, in the ancient Diocese of Annaghdown, was founded about 1235 as a cell to Holy Trinity Abbey, Tuam. Galway formed part of the Diocese of Annaghdown till the year 1484. The Priory does not seem to have prospered, as we find that in 1478, owing to depleted revenues, it was surrendered to the parent house in Tuam. In 1480 it was handed over to the Dominicans, who were confirmed in its possession by Apostolic Brief of Pope Innocent VIII in 1488. It survived until the confiscations of the early sixteenth century.

VII. Holy Trinity Priory, Attymas, in the Diocese of Achonry—"between the mountains called the Curlew and the Bralew in the barony of Tirrerragh"—was founded in 1238 by Clarus MacMaoilin O'Mulconry as a cell to Loch Cé. The Priory was possessed of lands in the parish of Attymas and was granted in 1594 by Queen Elizabeth to Robert Harrison.

VIII. Holy Trinity Priory, Kilross, Co. Sligo, was the third Premonstratensian foundation due to the zeal and energy of Archdeacon O Mulconry, who founded it about 1235 as a cell to Loch Cé. It is included in the 1594 Elizabethan grants to Robert Harrison.

IX. Holy Trinity Priory, Loch Uachtair,† Co. Cavan,

\* *Irish Monthly*, May, 1878: *Papers and Addresses*, pp. 20-25. In the list of those present at the Synod of Tuam in January, 1660, we find the name of Rev. Bernard O'Beirne who is styled Archdeacon of Elphin and Abbot of Loch Cé. He was, however, a Secular acting as a Commendatory Abbot. No later traces of members of the Premonstratensian Order in Ireland have, so far, been discovered.

† *Loch Uachtair*, i.e., the Upper Lake. The orthography of this name has suffered many distortions although its correct form occurs in all our *Annals* and should present no difficulty. The 1609 Plantation Map of Cavan has "Logh Oatre"—a corrupt form which, with many variations, occurs in all the *State Papers* of the time. It is unfortunate that most of our modern maps and geographical textbooks have perpetuated the gross perversion, "Lough Oughter," which represents neither the correct spelling nor the accurate pronunciation.



founded in 1237, was the fourth Premonstratensian foundation to the credit of Archdeacon O'Mulconry. Its history will be traced in the present chapter.

X. St. Mary's Priory, Kilnamanagh, Co. Galway, owed its foundation to the munificence of the Hacketts, lords of the district. It was founded in 1260 on the site of an older monastery. It is in the parish of Donaghpatrick, Archdiocese of Tuam, and the townland is still known as "Abbeytown." Pope Boniface IX in 1400 and Pope Martin V. in 1428 granted Indulgences in favour of this Priory. After the dissolution the Priory and its possessions passed into the hands of the Clanrickarde family.\*

XI. Holy Trinity Priory, Killenatrinody (Cill na Tríonóire), Co. Mayo, was founded about 1260 for nuns of the Premonstratensian Order, and was subject to Loch Cé. The church, which was also known as Teampall na gCailleac Dub—the church of the black (veiled) nuns—was in the townland of Killeen, parish of Kilbride, and Diocese of Killala. In 1594 it passed, *inter alia*, into the hands of the insatiable Robert Harrison, and in 1596 became the property of William Taaffe.

For over three centuries after the dissolution of the monasteries no house of the Order existed in these countries. At length, in 1872, the Norbertines secured a foundation in England, at Crowle, in Lincolnshire, through the exertions of the late Father Francis Martin Geudens.† The Priory of Corpus Christi, Miles Platting,

\* In 1650 Rev. Dr. John Dooley, who was V.G. of Tuam from 1651 to 1661, styles himself "Abbot of Kilnamanagh." He was a Secular acting as Commendatory Abbot.

† I must acknowledge my indebtedness to the late Chevalier W. H. Grattan Flood, Mus.D., K.S.G., who kindly placed at my disposal some references to the Irish Premonstratensian foundations transcribed by the late Father Geudens from the valuable manuscripts preserved in the Abbey of Tongerlo, together with abstracts from the *Annales Premonstratenses* of Hugo—the annalist of the Order. Father Geudens was appointed Abbot of Barlings in 1898 and died in July, 1913. He wrote an account of the Order for the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, s.v. "Premonstratensian Canons."

Manchester, was founded by Father Geudens in 1889. The mother house of the Order is now at Tongerlo, near Antwerp, Belgium.

In 1924 the Norbertines returned once more to Ireland and established the Priory of Kilnacrott, in Crosserlough parish, Co. Cavan. Like Trinity Island, Kilnacrott was once an O'Reilly stronghold.\* We will now consider the history of the original Norbertine foundation in Breiffne.

### HOLY TRINITY PRIORY, LOCH UACHTAIR. ITS FOUNDATION.

A distinguished American writer, in a volume of absorbing interest, amasses a wealth of evidence to demonstrate that the thirteenth was the greatest of centuries, that is, that the period from 1200 to 1300 represented the culmination of mediaeval progress.† A study of the history of Breiffne during this period, as illustrated by its ruined churches and monasteries, leads to the same conclusion. Their very ruins testify to the superior architectural skill which was one of the glories of the thirteenth century. The second quarter of the century witnessed the introduction of the Premonstratensian Canons to Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair; the ruined church and its magnificent doorway are examples of the thirteenth century skill. The closing years of the century saw active preparations being made for the foundation of the splendid Franciscan monastery of Cavan.

The Priory of Holy Trinity was established in the year 1237 on an island in Loch Uachtair in the Diocese of Kilmore and in the parish of the same name. It is situated about six miles west of Cavan town in the midst

\* See *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. iii, pp. 9-86.

† *The Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries*, by James J. Walsh, M.D., Ph.D., LL.D., Sc.D., Litt.D., K.C. St. G. (New York, 1913).



of Breiffne's most imposing scenic surroundings. Furthermore, it is Breiffne's most famous island sanctuary, and its venerable ruins cannot fail to impress the visitor with a realisation of its ancient fame. The district around it may be regarded as the very heart of the Diocese of Kilmore. St. Feidhlimidh, Patron of the diocese, who flourished in the sixth century, lived in it his life of prayer and great austerity.\*

Within a few hundred yards of Holy Trinity, on a ridge across the water that rises rather abruptly from the shore, was the ancient monastic establishment of Slanore (*Snamh Luthir*), already described, which existed in the sixth century.† In the opposite or Cavan direction, but a few miles away in the same parish, is the church of Kilmore which, with the sanction of Pope Nicholas V, was erected into a cathedral in 1454 by Bishop Andrew MacBrady.

Under the year 1237 the *Annals of the Four Masters* record the foundation of Holy Trinity:—

A monastery for canons [they state] was commenced by Clarus Mac Maillin on Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair under the patronage of Cathal O'Reilly.

The Annals, which are known since Ussher's time as the *Annals of Boyle*, although O'Curry disapproves of the name,‡ have a record, almost equally brief, of its foundation, but place it under the year 1238. It runs as follows:—

The foundation laid of the monastery of canons by Clarus MacMoelin, Archdeacon of Elphin, in Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair, by the aid of the family of Cathal O'Reilly.§

\* Lanigan's *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, vol. ii, p. 10; O'Hanlon's *Lives*, vol. viii, August 9.

† *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. i, p. 166.

‡ O'Curry, *Manuscript Materials* (Dublin—1878), pp. 180 *et seq.*

§ D'Alton, vol. ii, p. 407.

The *Annals of Loch Cé* agree with the *Four Masters* in ascribing its foundation to the year 1237. Under this year is the following entry:—

The erection of a monastery for Canons was commenced by Clarus MacMailin, in Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair, through the gift of Cathal O'Raighilligh, in hoc anno.\*

From the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* we obtain the fullest account (the orthography is archaic):—

Clarus m'Moylynn O'Moilchonry brought the White Canons of the order of premonstra neare Christmas from Trinity Island in logh Ke [Co. Roscommon] to Trinity Island upon Logh Ogther in the Brenie and were there lisiensed of Cahall O'Reilly, who granted the place after this manner: In puram et perpetuam Elimozinam, in honore Sanctae Trinitatis et idcirco Clarus hoc fecit in Domino, quia Premonstratenses gaudeant consimili privilegio cum monachis ita quod ad ullum alium ordinem transire possunt 1261 vell verius 1248.†

This appears as an item under the year 1261, whereas both the *Four Masters* and the *Annals of Loch Cé* assign 1237 for the foundation. It would not be quite impossible to reconcile both entries by assuming that the monastery was "commenced," as noted by the *Annalists*, in 1237, but that the Canons were not introduced to it till 1261 (or 1248). But it is difficult to understand why they should have delayed for 24 (or even 11) years before coming, or that the monastery

\* Edited by W. M. Hennessy, M.R.I.A., vol. i, p. 345. The part compiler of these *Annals* was Brian MacDermot of Carrick—MacDermot, Co. Roscommon, who died in 1592.

† Edited by Rev. Denis Murphy, S.J., LL.D., M.R.I.A., (p. 243). The original is, of course, in Gaelic. It was translated into English in 1627 by Conell Mac Geoghegan of Lismoyne, Co. Westmeath. The original manuscript of Mac Geoghegan's translation is lost, but a copy, made by Eadhg O'Daly in 1684 and now preserved in the Library of T.C.D., was used by the Rev. Dr. Murphy in preparing this edition in 1896; but Dr. Murphy did not venture to change the orthography.



took so long in building. Moreover, Clarus died in 1251. This is attested by the *Annals of Boyle*, *Annals of Loch Cé*, and by the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* themselves on a previous page of the work. It seems, therefore, a much more probable explanation that the item may have been misplaced either by the original compiler or by the translator, or perhaps by the copyist. The concluding Latin words of the entry itself suggest such a misplacement.

Archdall, relying on the entry in the *Four Masters*, also ascribes its foundation to the year 1237.\* But he also mentions an alternative date, 1249, and for it he assigns no authority. Very probably he took the second date from the work of Sir James Ware. Harris' edition of Ware † contains a list of "Premonstre Canons, being a Branch of the Great Order of St. Augustin." There are seven or eight houses (the last house is doubtfully Premonstratensian) in Ireland named in the list. The second reads as follows:—

Premonstre Canons	Places and Titles of Dedication	Founder	Date
Co. Cavan	Trin. Isl. in Lough Oughter, Ab. of H. Trin.	Clarus MacMailin	1249

The unedited original edition of Ware refers to this House as a monastery ("M") not as an Abbey. ‡ Moreover, it makes the following statements regarding it:—

Clarus MacMailin aliquando Archdiaconus Elphinensis coenobium ibi construxit ordini Canonicorum Praemonstratensium anno Dom. 1249, quod Carolus O'Rely donavit. Vel hoc coenobium, vel coenobium

\* *Monasticon Hibernicum*—Dublin, 1786, p. 42.

† Dublin—1764, p. 272.

‡ *De Hibernia et Antiquitatibus ejus Disquisitiones. Editio Secunda*—Londini, MDCLVIII, p. 224.

B. Mariae de Ballimore (de quo supra dixi in Midia occidentali) idem est cum eo quod Johannes Le Paige, in Bibliotheca Ordinis Praemonstratensis edita Parisiis anno 1633, Monasterium Ballimenuale in Provincia Armachana appellet.\*

It will be observed that Ware here relies on the classic work of Le Paige and gives no further authority for the date 1249; but it is well known that in his compilations he relied on the assistance of the famous Irish scholar, Mac Firbis.†

The *O'Reilly Pedigree*, an Irish MS. preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, has the following entry, dated 1162:—

The Monastery of Trinity Island [was founded] by Mac-na-hOidhche for Conchobar Mac Maoilin, Abbot of Loch Cé and Ceanannus, who afterwards became bishop of both Breiffnes. Others say it was Cathal na Beithe that built it, and that it was for the Canons Regular of St. Norbert he raised it.

This is an anachronism. The chronology of the first part of the statement is faulty. According to the genealogy of O'Cleirigh, Mac na hOidhche was the father of Gofraidh O'Reilly, who died in 1161, and Cathal was fourth in descent from this Mac na hOidhche. It is quite certain that Mac na hOidhche ‡ and Clarus MacMaoilin were not contemporaries. The *O'Reilly Pedigree*, which will be referred to later, usually eschews

\* *Op. cit.*

† Dubhaltach MacFirbis, of Lecain MhicFirbisigh in the Barony of Tireragh, Co. Sligo, was the great Connacht historian and genealogist. He compiled the genealogies of the Connacht clans in the College of St. Nicholas, Galway, in the period 1650–1666. MacFirbis was murdered in 1670 by a Cromwellian trooper named Crofton in an inn at Dunfin, Co. Sligo, while on his way to Dublin to visit Robert, son of Sir James Ware.

‡ In the *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1256, there is a reference to Mac na hOidhche MacDorchaidh, one of the chieftains of the Ui-Briuin. The MacDorchaidhs were the chieftains of Cinel Luachain, an ancient district now represented by the Parish of Oughteragh, around Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim.



the dating of events, and it may be inferred that it was compiled from oral tradition which presents history merely as a flat picture with no chronological arrangement. The second part of the statement, which chances to be correct, proves that the scribe was relying on tradition. No reliance whatever can be placed on the statement that Clarus MacMaoilin was Abbot of Ceanannus and Bishop of Breiffne. The *Annals* do not substantiate any of these entries.

The conflict of dates in the writings of Archdall and Ware is, however, more apparent than real. The explanation for the alternative date (1249) will be forthcoming from the following entry, *sub anno* 1250, in the *Annals of Loch Cé*.

White Canons of the Premonstre Order were taken by Clarus Mac Mailin, a short time before Christmas, from Trinity Island in Loch Cé, to Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair in the Breifne; and he established the Canons of the Order there through the permission of Cathal O'Raighilligh who granted it [Trinity Island] in puram et perpetuam elemosinam in honore Sanctae Trinitatis . . .\*

With the exception of the dates this corresponds very closely with the entry in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, already quoted, and the alternative date (1248) there entered obviously refers to the same event. Established as it was in 1237, as the *Annals of Loch Cé* already inform us, the Priory was not fully developed until 1249 (or 1250) when new life was infused into it by Cathal O'Reilly, who further enriched it by the grant of the entire extent of the lands of Trinity Island, in pure and perpetual alms. Additional Canons from Loch Cé were, thereupon, introduced to it and the priory rose to the zenith of its influence. But its foundation was twelve years earlier, when the *site* was granted by Cathal O'Reilly. We have now seen how

\* Vol. I. p. 395.

the confusion of dates arose. Some writers, probably unaware of the earlier entries in the *Annals*, assumed that the granting of Trinity Island to the priory coincided with the date of its foundation. No authority is more reliable than the *Four Masters*, and it is safe to hold with them, especially when supported by the *Annals of Loch Cé*, that the monastery of Holy Trinity in Loch Uachtair was founded in the year 1237.

#### CLARUS MACMAOILIN O'MULCONRY.

In Ireland, as I have already shown, there were nine Houses of Premonstratensian Canons, and Clarus MacMaoilin O'Mulconry was the founder of, besides the Cavan one, three others of them.\* It is well worth seeing, then, what manner of man was this great patron of the Order.

This distinguished man was a member of the learned family of the O'Mulconrys (Ó maol Conaire)† who were the hereditary ollamhs of the *Sil Muiredhiagh*, the royal tribe of Connacht, whose territory was co-extensive with the present Diocese of Elphin. Somewhere within this territory he was born during the last quarter of the twelfth century. It is certain, as O'Curry observes, that he was a dignitary of the ancient church of Elfinn (Elphin), which was founded by St. Patrick, and the oldest ecclesiastical foundation in that district, situate on the southern borders of MacDermot's country, though not in it.‡ In the *Annals of Boyle* he is described as "the illustrious" Archdeacon of Elphin§ That he was held in high honour by the English as well as the Irish is plain from the Annalists' accounts of the

\* See also *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 737.

† The name is now usually abbreviated to Conroy or Conry.

‡ *Manuscript Materials*, p. 109.

§ D'Alton's Edition, vol. ii, p. 402.



English predatory expedition of 1235, which are all substantially the same. In that year there was:—

A great hosting by the Foreigners of Erinn, who were assembled by Richard, son of William Burk; and they went across Ath-Luain [Athlone] to Ros-Comain [Roscommon], when Ros-Comain was burned by them; and they went from thence to Oilfinn, and burned the great church of Oilfinn; and they proceeded from thence to the monastery of Ath-da-laarc on the Buill [Boyle River]. And the persons who were the principal chieftains and the boldest on this hosting were MacMaurice [Maurice Fitzgerald], i.e., the Justiciary of Erinn, and Hugo de Laci, Earl of Uladh, and Richard, son of William Burke, and Walter Ritabhard, high baron of Laighen, with whom were the Foreigners of Laighen; and the routs [bands or companies] of all Erinn were along with them; and John Gocan, having all the foreigners of Mumha along with him. And they went on the night of Trinity Sunday to the monastery of Buill [Boyle Abbey]; and his soldiers attacked the monastery, and broke open the sacristy; and all its valuable things, and its Mass-chalices and Altar-cloths, were taken out of it . . . \*

The *Annals* give us a lengthy account of the depredations and murders committed during this plundering expedition. Manifestly these marauders were not too troubled by scruples of conscience. Yet when they reached Trinity Island in Loch Cé their warlike character seemed to undergo a remarkable transformation. The *Annals of Loch Cé* continue the narrative:—

The Foreigners of Erinn, however, and the Justiciary afforded a general protection and friendly shelter to Clarus MacMailin, Archdeacon of Oilfinn, and to the Canons of the Trinity on the Island; and the

\* *Annals of Loch Cé*, Hennessy's Edition, vol. i, p. 321. See also the *Annals of Boyle*, sub anno 1235, D'Alton's edition, vol. ii, p. 386.

Justiciary himself, and the chiefs of the Foreigners, went to see that place, and to pray there, and to show respect to it, in honour of the Holy Trinity.\*

The same *Annals* describe how the Foreigners took possession of the Rock (i.e., fortress) of Loch Cé and when driven from it by a stratagem they "fled to Trinity Island, to place themselves under the protection of Clarus MacMailin, who subsequently conveyed them away."

In 1243, as we learn from the *Annals of Loch Cé*, the historic church of Ardcarne (Ardcarne, near Boyle, an ancient episcopal seat) was enlarged by Clarus MacMaoilin. After a life of great activity Clarus passed away in the year 1251, and was buried in the church of the monastery of Loch Cé. He stands pre-eminently as one of Ireland's greatest thirteenth century church founders. The *Annals* of his own Loch Cé give the following unusually detailed account of his life and death:—

Clarus MacMailin, archidiaconus Oilfinnensis, vir providus et discretus, qui carnem suam jejuniis et orationibus macerabat; qui pauperes et orphanos defendebat; qui patientiam et coronam observabat; qui persecutionem a multis propter justitiam patiebatur; venerabilis fundator monasteriorum Sanctae Trinitatis per totam Hiberniam, et specialiter fundator monasterii Sanctae Trinitatis apud Loch Cé, ubi locum sibi sepulturae elegit, ibidem in Christo quievit Sabbato Dominicae Pentecostes; cujus animae propitiatur Deus omnipotens in coelo, cui ipse servivit in saeculo; in cujus honore ecclesiam de Rinnduin

\* *Ibid.* Also in *Four Masters*. The corresponding entry in the *Annals of Boyle* as translated by Dr. O'Connor is, according to O'Donovan, "most incorrectly" done, and D'Alton in the same *Annals* follows O'Connor (vol. ii, p. 401). O'Donovan quotes the original Gaelic sentence from the *Annals* just named, and thus translates it: "The Justiciary and the chiefs of the English of Ireland went to see that place, and to pray and to pay veneration to it, so that none should offer dishonour to the place." (*Four Masters*, sub anno 1235, note q.). As a Gaelic scholar O'Donovan was supreme.



et monasterium Sanctae Trinitatis apud Loch-Uachtair, ecclesiam Sanctae Trinitatis [apud] Ath-Moighe, ecclesiam Sanctae Trinitatis apud Cill-Rais, aedificavit.\*

This is the longest Latin entry in these *Annals* ; evidently as Archbishop Healy points out, the writer thought the life and death of the great Clarus of Trinity Island too important a matter to be recorded, like other events, in the spoken language.

Under the same year, as already seen, both the *Annals of Boyle* and the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* also record the death of Clarus. The entry, in both compilations, is in Latin and is word for word the same as the above, but with slight differences in spelling and arrangement. In the first mentioned *Annals* it is the sole item given under that year ; indeed it is the last historical event distinctly recorded in the book, for the six remaining years are illegible, i.e., 1251 to 1257. The passage may be rendered into English as follows :—

Clarus MacMailin, Archdeacon of Elphin, a man prudent and discreet, who kept his flesh attenuated by prayer and fasting, who defended the poor orphans, who waited for the crown of patience, who suffered persecution from many for the sake of Justice ; the venerable founder of the places of the Confraternity of the Holy Trinity throughout all Ireland, especially the founder of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity of Loch Cé, where he selected his place of sepulture ; there he rested in Christ, on the Saturday before Pentecost Sunday [in the year 1251] ; may the Almighty God in Heaven be propitious to his soul, whom he served in the world, in whose honour he built the Church of *Renduin* † and the Monastery of

\* Vol. i, pp. 396–397.

† Now Randown, on the western shore of Loch Ribh [Ree], Co. Roscommon. The peninsula from which the district obtained its title (Rinn Dúin—peninsula of the fort) is about a mile in length and contains some interesting ruins. "Deryndoyne" is the form of the name given in the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*.

the Holy Trinity in *Loch Uachtair*; the Church of the Holy Trinity of *Ath-Moige*,\* also the Church of the Holy Trinity at *Cill-Rais*.†

The account in the *Annals of Boyle* concludes with this sentence: "pro cuius anima quilibet librum legens, dicat Pater Noster" ("for whose soul let whoever reads this book say a Pater Noster").‡

It is quite apparent [writes O'Curry] from this honourable and feeling tribute paid to Clarus MacMailin, as he is called in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 1235—but who was a member of the learned family of O'Mulconry—that the annalist, whoever he may have been, had a high veneration, if not a personal friendship, for him; and it is equally clear, or at least it is much more than probable, that an annalist of the Abbey of Boyle, with which he had no known connection whatever, would not speak so warmly and affectionately of one who perhaps was the light of a rival establishment.§

The ruins of Holy Trinity Monastery of Loch Cé, where Clarus MacMailin and many other Premonstratensian Abbots are interred, are visible from the mainland, and the tourist or visitor will find on the island many objects of antiquarian interest.

It has been stated by some authorities that Clarus MacMailin was Bishop of Kilmore. There is no evidence, however, to support such a conclusion which, if correct, would hardly have been omitted by the scribe who penned the glowing eulogium just quoted from the *Annals of Loch Cé*. The *Annals* just named record the death of Flann O'Connactaigh, "Bishop of Ui-Briuin," sub anno 1231. Again, in 1250, the death of Congalach

\* Attymas, now a parish in the Diocese of Achonry.

† Kilross, Co. Sligo. "Killrusse"—*Annals of Clonmacnoise*.

‡ Cf. O'Curry, *Op. cit.*, p. 108. Dr. O'Connor, he shows (*loc. cit.*), here fell into confusion about the dates. D'Alton, in his edition of the *Annals of Boyle*, follows O'Connor and so he mistakenly ascribes the death of Clarus to 1241 instead of 1251.

§ *Op. cit.*



Mac Idhneoil, " Bishop of the Breifne," is noted. The next bishop was Simon O'Ruairc, who ruled the See from 1251 until his death in 1285. The name of Clarus MacMailin is not to be found in any of the lists of the thirteenth century Bishops of Kilmore. His labours were not limited to one diocese; his ambition was the foundation of monasteries for the Order of which he was such an illustrious patron.

### TRINITY ISLAND IN LOCH UACHTAIR

The island in Loch Uachtair, on an angle of which the Premonstratensian Priory of Holy Trinity was built, is a fairly large one, now containing 122 acres, 2 roods and 11 perches, statute measure. After the foundation it became popularly known as Trinity Island. Besides Trinity Island the lake contains three other large islands, Inch, Eonish, Derinish, and several smaller ones. In former times, before the drainage of the lake and consequent lowering of the water levels, the number of islands was still greater, but some of these are now attached to the mainland by narrow strips of land. Some of the townland names are proofs of their insular character, as a glance at the Ordnance Maps will show. The seventeenth century townland maps of Cavan show that at that time the submerged area was much more extensive than at the present time. As will be shown later the area of Trinity Island was then much smaller than now. When visiting the island it is interesting to trace the original water level as it existed before the Erne Drainage Scheme, which was carried out about the middle of the last century.

The 1609 Plantation Map of Loughtee barony indicates Trinity Island and spells it "Trinidy"—a fairly close rendering of the Gaelic *Trinoide*. The other islands "Inch," "Einish" (Eonish), "Deri-Inch" (Derinish) are also marked, together with the smaller

island containing the famous Castle of Loch Uachtair. Sir William Petty's Map—the *Down Survey*—of 1654 has "Trinity Island," and the adjoining lake is noted as "good for fishing"—showing that the compiler of the Loughree map—one John Humfrey—was a follower of the "gentle art" of Isaac Walton.

The original designation of Trinity Island is now a matter for speculation. I can find no mention of the island prior to the thirteenth century, but the neighbouring island of Eonish (Eo inir, i.e., yew island) is mentioned in the *Annals* sub anno 1231. Evidently oak woods abounded in the district; for instance, we have Derinish (i.e., island of the oaks) and Derries (i.e., oak woods). Clearly the island afterwards called Trinity was also well-wooded in early times, and that it had an appellation of its own, although of purely local significance, there can be no doubt; but what its original name was we cannot now determine. The newer title has long since totally eclipsed the older. Whether an older ecclesiastical foundation existed on the island before the foundation of the Premonstratensian monastery is uncertain; but the probability is against it. Our early records have no mention of such a foundation which, had it existed, would certainly have established a name for the island. It is true that the monastery of Holy Trinity in Loch Cé was founded on the site of an earlier religious house which had belonged to St. Columbkille; but the monastery of Loch Uachtair does not seem to have replaced any older foundation. The subject, however, deserves further inquiry.

Loch Cé is in the extreme north-west of County Roscommon. The island in it, on which the parent house was established in 1225, became also Trinity Island. This identity of names had the disadvantage that it sometimes led to confusion. Stevens' *Monasticon Hibernicum* of 1722 (founded on the work of Alemand),



one of our earliest works of the kind, doubts even the very existence of the Kilmore institution! In later writings, based on Stevens and Alemand, the same doubts are repeated without question. The exact words of Stevens, strange though they may seem now, are worth quoting.

The *Monasticon* first states about the Premonstratensians that:—

John le Page, a Regular Canon of this Order, in his book entitled *Bibliotheca Ordinis Praemonstratensis*, tells us, that the Province or *Circaria* of Ireland, in the year 1326, contained six houses.\*

The six houses mentioned by Le Page are then enumerated, but the Breiffne one is not among them. Sir James Ware, it is added, “does not altogether agree with *Le Page*, even as to the number of the houses” and the statements abstracted from Ware, already referred to, bear this out.

Continuing its information about the Premonstratensian Order the *Monasticon* next takes up Ireland county by county. When it comes to Cavan it says:—

Ware places an Abby of this Order in an Island which he calls the *Holy Trinity*, lying in the Lake called *Logh-Oughter*; and says it was founded there by *Clarus Mac-Moylin*, Archdeacon of Elphin, and that *Charles O'Rely*, an Irish Gentleman, was a Benefactor to it. However, other authors do not make the least mention of this House, and being in an Island of the *Holy Trinity*, in a Lake, or Logh, and founded by an Archdeacon of *Elphin*, in the thirteenth century, all which agreeing with the Abby of the same Order [in Loch Cé], we placed in the County of Roscommon, which was also in a *Logh*, and in the Island of the *Holy Trinity*, and of the same Founder and the same century, I cannot, I say,

\* *Monasticon Hibernicum*—London, 1722. Printed for William Mears. p. 136.

question but it was the very same. However, there being some difference as to the Time of their Foundation, the one being in 1215, and the other in 1249, it is not altogether improbable but that they might be Two different Houses.\*

That they were different is, of course, now beyond question. The dates quoted are from Ware and are, as I have already shown, quite unreliable. I have explained elsewhere that the works of Ware are often untrustworthy when dealing with Breiffne history. Later writers, who have relied on the work of Stevens have perpetuated the same curious historical blunders when dealing with the Abbeys of Loch Cé and Loch Uachtair.

#### THE MONASTERY'S BENEFACTOR

In the second quarter of the thirteenth century Cathal O'Reilly, who befriended the Nobertines, was an important personage in north-west Ireland. He was lord of Muintir Maolmordha, i.e., the chieftain or king, as the *Annals of Ulster* would term him, of the O'Reilly territory. According to O'Cleirigh's genealogies Cathal was the son of Andaidh who was son of Cathail (died 1162), son of Gofraidh (died 1161), son of Mac na hOidhche. His wife, Cacht, was the daughter of Mac Fiachrach.

In 1226, when Cathal makes his first appearance on the stage of history, he demolished the Castle of Kilmore.† This castle is believed to have been a Norman one, erected beside the ancient church of St. Feidhlimidh raised to cathedral status more than two centuries afterwards by Bishop Andrew MacBrady. The moat still remains. It is one of the very few moats—Westropp maintains the sole one ‡—raised in

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 143. The orthography is unchanged.

† *Annals of the Four Masters*, and *Annals of Loch Cé*.

‡ *The Ancient Forts of Ireland*, Trans. Royal Irish Academy, vol. xxxi—Part XIV (1902)



Breifne by the Norman-English. In 1231, six years before the monastery was founded, the neighbourhood of Trinity Island, and most likely the island itself, was overrun and plundered. The *Annals of Loch Cé* record that :—

A great hosting-assemblage was led by Domhnall O'Domhnaill, King of Tir-Conaill, and by Aenghus Mac Gillafhinnein, against Cathal O'Raighilligh ; and they brought vessels with them upon Loch Uachtair, and plundered Eo-inis (eo-inis), and killed the best white steed that was in Erin.\*

Furthermore, we are told that they carried away with them the jewels, and treasures, and goods of the entire place. From this account it is evident that the residence of Cathal O'Reilly, on the island of Eo-inis, was the scene of wealth and grandeur which aroused the cupidity of the neighbouring chieftains. The reference to the famous white steed is also found in the entry describing the same event in the *Annals of Kilronan* ; the O'Reillys were always famous for their cavalry.

Two years later, in 1233, Breifne O'Reilly was again invaded, this time by the English. But Cathal overtook and completely routed the invaders in the battle of Maoin-crann-chaoín. The *Annals of Loch Cé* thus describe the incidents :—

A hosting by William de Laci (i.e., the son of Hugo and the daughter of Ruaidhri, son of Toirdhelbhach Mor O'Conchobhair), and by the Foreigners of Midhe (i.e. Meath) along with him ; when they went with great force into the Breifne, to Cathal O'Raighilligh, and to his brother Cuconnacht, and committed great depredations. A party of the people of O'Raighilligh, however, encountered William de Laci and the chieftains of the host, who were behind the preys ; and

\* Vide *Annals of the Four Masters* . also *Annals of Ulster* and *Annals of Clonmacnoise*.

they gave each other battle, and William Brit was slain there, and other good foreigners along with him; and William de Laci was wounded there, and Charles, son of Cathal Gall, and many more along with them; and they (the Foreigners) afterwards returned from the district, without pledges or hostages; and William de Laci; and Charles, son of Cathal Gall O'Conchobhair; and Feorus Finn [Pierce the Fair], son of the Foreign Queen [Isabella, mother of Henry III]; and Diarmaid Bernach O'Maelsechlainn, died in their own houses immediately after from the wounds inflicted on them at Mona-crand-chain.\*

In 1250 Cathal, in his turn, was one of the leaders of an expedition against the O'Neills of Tyrone, but the expedition met with no success.† After a life of warfare, invading and repelling invasions, he was slain in 1256 at the great battle of Magh Sleacht, a disastrous day for the O'Reillys and their adherents. The *Annals of Loch Cé* furnish a lengthy account of this important battle which took place in September, 1256. Among those slain were:—

Cathal O'Raighilligh, king of Muintir-Maelmordha and the descendants of Aedh Finn, together with his two sons, viz.: Domhnall Ruadh and Niall; and his brother, i.e., Cuconnacht; and the three sons of Cathal Dubh O'Raighilligh . . . The battle of Magh Sleacht, on the brink of Ath-derg, at Alt-na-helti, over Bealach-na-beithighe, is the name of this battle.‡

O'Donovan, who evidently was not acquainted with the details furnished by the *Annals of Loch Cé*, just quoted, thought that this battle took place in County

\* Vol. i, pp. 316-317. The *Four Masters* have a similar account. Mona-crand-chain (MÓNAI CRAND CAIN, i.e. the bog or morass of the beautiful trees) was situated in Co. Cavan near the Meath border. Its location is now uncertain as the name is obsolete. The scene of this battle was, most probably, in the neighbourhood of Mullagh.

† *Four Masters*, also *Annals of Ulster* and *Annals of Loch Cé*.

‡ Vol. i, p. 415. See also the account in the *Four Masters* and the *Annals of Ulster*.



Leitrim and in the ancient district of Magh Rein, outside the boundary of Magh Sleacht. In fact he suggests the neighbourhood of Ballinamore as the site of the battle.\* Elsewhere I have shown that the battle was fought in the townland of Legnaderk, beside Bellavally Gap, among the mountains of Tullyhaw.†

Living in days of turmoil and warfare Cathal O'Reilly proved himself no mean soldier as in days of tranquillity and peace he proved himself a generous benefactor of Holy Trinity Priory. Tradition tells how his body was conveyed to the Priory from the battlefield of Magh Sleacht, and that after due honour and ceremony he was laid to rest in the Priory church.

### THE MONASTERY IN ITS PRIME

From its foundation in 1237 onwards, for more than 300 years, Trinity Monastery pursued its peaceful monastic life free from any exciting incident which might disturb its normal life. During this period our *Annals*, as far as I can discover, have no mention of it. No doubt there has been a vast destruction of MS. records relating to Ireland; and the records of Trinity Monastery have vanished as effectively as the Lost Books of Livy. The monastic records, which if extant, would illuminate a somewhat obscure period in our ecclesiastical history, seem to have passed beyond hope of recovery. Still the three centuries silence about Holy Trinity is not a bad omen. Events in the ordinary routine of life have but little attraction for the historian who does not note down the ordinary but rather

\* Notes to *Four Masters* sub anno 1256.

† It is in the heart of the famous "Kingdom of Glan," the territory of the MacGaurans. The wild and rugged grandeur of Glan Gap is picturesque in the extreme, and the visitor will hear the native traditions related in the Gaelic tongue, which among those rugged mountains, has retained all its pristine freshness and vigour.

chronicles the unusual and extraordinary. The meagre records of Holy Trinity are singularly lacking in anything approaching the sensational; the monastery pursued the even tenour of its way undisturbed and there was no sacking or burning or massacre to attract the attention of the historian. Every new Superior, as the years went on, started, of course, his reign by some necessary reconstruction of the building that had been overlooked by his predecessor, and signalled his term in office by some *magnum opus*, most likely an improvement in the church. Of the daily life of the community, how the monks reclaimed the soil, tilled the fields, studied and taught, we can only infer; but the Premonstratensian Rule was universally the same.

The Canons were subject to the jurisdiction of the Abbot of Loch Cé. We find that Irish monks went abroad to study at the mother house of the Order. A letter, written about 1216, from Gervaise, Abbot-General of the Order of Prémontré, to Walter, Abbot of Vicoyne, refers to Irish monks from Tuam who had come to the mother house and made a careful study of the Norbertine Rules.

From the published *Calendar of Papal Letters*, and also from occasional references to the contemporary affairs of the Irish Premonstratensian Houses in the records preserved in the Abbey of Tongerlo, Belgium, we are able to follow the progress and development of the monastery during the three centuries of its active existence.

In 1390 John O'Cullinan was Prior of Holy Trinity, in Loch Uachtair. In the *Calendar of Papal Letters*, sub anno 1398, it is recorded that:—

A mandate from Rome is issued to the Bishop of Kilmore, the Prior of Holy Trinity in Loch Uachtair, and the official of Kilmore, commanding them to collate and assign to John MacKiernan, clerk of the



same diocese, the rectory of Kilintenra [Killeshandra] \* . . .

In 1412 the death of Maurice Odulmean (O'Dolan ?) is recorded, and his successor as Prior in the same year was John O'Sheridan. In fifteenth century records, and earlier, the monastery is usually called the " Priory of Loch Uachtair," e.g., " Insule Sancte Trinitatis de Lochuachdair "—*Papal Letters*, Eugenius IV, 1433.

The income of the Priory was so meagre, only 5 marks yearly, that John O'Sheridan was also granted the perpetual vicarage of Tomregan to be held *in commendam* for his lifetime. The following entry in the *Papal Registers* furnishes the details of the grant:—

16 July, 1412. The priory of Lough Oughter [*recte* Loch Uachtair] diocese of Kilmore being vacant by the demise of Maurice Odulmean, John XXIII ordered that John Osyredean [Ó Sheridan], a canon of the abbey of Loughkee, diocese of Elphin, should be provided thereto; said John having represented to the Pope that the income of the aforesaid priory is so meagre (but 5 marks † yearly) that it would not suffice for his decent support, he by Bull (17 Kal. August, an. 2) [in the Papal Register the date is

\* Cill a Sean Ráta, i.e. the church of the old rath. An entry in the *De Annatis Hiberniae*, sub anno 1439, mentions St. Brigid's parish church " Kilnascanarach." In 1398 the rectory was vacant by the death of Austin MacKiernan and the yearly fruits did not exceed 20 marks. Killeshandra Parish is in the Barony of Tullyhunco, a district of which the MacKiernans were hereditary chieftains.

The ruins of the mediaeval " church of the old rath " are in the town of Killeshandra and occupy a very picturesque position on the shore of the lake. The situation of the church is somewhat unusual, occupying as it does the interior of a still more ancient rath, the circumvallation of which still partly remains *in situ*. Other instances of churches having been erected in similar locations occur at Kilnavart and Kildallan, and I have already discussed the probable reasons which influenced the early church builders in their choice of such sites. The present ruin at Killeshandra was " restored " in the early seventeenth century and the edifice considerably altered; it was then used for Protestant services. The names of many of the mediaeval parish priests of Killeshandra occur in Roman documents of the period.

† The mark was equivalent to 13/4 in the money of the time.

given thus: Dat. Rome apud S. Petrum, 17 Kal. Augusti, anno secundo], directed that the perpetual vicarage of Tuaimregayn [Tuaim Drecauin, now Tomregan] the yearly revenue of which does not exceed 4 marks, if it should be void in the manner alleged or in any other way, provided that at the date of these presents no one has a special right therein, should be given to said John to be held by him, even with the above priory, *in commendam* for his lifetime. Provided that the said vicarage shall not be defrauded of its due services, and the cure of souls therein shall in no way be neglected.\*

Fifteen years later—in 1427—a movement was inaugurated for the enlargement and reconstruction of the monastery, and the Prior appealed for the necessary funds. Pope Martin V granted an Indulgence of three years and three quarantines to those who would contribute to the repair of the monastery church. The *Register* of Pope Martin V specifies the necessary conditions:—

11 Feb., 1427. It having been made known to Pope Martin V that the church of the monastery of the Holy Trinity of Lough Oughter [*recte* Loch Uachtair] of the Premonstratensian Order was much in need of repairs, he granted a relaxation of three years and as many quarantines of enjoined penance to all who being truly penitent and confessed, shall devoutly visit the said church on the feast of the Assumption and give helping hands towards its repair. Given at Rome, etc., the third of the Ides of Feb. pont. an. X.†

On the same date the Pope provided for the Prior, John O'Sheridan, a benefice for his support owing to the poverty of Holy Trinity Priory. We have already noted that in 1412 he had been granted the

\* Reg. John XXIII: *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 244.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 247.



perpetual vicarage of Tomregan, valued at 4 marks yearly, but the combined revenues of Holy Trinity and Tomregan seem to have been inadequate for his support, and he was granted the perpetual benefice of Keadue (Urney) which he resigned in December, 1426. Hence we find him early in 1427 being provided with another benefice. It is scarcely necessary to add that the Prior was responsible for the repairs and upkeep of the church and monastery, and that the revenues accruing from Holy Trinity, Tomregan and Keadue—five, four and eight marks, respectively—were quite inadequate to maintain such an establishment in a thriving condition. The provision of Pope Martin V is as follows :—

10 Feb., 1427. Pope Martin V understanding that the income of the priory of Holy Trinity of Lough Oughter [Loch Uachtair] did not exceed 5 marks yearly reserved to its prior, John Osiredean, *ut commodius sustentari valeat*, a secular ecclesiastical benefice in the gift of the bishop and chapter of Kilmore, of the value of 25 marks, if with cure of souls, or 18 marks without cure, provided that it is not a cathedral canonry and prebend, to be held by him *in commendam* for life together with said priory. Given at Rome, etc., 4th of the Ides of Feb. an. X.\*

This was a period of reconstruction. In 1431 the Drumlane Canons made an appeal for the building of a cloister, refectory, etc., and again, in 1436, came a further appeal.† After 1427 the Priory of Holy Trinity was further enlarged and reached the apex of its fame. This was aided by the energy and zeal of John O'Sheridan who for the long term of 32 years ruled over it as Prior and during whose lifetime it took second place only to Loch Cé as the leading Irish

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 247.

† *Calendar of Papal Letters*, sub annis 1431 and 1436.

Premonstratensian foundation. The greater part of the existing building, now in ruins, may be dated from his time. The doorway, now at Kilmore, must, however, be ascribed to an earlier period.

John O'Sheridan resigned in 1444. In the same year the resignation of Luke Macgallgali (MacGillooly) is recorded. It is evident that the latter was appointed Prior at some time during the illness or absence of O'Sheridan. The *Papal Registers* have the following account (dated October 24th, 1444) :—

The priorship of the Holy Trinity of Lochwattair of the Premonstratensian order, diocese of Kilmore, vacant by the resignation of Luke Macgallgali into the hands of Thady, abbot of Loughkee (Loch Cé), of the aforesaid order, diocese of Elphin, who is the *pater abbas* of Lough Oughter [Loch Uachtair], was conferred by said abbot Thady on Fergallus Osiredean [Fergal O'Sheridan], a professed canon of the same order. However the said appointment was null and void as it had been previously reserved to the apostolic see. Now, whether said priory which depends on the monastery of Loughkee, and is wont to be ruled by canons of the same, and the yearly income of which does not exceed five marks sterling, is vacant in the way alleged or in any other way, or by the resignation of John Osiridean, the Pope wishing to grant a special favour to Fergallus aforesaid, recommended to him on trustworthy evidence *de vite et morum honestate*, etc., conferred it with all its rights and appurtenances on him, and provided him thereto. Notwithstanding, etc. Given at Rome, etc., the year of our Lord's Incarnation, 1444, 9 Kal. of Nov. and of Pope Eugenius IV. pont. the 14th year.\*

That the new Prior failed to prove himself worthy of the trust imposed on him by Pope Eugenius IV. may be inferred from the very unfavourable reports of the administration of "Fergal O'Siriden, Prior of Holy

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 250.



Trinity of Lochwoctir," received at the Papal Court of Paul II. in 1466 when the Prior was called upon to answer some very grave charges.\*

The next reference to the Priory is in 1491 when Willialmus Osyridean (William O'Sheridan), a priest of Kilmore diocese, was Prior, *prioratus Insule S. Trinitatis de Loc*, and promised to pay the apostolic taxes. Again, in 1494, we find him holding a perpetual vicarage together with the Priory of Holy Trinity, the vicarage being valued at ten and the Priory at eight marks sterling, respectively.† We may take it that the Priory had increased in value during the previous fifty years.

The history and vicissitudes of the Priory are very closely connected with those of the O'Reillys, whose great, almost impregnable, fortress of the Castle of Loch Uachtair lay a short distance away. In fact the history of the Priory may be said to run parallel to that of the castle. The castle, which was the most important stronghold in Breiffne O'Reilly, is said to have been built on a crannoge, i.e., an artificial islet, in Loch Uachtair, and its ruins testify to its former strength. It is not necessary here to enter upon the much debated question of the date of its erection, but that it belongs to the twelfth century is, I think, established beyond doubt. According to a passage in the *O'Reilly Pedigree* it was erected by the Red Earl, i.e., Richard de Burgh, "Lord of Uladh and Connacht, and the choicest of all the Foreigners of Erin," who died in 1326.‡ Petrie, in his *Essay on Antient Irish Military Architecture*, is of the opinion that the castle was built before the coming of the Anglo-Normans, and the views of such an authority carry much weight. Its period is certainly

\* *Calendar of Papal Registers*—Paul II., 1466.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 240.

‡ The *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of Loch Cè* agree in ascribing his death to the year 1326. The *Four Masters* chronicle the event sub anno 1323.

not later than the twelfth century. The style of architecture is of the ancient Irish military type.

The Castle of Loch Uachtair was probably one of the strongholds of Cathal O'Reilly, and was in existence before he introduced the Norbertines into his principality. It remained the great fortress of the O'Reillys until after Cromwell's time. In July, 1646, Monsignor Massari, Dean of Fermo, on his coming to Cavan, made it his headquarters for some time. In the wars of the country, from the erection of the castle till its destruction, it was many times assailed by the enemies of the O'Reillys; and occasionally, as the *Annalists* relate, the neighbouring islands and the adjoining mainland were overrun and plundered by the enemy hostings. The monastery of Trinity Island was in existence from 1237 until 1570, i.e., almost through the whole period, yet the *Annalists* have no mention of it. This is a clear indication that it did not suffer from enemy attack during the period. Three miles by water from the Castle of Loch Uachtair, and occupying a not conspicuous position, it was at a safe distance from the turmoil and escaped being drawn into the maelstrom of war.

Besides being a fortress, strongly garrisoned, the castle was the principal dwelling place of the O'Reilly chieftains and their families.\* Most likely the monastery church served as the place of worship for the inhabitants of the castle, who came down by boat. The White Canons would also have assisted in the education of the young scions of the Clan.

#### THE PERIOD OF CONFISCATION

In 1542 Rory Mac Dermot, Abbot of Loch Cé, was commendatory Prior of Loch Uachtair and continued as such until his death in 1568. With him the im-

\* *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol i., pp. 240-263 and p. 332.



portance of Trinity Priory may be said to have passed away, for two years later it was singled out for confiscation. The following particulars relating to its confiscation are furnished by the *Fiants* of Elizabeth, dated February 1st, 1570 :—

Lease under Commission, 26th Sept. to Hugh O'Reyly, of the Brennye, Chief of his nation ; of the site of the monastery of the Holy Trinity of Canons in the isle of the Holye Trynytie in Loughoughter in O'Reyly's country called the Breny ; 4 parcels of land called Polle Drumore [Drummurry], Polle in Yllane [i.e., Trinity Island] and Dyrre [Derries], Polle Snavelogher [Slanore], Drumore alias Drumorore [Drummora], and their tithes . . . , to hold for 21 years . . . rent 56/8 . . .

Already, in 1568, Breiffne had passed under English law and the monastic institutions were being gradually dissolved. Hugh O'Reilly (Aodh Connallach), then chief of his principality of Breiffne, rented the monastery with the hope of its being allowed to continue its functions. From the record just quoted we learn something of the amount of lands attached to the monastery. Evidently the townlands of Drummora, Derries, Slanore, and Drummurry belonged to it. All these were endowed by the O'Reillys.

Archdall's account is similar :—

Queen Elizabeth, February 1st, 1570, granted the abbey, with all its possessions, to Hugh O'Reilly of the Brenie, head of his sept, for the term of 21 years, at the rent of fifty-five shillings and eight pence Irish money ; but by an Inquisition taken in the 27th of the same reign, the said Hugh was found to be eleven years and an half in arrear.\*

In the same year, 1570, Hugh O'Reilly also obtained on the same terms the Abbey of Drumlane, but at the

\* *Monasticon Hibernicum*, 1st edition (1786), p. 42 ; Moran's edition (1873), vol. i, p. 71.

rent of £8 14s. 8d. A comparison of the rents payable shows that Drumlane was a much more valuable foundation. The lands in possession of Trinity monastery were, evidently, not highly valued by the Commissioners of the day. The second Inquisition referred to by Archdall was held in 1584 in the 27th year of Elizabeth's reign. Hugh O'Reilly—or Aodh Connallach as the *Annalists* call him—died in the previous year, 1583, and was buried in the Franciscan monastery of Cavan.

The action of Hugh O'Reilly in leasing the Priory may require an explanation. It is obvious that the chief of the O'Reillys did not formally co-operate in the work of confiscation. The monastery had remained under the protection of the family from its foundation in 1237 until dark clouds began to hover around it in 1570. In a last desperate effort to save the monastery Hugh O'Reilly took over the custody of its possessions for the time being with a view to returning them to the owners when the storm had blown over and happier times would have arrived. He thought it likely that, under his protection, the Premonstratensians would be allowed to continue in occupation of the monastery. But his hopes were in vain. Seeing that there was no prospect of a change, or of the relaxation of the laws, he lost heart and after a few payments he discontinued his instalments of rent. This explains how it was that fourteen years after taking over the monastery and its possessions he was found to be eleven and a half years in arrears. The device he adopted was not an uncommon one in the Penal times in Ireland.

From the *State Papers* of the period we find that the Lord Deputy of Ireland, on January 9th, 1569, granted to Turlogh MacCabe of Fyleinston (Flintstown), Co. Meath, the custody of the Priory. This was on the eve of its confiscation. However, Hugh O'Reilly succeeded in securing the lease and Turlogh MacCabe



did not obtain possession. On June 22nd, 1582, MacCabe petitioned for a fee-farm of "Trinity Priory in O'Reilly's country," but he was again unsuccessful and on August 30th of the same year Hugh Strowbridge obtained a lease of the Priory for 21 years. From the *Fiants* of Elizabeth, dated December 12th, 1583, we find that Turlogh (Tirrelagh) MacCabe was granted a pension of eighteen pence sterling a day for life presumably to compensate him for his failure to secure Trinity Priory. But Strowbridge fared no better than MacCabe, for he does not appear to have succeeded in obtaining possession. In 1586 it was leased to Sir Lucas Dillon, Chief Baron, for a period of 60 years. The *Fiants* of Elizabeth under date September 10th, 1586, record the :—

Lease to Lucas Dillon, knight, chief baron . . . the site of the monastery of the Holy Trinity in S. Trinity's island in Loghoughter in the Breny [Breiffne], with its possessions, and the site of the monastery of B.V.M. of Drumelaghan [Drumlane] in the Breny, with its possessions. To hold for 60 years, from the determination of existing interests.

The Dillon family retained possession of the island and monastery until the Cromwellian wars. In 1634 Luke Dillon, one of the Members of Parliament for Co. Cavan, resided on the island. This Luke Dillon figured in the Revolution of 1641, and proved to be a man of much wisdom and influence.

In 1590 an important *Inquisition* was held in Cavan to inquire into the values of the church and monastery lands in Co. Cavan. The Report of the *Inquisition*,\* dated September 19th of the same year, includes the

\* Archdall, *Op. cit.* Addenda, p. 733 : Moran's Edition, p. 71. For an exact reproduction of the original document made by the present writer in the Public Record Office, Dublin, prior to its destruction, see *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. i, pp. 216-220.

names of 44 Cavan Hospitals (i.e., parish churches) ; but the monastery of Loch Uachtair is not included in the list. As the Franciscan monastery in Cavan town, and also the Hospital of Drumlane (which had been, together with Trinity Priory, leased to Hugh O'Reilly twenty years earlier) occur in the list the absence of Trinity Priory requires some explanation.

The annual value of the Termon (i.e., church) lands is given in the Report. Land is assessed at 1 penny per acre, or 1 shilling per "poll" or cartron.\* Drumlane, for instance, had 32 cartrons "annual value besides reprises 32 shillings." We may assume that all Trinity Island was church land but, of course, we cannot make any calculations on the basis of the present area of the Island, as its extent was greatly increased by reason of the drainage operations of the last century. From the *Down Survey* returns we find that in 1641 the area of the Island was then 69a. 3 r. 24 p., and we may assume these figures to be, very approximately, correct. Comparing this with its present acreage—122 a. 2 r. 11 p.—it will be seen that the Island in early times was scarcely more than half its present size. This explains some of the apparent discrepancies of the earlier *Inquisitions*. Furthermore, no "unprofitable land" attaching to the Island is shown in the *Down Survey*, which leads to the conclusion that after three centuries of toil the monks had reclaimed all the land to the water's edge. About the middle of the last century, when very extensive drainage operations were carried out, the level of Loch Uachtair was lowered and Trinity Island gained very considerably in extent. The original lake level may still be easily traced around the Island.

By inference from the evidence afforded by the confiscation document of 1570, already quoted, where

† Values in the 16th century were, of course, quite different from those obtaining at the present time.



the four parcels (polls) of land attached to Trinity Priory were leased to Hugh O'Reilly at a rent of 56/8, whereas the 8 polls of Drumlane were leased at a rent of £8 14s. 8d., we can gather that Drumlane was more highly valued than Trinity Island. The tithes, however, have to be taken into account before a definite conclusion could be reached. Although not mentioned in the Report of the 1590 *Inquisition* it is obvious that Trinity's land endowment was two or three times that of the average Cavan Hospital.

The *Inquisition* of 1590 dealt with the property belonging to the parish churches. Trinity Priory had been already leased to Sir Lucas Dillon and was not included in the Report. Drumlane, however, was a parish church and passed with the others into the general scheme of confiscation. In the same manner Kilmore (in which parish Trinity Island is situated), containing six polls, is included in the Report. The inclusion of the Franciscan Monastery of Cavan may be attributed to the fact that it had not been previously disposed of.

A later *Inquisition* held at Cavan, September 25th, 1609, has the following reference to Trinity Priory and its possessions :—

The abbey lands of the late abbey or priory of Trinity Island, situate near the Toagher [Togher], with  $4\frac{1}{2}$  polls of land called Clanlaskan, Derrie, Blerncupp [Bleancup] and Dromore, and the poll of Snaulugher [Slanore] and Killevallie [Killyvally] and  $\frac{1}{2}$  poll of Trinity Island—the bishop claims a rent of  $\frac{3}{4}$  out of the half poll of Snaulugher, and claims the land as his mensal.\*

This shows that the Priory owned considerable property in the adjacent townlands (cf. 1570 grant to Hugh O'Reilly, *supra*). The 1609 Map of Loughtee

\* *Patent Rolls*, 7 James I.

shows Clonlaskan adjoining "Snaulurher" (Slanore); it probably was taken as extending over portion of the present townland of Drummora. In the early eighteenth century list of Cavan townlands—the *Henry Ireland* list—Trinity Island is valued at 7 carvagh.

From 1586 until 1666 Trinity Island remained in the possession of the Dillon family. By order, dated May 19th, 1666, Luke Dillon was dispossessed and the island became the property of Earl Anglesey.\* Its dissolution was then an accomplished fact.

An interesting contemporary description of the Priory and its surroundings is given by Monsignor Massari, Dean of Fermo (an episcopal city in the Papal States), who was secretary to the illustrious Rinuccini, the Nuncio sent by Innocent X to help and encourage the Irish Catholics in their hour of dire distress. Monsignor Massari, on his way to Ulster, stayed for some time in Cavan and made Loch Uachtair Castle his headquarters. In July, 1646, he visited Trinity Island and his observations are of much historical interest. On his return to Italy he wrote a lengthy account of his Irish campaign, and the manuscript is preserved in the Ambrosian Library, Milan; a translation has been published.† Describing his visits to various places in the neighbourhood of Loch Uachtair Castle he goes on to tell what he saw on Trinity Island itself:—

I landed [he writes] at the one called Holy Island where, in the ancient church of a ruined monastery of the Cistercians (*sic*) or Canons Regular, I found in a corner many painted and gilded images of saints carved in wood. These were now lying exposed to wind and rain, having been overturned by the heretics who dominated the district. If I remember aright, there was a Crucifix, with statues of the Blessed Virgin and Child in her arms, of St.

\* *Books of Survey and Distribution*, Loughree Barony.

† *Catholic Bulletin* (Dublin), 1917.



Patrick, St. Catherine, the Magdalen, and three other Saints. Tenderly and with tears I kissed them all, crying out with a loud voice: How long would God allow them to lie there abandoned and despised. The inhabitants assembled to see me; and bewailing the ruin and outrage done to the sacred images, we raised them up and placed them in more becoming places, pouring out our prayers before them that they would prosper the arms and the holy cause of the Confederate Catholics by imploring God to grant them continued victories. Finally, all went on their knees and asked my blessing, which I granted to them by the authority given me by the Nuncio. On leaving the church, I came on a well of clearest water which, as many of the islanders told me, had been miraculously discovered in the days of a saintly Abbot, when his monks were suffering greatly for want of water. Producing a silver cup which I always carried with me, so as to avoid the usage of that country, by which all drink from the same vessel at parties and banquets, each one as a rule leaving part of the wine or beer undrunk in token of affection or confidence, I devoutly drank some of that water. All were touched by this act, and each one drank of the water, not only out of devotion to the place and to the well, but also, as I believe, because I had tasted of it.

I found the inhabitants well instructed in the doctrines of our holy faith, and I afforded them all great consolation by the distribution of some hundreds of blessed medals, which I had brought with me for the soldiers.

This vivid description affords some valuable sidelights on the manners and customs of the people, as well as indicating the condition of the ruined Priory. It is clear that Monsignor Massari found both monastery and church in ruins; at any rate the roofs must have already collapsed. He is, of course, in error in ascribing the foundation to the Cistercians; but it must be

remembered that he wrote the account some years later, on his return to Italy, and he relied chiefly on memory. But the dilapidated condition of the church, with its broken and scattered statues, seems to have made an indelible impression on the mind of this sympathetic Italian dignitary, whose labours for Ireland's welfare should never be forgotten by our people. The well from which he drank is in the vicinity of the church, with which it was formerly connected by a path. It supplied the monks with water, and springing as it does from the limestone rock its waters are still clear and sparkling. Small wonder that an Italian visitor, away from the parched plains of his own native country, where potable water is a luxury (at least in summer time, as the present writer has experienced on a few occasions when crossing the Italian campagna), should enjoy a drink of its cool and refreshing waters.

The island seems to have been well inhabited at that time, and the monks, although deprived of their monastery, continued their labours among the people. Education was not neglected, and the people favourably impressed the Monsignor with their knowledge of Christian Doctrine.

While at Loch Uachtair Castle Monsignor Massari was visited by Primate Hugh O'Reilly, whose temporary residence (a permanent residence for an archbishop was then impossible) was, the narrative informs us, not far away. It was in the vicinity of Kilmore. A few years later, in 1652, the Primate died on Trinity Island, to which he had retired after the country had rejected the wise and uncompromising policy of Rinuccini and had experienced Cromwell's merciless and devastating campaign. His body rests in Cavan Abbey.

During the Cromwellian wars the islands in Loch Uachtair, including Trinity, served as places of refuge and seclusion. That the Primate should have chosen Trinity as his last retreat is evidence of this. In fact



we are informed by Monsignor Massari that in 1646 Major Myles O'Reilly was living on one of the islands not far from Trinity. Ireland was now being slowly but surely conquered, and Breiffne was overrun by the bloodstained Puritans. Of the outrages and murders of that dreadful time we will never know. From the Commonwealth Papers we find that in 1653 Trinity Island was occupied by English troops. The following letter from the Commissioners to the Council of State is dated February 4th, 1653 :—

It had also pleased the Lord to assist another party of your forces under Colonel Barrow against a party of the rebels, who, in hope of safety and for the better annoyance of the country, had betook themselves into certain islands and bogs; and to deliver into your hands Trinity Island, lying in the County Cavan, which was a considerable fastness of the enemy's, and able to receive about 1500 men in it.\*

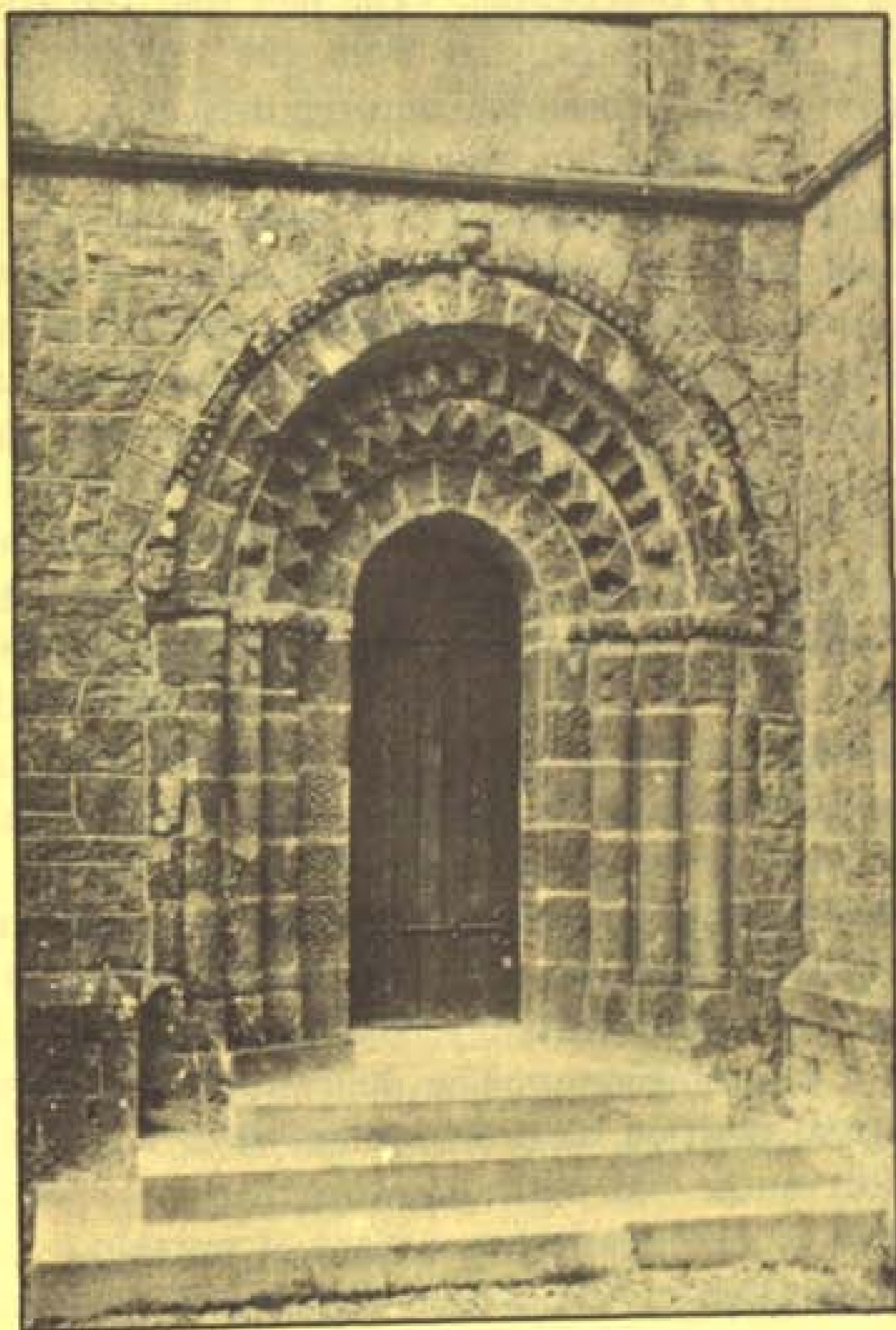
*Delenda est Carthago* was now the slogan: the native population were routed from Trinity Island and the venerable monastery, in its island solitude, was finally abandoned to ruin and decay.

### EXISTING RUINS AND TOMBS

Approaching Trinity Island by boat from the direction of Bleancup, or Killyvally, the ivy-mantled gable of the ruined church is a prominent feature of the landscape; this is the west gable, which is still remarkably perfect and displaying a pointed window over a deformed and mutilated doorway. Masses of ivy almost hide the gable from view. With the exception of this gable only fragmentary portions of the church remain; fragments of the sidewalls, also covered

\* Dunlop, *Ireland under the Commonwealth*, vol. ii, p. 323.

with ivy, are crumbling to decay. The church, judging from its dimensions, must have been a very fine one; its interior measurements are, 76 feet in length by 20 feet in width. A side chapel on the south wall,



Photo] DOORWAY OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH. [Mason  
(Now at Kilmore Protestant Cathedral.)

probably an addition of later date, measures 22 feet from north to south and  $18\frac{1}{2}$  feet from east to west.

Fragments of slabs, displaying elaborate carvings, which belonged to the church, are strewn about the surrounding graveyard. Until a careful exploration



of the site be made, in something of the same fashion as has been recently done at Nendrum,\* Co. Down, it will be impossible to speak with confidence of the size or extent of the monastery buildings. And even this is scarcely practicable. The fact that the grounds around the buildings, and even the interior of the church itself, have been for centuries used as a cemetery, is a bar to very exhaustive exploration. But as it is expected that the building will soon be vested as a National Monument we may look forward to an effort being made to clear away some of the debris and reveal the original foundations as well as uncover the inscribed monuments which, most probably, remain *in situ* on the original floor level. Tradition reminds us that Cathal O'Reilly and many of his descendants are buried here, and that splendid monuments once marked their graves. A careful search will, perhaps, some day discover some of their tombs. On the south side of the cemetery a reputed saint's grave is pointed out by the people living on the island, but his name is not now remembered.

Judging from the west gable of the ancient church, and especially by its main entrance or portico, which remains to the present day, the structure must have been an imposing one. The doorway is no longer in its original position, as it was removed to Kilmore and inserted in the old cathedral (by then in Protestant hands) on its renovation as a place of worship. Later, on the erection of the present Protestant cathedral of Kilmore, quite beside this ancient church, it was again removed and utilised as the vestry door, which position it now occupies. This doorway is thirteenth century work, is elaborately carved in Irish Romanesque style, and bears a distinct resemblance to the doorway of Cormac's Chapel on the Rock of Cashel, also to the doorway of the old Cathedral of Killaloe. It is one of the most interesting specimens of its class in Ireland

\* *The Monastery of St. Mochaoi of Nendrum*, by Lawlor (Belfast, 1925).

—and I might say *the* most interesting—and reflects credit on the unnamed Breiffne sculptor of the thirteenth century. Canon O'Hanlon was greatly impressed by it and his description is worth quoting:—

It has [he writes] chevron mouldings, with a magnificently rounded arch, recessed over connecting side—moulded and receding jambs. The stones are all finely carved in zig-zag and interlaced patterns; and it contains the most interesting and beautiful details of ancient Irish architecture the writer has yet seen. The stones seem composed of a reddish gritty substance, weatherworn, yet with the carvings all very sharply defined; except where some damages at the angles have been supplied with a plain coating of cement, executed with good taste and judgment. The upper arch is of considerable height, and the doorway is of sufficient width to afford easy access to the vestry, through a modern door.\*

Although this doorway has already suffered two removals yet it is remarkably well preserved. Each time it was removed stone by stone and re-erected. It originally formed the west entrance to the church of Trinity Priory—leading through the west gable—and its removal caused considerable damage to the gable, which it had adorned for many centuries. A number of stones displaying interlaced patterns are now scattered around the cemetery, and some of these stones seem to have belonged to ancient tombs.

The head of a large stone Crucifix belonging to the ancient church was discovered close to the church ruins in October, 1921.† The discovery of this ancient stone cross is of unique interest. The Cross is 18 inches high and is beautifully carved, front and back; it is of Celtic design and the circle is perfect, as is also the

\* *Lives of the Irish Saints*, vol. viii, p. 134.

† *Jour. Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. i, p. 192. The discovery was made by Very Rev. M. Comey, D.D., now P.P., V.F., Lurgan.



Figure. The left arm is intact but the right arm and top are broken off. As the Cross is much weathered it must have stood for centuries in the open beside the church. The shaft has not yet been discovered, but it is likely that future exploration will unearth it. Was this the Crucifix which Monsignor Massari saw in 1646? We cannot answer with certainty, but the probability is that it was.

A carved stone head, representing a young person, probably a female, was also discovered near the old church. It is life size and may have served as the top of a pillar. Over the main entrance to Bellananagh Catholic church, in Kilmore parish, are two carved heads representing mitred bishops or abbots. At least one of these carved figures is said to have been brought from Trinity Island.

O'Donovan visited Trinity Island in 1836 but, unfortunately, has left no record of the traditions of the time. He merely mentions that the people were then more inclined through force of circumstances to discuss the tyranny of a local despot, then scourging the Catholic population with a rod of iron, than to refer to the traditions of the place.\*

During the last century the greater portion of the walls of the ancient church was carried away by covetous hands and utilised for building elsewhere. This accounts for the disappearance of the east gable and the greater part of the side walls. The ancient tombs also suffered during this demolition. Stones suitable for building purposes were taken away and the rest were strewn about. Until the work of clearing the site is undertaken, the ivy removed from the walls, the remaining carved stones collected, and the debris removed from the floor of the church, it is impossible

\* *Ordnance Survey Letters*, Cavan; letter dated May 30, 1836.

to conjecture the number and variety of objects of ecclesiastical and antiquarian interest which still remain beside the ruined walls of this once great island sanctuary.

The graveyard has always been a favourite burial-place. At the south side is a large flat stone marking the grave of Rev. Michael O'Reilly, P.P., Kilmore. The inscription, which is much worn, and now barely legible, reads :—

Sacred to the Memory of the Revd. Michl. O'Reilly  
pastor of the parish of Kilmore for 33 years departed  
this life 1818 aged 80 years. Requiescat in pace, Amen.  
In the interior of the church, and just beside the  
western entrance, is an upright stone bearing the  
following inscription :—

Here Lyeth the Body  
of Hugh Maguire  
Who departed this life  
January ye 14th 1793  
Aged 19 years.

This stone also displays some curious carvings; a huntsman with bow and arrow is depicted in pursuit of a deer. Alongside is shown a fish. According to the local tradition this Hugh Maguire was a great sportsman and one day while hunting a deer his enthusiasm for the chase led him too far and he was drowned in the lake. He is shown on horseback and the fish is said to represent the lake. Such is the local interpretation of this otherwise inexplicable symbolism.

Outside the south wall of the church is a stone with the inscription :—

I beg ye pray for the  
Soul of Francis Murphy  
who erected this Monument  
Bridget Murphy alias  
Sheridan of Derewenew  
Died March 6th 1795 aged  
95 yrs.



A little to the south of the above is another stone inscribed as follows :—

This Stone erected  
by Arthur Sheridan  
in Memory of his  
Father William Sheridan who departed  
this life April ye 21  
1773 aged 50 years.

Some other inscribed monuments are to be found, but they are comparatively modern.

The cemetery is surrounded by a circular fosse, planted with tall whitethorns, above which the west gable, terminating in its belfry, is visible from every side. This fosse or enclosure seems to have served a twofold purpose ; it prevented the waters of the lake, which in early times, especially at high water level, must have extended up to the south-east boundary of the cemetery, from flooding the precincts of the church : it also afforded shelter from the cold winter winds blowing over the lake.

The tourist or archaeologist who visits Trinity Island will hear many traditions of the Priory related by the people. It is believed that at the time of the confiscation the sacred vessels belonging to the church were deposited in the lake to save them from sacrilegious hands. Standing beside the ruined walls of this once great Premonstratensian foundation the visitor cannot fail to appreciate the zeal and enthusiasm which inspired its 13th century founders. Around it the rich green fields still bear evidence of intensive cultivation in former times. In the neighbourhood of the church are some grassy mounds marking the foundations of some of the monastery buildings. This island sanctuary is approachable only by water, but the situation is very picturesque and will repay a visit. On a clear day the journey by boat over the winding waters of Loch Uachtair is a pleasant experience and the varied

scenery of the Breiffne lakes passes in review. Kilmore, Loch Uachtair Castle, and Slanore are within easy reach. The ruins and broken monuments of the Premonstratensian Priory are redolent of its glories in the days when the sceptre had not yet passed away from Breiffne and when Trinity Island was the *Insula Sanctorum* of Kilmore.



## CHAPTER XII

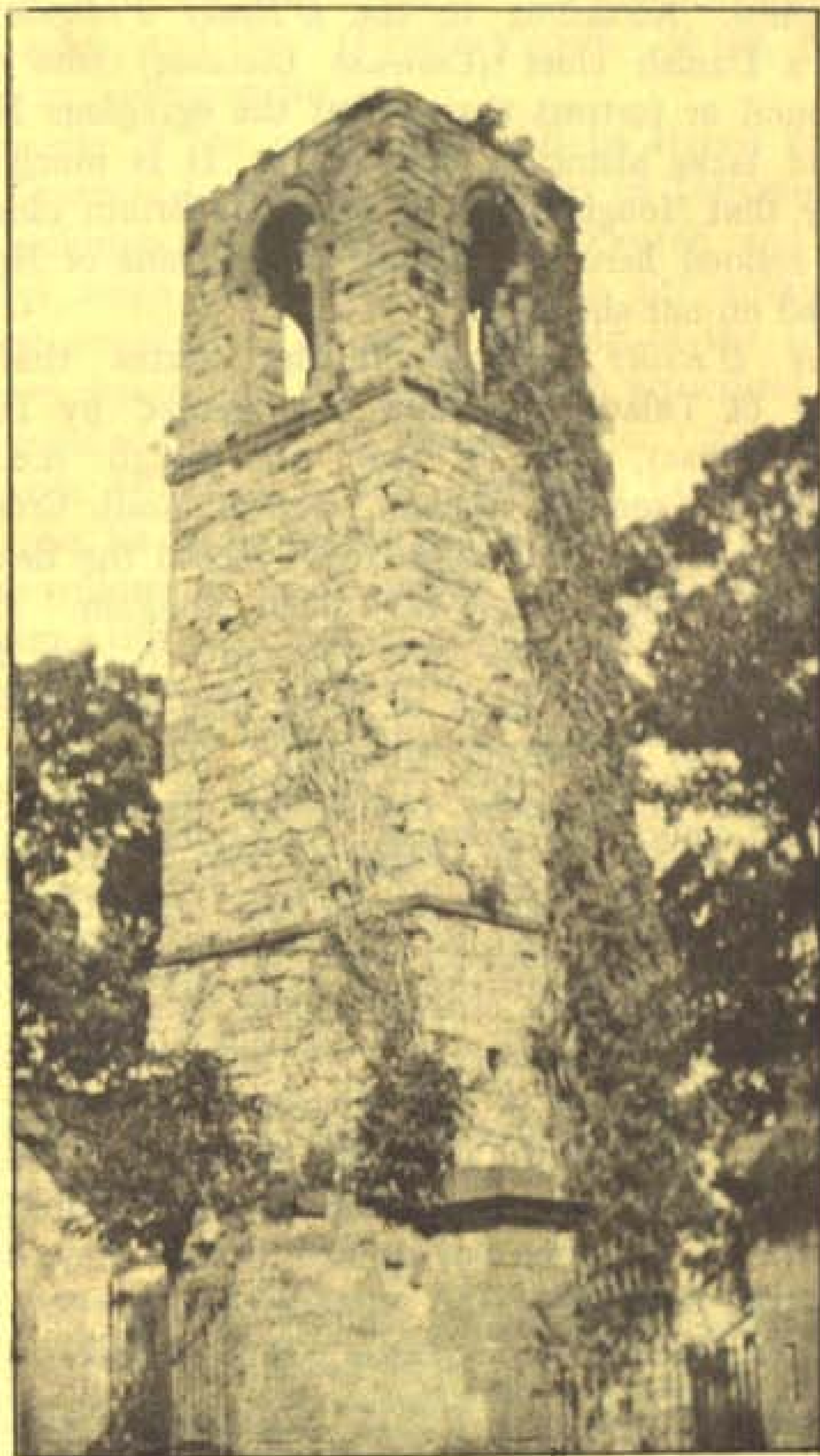
## THE FRANCISCANS IN KILMORE.

## THE MONASTERY OF ST. MARY'S, CAVAN.

(Founded A.D. 1300.)

THE Franciscan monastery of St. Mary's, the square tower of which is a conspicuous object rising near the centre of the town of Cavan, was for three centuries a flourishing ecclesiastical foundation, which played a foremost part in the religious life of the diocese. This ancient bell-tower, covered with a thick growth of ivy and surrounded by a cemetery now rarely used, is all that survives of Breiffne's once great Franciscan monastery. The history of the monastery is very closely interwoven with that of the Castle of Tullymongan and its chieftains, the O'Reillys, and with the growth of the town of Cavan itself ; hence, to elucidate its history, it will be necessary to describe briefly the foundation of Tullymongan and to follow with the succession of its chieftains. It may be said with truth that the history of the monastery is parallel with that of the castle ; it shared in its triumphs and vicissitudes and finally shared in its ruin and confiscation.

East of the present town, on the summit of the hill of Tullymongan, stood in early times an important fortress of the Ui-Briuin race. On the site of this fortress the O'Reillys, about the thirteenth century, erected a strong castle, which became the residence of the ruling family of East Breiffne. Tullymongan was therefore, from very early times, an important princely seat. Regarding the origin of the name *Tulac Mongain*



TOWER OF CAVAN FRANCISCAN MONASTERY

(*Tulach Monghain*), which means Monghan's Hill, nothing definite can now be ascertained. That the second part of the name is personal is quite clear, but the identity of Monghan is veiled in the mists of



antiquity. According to the *O'Reilly Pedigree*\* he was a Danish chief (Taoiseach Lochlanach) who raised a mound or fortress there; but the egregious Danish legend lacks historical probability. It is much more likely that Monghan was an early Ui Briuin chieftain, who resided here long before either Dane or Norman landed on our shores.

The *O'Reilly Pedigree* further states that the Castle of Tulach Monghain was erected by Turlogh (Toirdealbhac), son of Sean an Einigh (i.e., the hospitable), son of Eoghan, son of Aodh Crosaidh. But the *Annals*, sub anno 1487, record the death of Turlogh in the "Castle of Tulach Mongain" and an earlier entry sub anno 1400 (or 1401 in the *Annals of Ulster*) has the death of John, son of Philip, "in his own bed in Tulach Mongain." The castle must have been in existence before the time of Turlogh and the entry in the *Pedigree* may have reference to repairs or restorations due to him. Had Giolla Iosa Ruadh been the founder such an important event would scarcely have escaped notice, so it must have been already in existence. We may infer that the castle was erected in the thirteenth century. From the year 1400 onward there are many references to it in the *Annals*. Cavan was then a place of purely local importance, the name was applied to the valley through which the river runs, and viewed from the heights of Tullymongan the name (Cabadan, a hollow place) was an

\* This is the MS. H. 1. 15, T. C. D. According to O'Donovan the manuscript was transcribed by a Philip MacBrady in 1736. It is entitled "Extracts from the Chronicals and Histories of the Kingdom of Ireland concerning the antiquity and rank (respectability) of the Cearbhallachs or MacBradys, where their pedigree, from Dr. Hugh MacBrady to Milesius, King of Spain, is given; written originally in Latin at Louvain by Boethius Oge (the son of Boethius Roe) MacEgan, a Friar of the Order of St. Francis, and by Patrick Hackett, a Friar of the Order of St. Dominic." The manuscript is in Gaelic and seems to be based on oral tradition. Dates are rarely inserted, which minimises the value of the work. The Pedigree of Count O'Reilly of Spain, compiled by Chevalier Thomas O'Gorman seems to have been based on this manuscript.

apt one. The castle was the nucleus around which the town arose, and the "O'Reilly's town" of the *Annals* refers to Tullymongan.

The site of the castle may still be traced on the Fair Green of Cavan, on the summit of Tullymongan. The buildings have long since disappeared, and even in 1836, when O'Donovan visited the site, nothing of interest remained. Traces of the ring of the ancient rath are discernible, but all the earth structures have been levelled.\* The hill was in former times known as Castle Hill and is now sometimes called Gallows Hill from its being in the eighteenth century the site of the gallows on which public executions took place, sometimes for very trivial crimes. From the site of the castle there is an extensive view of the surrounding countryside. To the north, in Castletara parish, rises the mountain of Shantemon (*Sean Tuimin*) † on which the O'Reilly princes were inaugurated. Some remnants of a Stone Circle are on the summit of Shantemon.

The local topography will be understood more clearly from a description of the boundaries of the older parishes of Urney and Annaghgeliffe.‡ The townland of Tullymongan, over which portion of the town of Cavan extends, is in the parish of Annaghgeliffe. The older parish church of Annaghgeliffe § was in the townland

\* A Bronze Coin of the Roman Empire, time of Diocletian (284-305 A.D.), was unearthed during excavations near the castle site about 1922. On the obverse is a head, and the reverse has a figure of Fortune. According to Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary* (1837) considerable quantities of human bones have been unearthed on the hillside. These may have belonged to a century earlier, when public executions were the order of the day.

† The *O'Reilly Pedigree* has *Seantuinin*, the etymology of which is not quite clear. The first part of the word is certainly *Sean*, i.e. old. *Tuimin* may be a derivative of *Tuam*, a tumulus or burial mound.

‡ This name does not appear to be of ecclesiastical origin. The Gaelic form is *Eanácl Saitib*, which is usually interpreted as "the marsh of the storm."

§ O'Donovan made inquiries in the Parish during his Ordnance Survey itinerary in 1836 but was unable to discover the Patron of the church.



of the same name, on the summit of a hill, about a mile south-east of Tullymongan. Its outline may still be traced. In the thirteenth century the parochial boundaries of Annaghgeliffe can hardly have been different from those of to-day. On the west of Annaghgeliffe is Urney parish, the older church of which lies near the village of Butlersbridge, and about five miles west of Cavan. The boundary line between these parishes passes about the centre of Cavan town, which is therefore divided between the two parishes. The dividing line will be easily followed when it is known that the townlands of Drumavanagh, Lurganboy, and Kinny-pottle are in Urney, while Tirquin, Killynebber, and Tullymongan are in Annaghgeliffe. In the seventeenth century the parishes were ecclesiastically united.

The Castle of Tullymongan, the seat of the ruling house of Breiffne, was situated on the western fringe of Annaghgeliffe, adjoining Urney. Annaghgeliffe was the parish church and was endowed by the chieftains of Tullymongan. In the sixteenth century, when the power of the O'Reillys was weakening, the church of Annaghgeliffe declined in importance. The rise of Cavan monastery heralded the decline of Annaghgeliffe. This is evident from contemporary records. The *Inquisition* which was held at Cavan in 1590 found that the parish church of "Annaghgalve" was possessed of only half a poll, or carton, of termon land, valued at six pence per annum, whereas the church of "Urnye" possessed of three polls, was valued at three shillings. These returns of the comparative values of the churches show that the close of the sixteenth century found Urney endowed with a wealth six times greater than that of Annaghgeliffe and the latter was already reduced to a mere shadow of its former importance.

The Abbey of Cavan was founded in the year 1300 by Giolla Iosa Ruadh O'Reilly, king of Breiffne, who presented the site together with a liberal grant of the

surrounding lands. Giolla Iosa,\* surnamed the Red, lived in the Castle of Tullymongan and was one of the most enlightened chieftains of his time. Authorities are unanimous in ascribing the foundation of the monastery to the year 1300. According to Ware : "Cavan fundatus per Gelasium Rufum O'Rialy." † But conflicting opinions have been expressed regarding the question of whether it was founded for the Franciscans or Dominicans. Archdall expresses the usually accepted historical belief that :—

[The Cavan] Monastery of the Virgin Mary was founded in the year 1300 by Giolla Iosa Ruadh O'Reilly, dynast of Breffny, for friars of the Order of St. Dominick ; but the same sept of the O'Reillys, about the year 1393, expelled the Dominicans and gave the house to the conventual Franciscans.‡

For the first part of this statement Archdall refers to Bishop Burke's classic work, the *Hibernia Dominicana* (p. 287). However, it may be pointed out that the learned author of the *Hibernia Dominicana* relies for his statement on tradition alone, and produces no higher authority to substantiate it. We cannot, therefore, accept Archdall's authority as satisfactorily settling the point. Ware, in his *Antiquities*, has no reference to Dominicans.

In a list of Irish Franciscan monasteries enumerated by Friar John Clyn in 1331 we find "Breffinia," which obviously refers to the Cavan foundation.§ This is conclusive evidence that thirty years after its foundation the monastery was Franciscan.

Confirmatory evidence is forthcoming from the

\* Literally "Servant of Christ"—a very common Christian name among the O'Reillys in those days.

† Harris-Ware, *Antiq.* 279 (MS. Add. 4821, f. 104).

‡ *Monasticon Hibernicum*, p. 40.

§ *Annals of Ireland by Friar John Clyn* (ed. Butler, Dublin, 1849), p. 39.



*O'Reilly Pedigree*, an old Irish manuscript, which has the following entry :—

The Monastery of Cavan [was founded] by Giolla Iosa Ruadh—anno 1300—for the Friars of St. Francis.\*

Thirty years later Giolla Iosa Ruadh died and was interred, according to the Annalists,

in the Abbey of the Friars Minor in Cavan of which he himself was the original founder.†

The Annals have no mention of Cavan as a Dominican foundation, nor is there any reference to the Franciscans having replaced the Dominicans at any period. Such an event, had it taken place, would hardly have entirely escaped the notices of the early ecclesiastical writers. But we need not rely on purely negative evidence alone; the entry in the *O'Reilly Pedigree* and Friar Clyn's reference in 1331 establish conclusively the Franciscan origin of the monastery. It is, therefore, manifest that the tradition of the *Hibernia Dominicana*, a work of great value and a record of deep research, cannot be accepted. The Annalists have a record of the chief events in the history of the monastery and would hardly have neglected to record such a transfer had it ever taken place. It is unreasonable to suppose that Giolla Iosa Ruadh should, during his lifetime, have consented without some very grave reason to expel the Dominicans and transfer their property; and history fails to produce any such reason, or to show that such an event ever did take place.

A chronological list of the foundations of the Irish Franciscan Province, compiled by the learned Brother Michael O'Cleirigh, one of the Four Masters, who died at Louvain in 1643, has the following entry, A.D., 1300, regarding the foundation of Cavan Monastery :

Máistir Cíán an Cábáin, in earpuccóiríocht Cille móire

\* MSS. H.I., 15, T. C. D.

† *Four Masters*.

DO CÓGDAIL DO BRÁICRÍO SAN FROIMÉIR LA NÁA  
RAIGALLAIGH.\*

This statement, that the foundation was Franciscan, on the authority of such an eminent historian may be accepted as decisive.

It would now be scarcely possible to trace the origin of the Dominican tradition recorded by Bishop Burke. But the evidence is all against it. Father Luke Wadding, O.F.M., the Franciscan historian, mentions the Cavan house in a list of Irish Franciscan foundations *sub anno* 1393.† He does not mention Dominicans and the entry implies that the house was already established as a Franciscan monastery before that year.

The date of the introduction of the Franciscan Friars into Ireland may be ascribed to the period 1214-1232.‡ Political factors, following in the wake of the Anglo-Norman Invasion, seriously affected ecclesiastical life in the Ireland of mediaeval times. Fifty years after the Anglo-Norman bid for conquest, when the Friars arrived in Ireland, they were faced with conditions of strife and unrest. The principal towns and cities were in Anglo-Norman hands, and the Irish "natives" were being treated with contumely. In those towns and cities where Franciscan foundations had been established there was, as one would naturally expect, a predominance of Anglo-Irish Friars. These racial differences were inevitable, but did not prevent the spread of the Order; by 1325 no less than thirty-two monasteries had been established. Each monastery had its patron—the founder or his descendants—who

\* Brussels MS. 3410: *Analecta Hibernica*, vi.

† *Annales Minorum*, IX, 121.

‡ The activities of the early Franciscans in Ireland are detailed by the Rev. Gregory Cleary, O.F.M., J.U.D., in a series of very informative articles in *Studies* (Dublin)—December, 1926; March, 1927; September, 1927. I am indebted to Rev. Dr. Cleary for his great kindness in furnishing me with some valuable notes on Irish Franciscan history, a subject on which he is a leading authority.



built the church and monastery and contributed to its support.

Owing to the peculiar circumstances of the times the Order first developed in Ireland in the Anglo-Norman centres. At first the Irish Friars were in a minority, but with the rise of the great Irish families, like the O'Reillys and the O'Neills, their number increased, owing to the large numbers of foundations established in purely Irish territories. By the fifteenth century the Irish Friars were the more numerous and influential of the Irish Province.\* But in the fourteenth century the racial differences had been very marked. Friar Clyn, in his Annals, *sub anno* 1325, observes that at a General Chapter of the Order, held at Lyons in that year, several monasteries in Munster (Cork, Limerick, Buttevant, etc.) were taken from the Irish Friars and handed over to the English Friars. But the Monastery of Cavan, at the same period, is included in a list of those essentially Irish in their composition. From its foundation until its dissolution in the seventeenth century it remained under the patronage and protection of the O'Reillys.

In the early years of the fourteenth century the hill of Tullymongan, as already described, was crowned with the O'Reilly castle, which stood like a sentinel over the surrounding district. To the north-east lay the fertile low-lying plain called Cavan on account of its configuration. This plain, where the present town is situated, was granted to the monastery by Giolla Iosa Ruadh, and a handsome church soon adorned the landscape. The little river flowing through the monastery land supplied the community with fish. Here, as elsewhere in Ireland, the proximity of a river was an

\* See *Materials for the History of the Franciscan Province of Ireland*, A.D. 1230-1450. Collected and Edited by the late Father E. B. Fitzmaurice, O.F.M., and A. G. Little. (Manchester University Press, 1920.) This valuable work is replete with much research.

important consideration in determining a monastery site. The monastery lands extended from Tullymongan to Keadew, including the present Kinnypottle and Drumavanagh. It is interesting to note the derivation of the last named townland—Drumavanagh, which is *Drum a'manaigh*, i.e., the ridge of the monk. In this townland, which is to the west of the town, tradition points out the "Friars' Walk," leading to the "Friars' Well"; the 1609 map has "Dromavana," which is the form appearing in the older lists.

On the 1609 map of Cavan both the old castle of the O'Reillys and the monastery church are marked in the townland of "Tollomoan" (i.e., Tullymongan). The same map shows, in the space between "Tollomoan" and "Nakadiue" (Keadew), a division marked "Themore," now obsolete. The meaning of this is obvious: *Ṭig mór*, i.e., great house, and seems to have taken its name from the reception house attached to the monastery. This obsolete division which appears to have extended over the present Kinnypottle is now partly occupied by the northern end of the present town.\* On a map of Cavan, published in connection with the Reports and plans on Municipal Corporation Boundaries (Ireland), 1837, the site of O'Reilly's castle is marked off Bridge Street. The explanation seems to be this: that after the dissolution of the monastery the O'Reillys claimed ownership of the buildings in order to save them from confiscation. In this way the residential part of the monastery would become known as "O'Reilly's Castle." But the "Great House," dating from the foundation of the monastery, was obviously the building which served as a reception house, and which, no doubt, justified the title engraven on our early maps.

The town of Cavan began to expand during the

\* See *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. iii, p. 180. 1927-28.



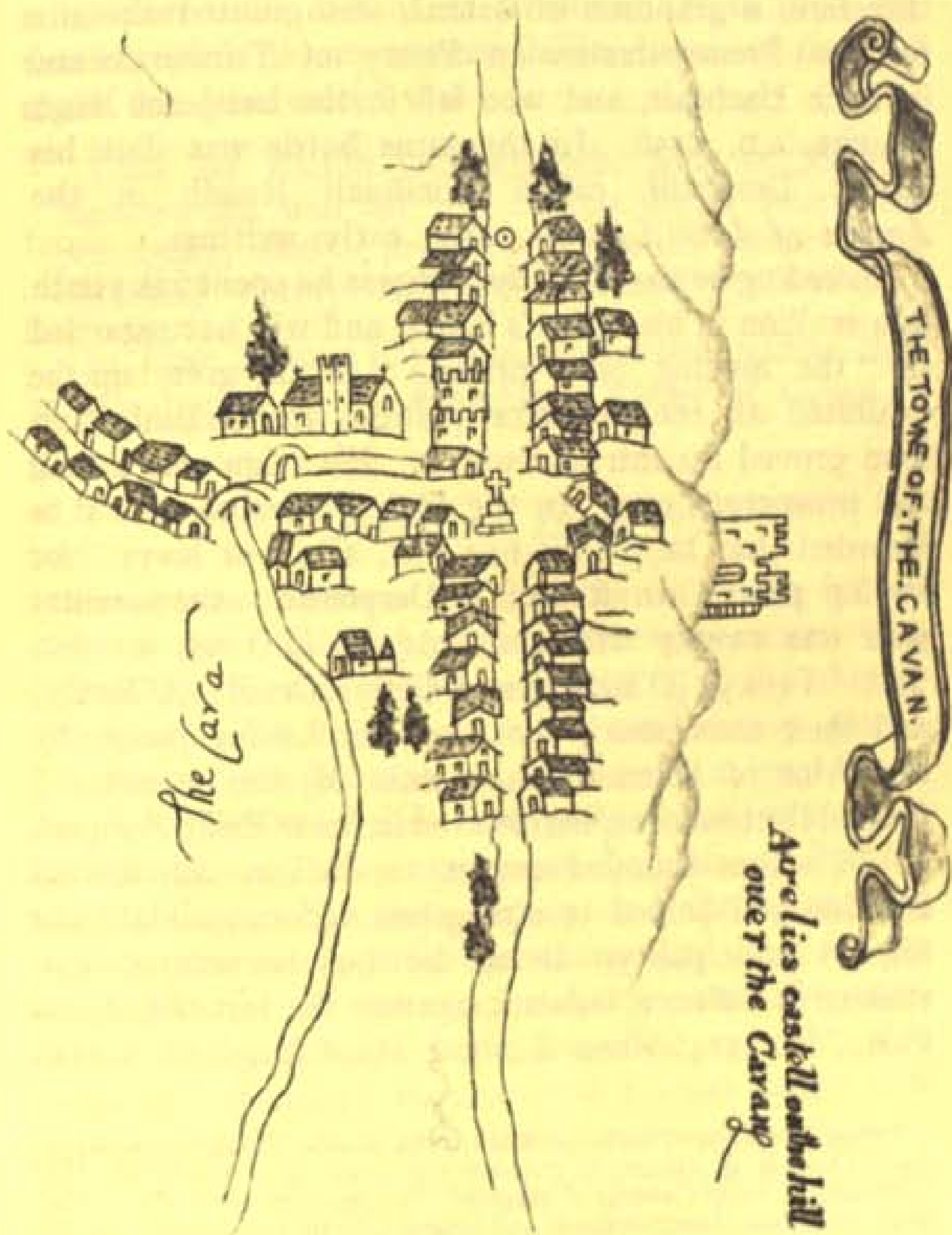
seventeenth century and gradually encroached on the monastery lands. Ancient landmarks were all obliterated and it is not now possible to locate the sites of the monastery buildings. But the records of the centuries following its foundation show that for a period of three hundred years it played an important part in the ecclesiastical life of Breiffne. The lands on which the town is built are still known as "Abbey Lands."

A map of "The Towne of the Cavan," made about 1593 and preserved among the State Papers of the time, shows "Aurelie's (i.e., O'Reilly's) Castell on the hill over the Cavan." In the centre of the town is depicted a Cross, evidently a Market Cross, and a Bull Ring. The Cross has long since disappeared, and whether it was a plain Cross or one richly carved cannot now be known. The map shows the church and tower, and the Franciscan monastery, and the tower was apparently the same as it remains to-day.\*

### THE FOUNDER OF THE MONASTERY

Having reviewed the chief facts relating to the history of the foundation of the monastery a brief reference to the career of its founder is relevant. Giolla Iosa Ruadh O'Reilly lived in the Castle of Tullymongan and was an important personage in the Breiffne of the early fourteenth century. According to the *O'Reilly Pedigree* his father was Domhnall Mór,

\* The accompanying reproduction is, by kind permission, from a copy in the possession of Mr. William H. Clarke, Cavan, and is reduced  $\frac{1}{2}$  original size. The map has no scale indicated. Underneath is the following inscription: "Taken from a map in the State Paper Office Intitled [sic]—*Cloneys* [Clones] *An Abbey in McMahon's* [Mac Mahon's] *Country and the Country from Cavan to the Sea by Lough Earne in Ireland. Circa 1593. F. Netherclift fecit.*" In the copy the roofs of the church and houses are shaded in red.



MAP OF CAVAN TOWN CIRCA 1593



and his mother belonged to the family of Maguillseanain.\* This agrees with the pedigree compiled by O'Cleirigh, which states that Giolla Iosa Ruadh was son of Domnaill, son of Cathal, son of Andaidh. He was, therefore, a grandson of Cathal, who granted the site for the Premonstratensian Priory of Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair, and who fell in the battle of Magh Sleacht, A.D. 1256. In the same battle was slain his father, Domnaill, called Domhnall Ruadh in the *Annals of Loch Cé* and other early writings.

According to the *O'Reilly Pedigree* he spent his youth as a scullion in his father's house, and was not regarded as "the making of a prince." As he grew up he exhibited all the requisite qualities for kingship and soon proved his intrinsic worth. His reign was a long and prosperous one. In the *State Papers* of 1292 it is recorded that he paid a fine (i.e., a tax or levy) "for having peace" to Robert le Despenser; the amount paid was twenty shillings.† Again, in 1295, we find that "Ferwyl [O'Reilly] and Gyllys Orailly [O'Reilly] and their associates [were fined] for having peace, by the Prior of Kilmainham [a sum of] ten pounds," ‡ He had thirteen sons, enumerated in the *O'Reilly Pedigree*, all of whom founded castles in various districts of Breiffne and helped to strengthen and consolidate the ancient principality. Before he died he succeeded in making Breiffne a bulwark against the inroads of the Pale. In 1314, when Edward II of England sought

\* MAG UINSEANAIN, now Gilsenan, one of the Breiffne clans. In 1507 (*Annals of Ulster*) is entered the death of Feidhlimidh Mag Uinsennain, Vicar General of Raphoe, "an eminent cleric and person that was most conscientious and charitable in his time." In the *Fiants* of Eliz., *sub anno* 1586, there is a record of Owen McGilsenan and Ferrall McGilsenan of Tollemogane (Tullymongan). Several families of the name were then living in the Barony of Clankee, according to the *Fiants* of 1586. In Breiffne the name has, in some cases, been anglicised "Nugent."

† Sweetman, *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland* (1285-1292), p. 514.

‡ *Op cit.* (1293-1301), p. 115.

the aid of the Irish chieftains in his enterprises, he directed a special letter to "Gillys O'Raghli Duci Hibernorum de Brefney." But it is as the founder of St. Mary's Abbey of Cavan that his name is best remembered. He died at an advanced age in 1330 and was buried in the monastery. The *Annals of Loch Cé* under this year record that :—

Gilla Isa Ruadh O'Raighilligh, King of Muintir Maolmordha and all the Breifne for a long time previously, died a prosperous, wealthy senior, after obtaining victory over the devil and the world.

The *Four Masters* have a similar notice, adding that he was buried in the Franciscan Abbey of Cavan.

#### THE MONASTERY AFTER 1330.

The monastery now became the favourite burial-place of the O'Reillys and successive generations were laid to rest in the immediate precincts of the church, where splendid tombs marked their resting places. For three centuries afterwards we have a long list of distinguished chieftains and ecclesiastics who were buried there. Hence this great Valhalla of Breifne was held in the greatest respect, and the Friars who were in charge continued to enlarge and improve the buildings. Its monuments, numerous and elaborate, did credit to the sculptor's art. The cemetery surrounding the church then covered a much larger area than at present. In later times, as the town gradually increased in size, the sacred precincts were encroached upon, leaving only a comparatively small area.

In 1330 Cu-Connacht O'Reilly, son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh, succeeded to the kingship of Breifne, and the monastery found in him a generous patron. During his reign the monastery continued to increase in importance, and in 1365, the *Annalists* tell us, "he



went into the Friars of his own free will." Two years later, in 1367, he died and was laid to rest beside his father in the monastery church. In the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, is preserved a Seal Matrix which, no doubt, belonged to this chieftain. It is described as a Seal Matrix with screw-out centre, and the following account of it has appeared in the *Antiquaries' Journal*, London (Vol. iv, p. 414), from the pen of Mr. H. S. Kingsford :—

Since the publication of my notes in the July number of this Journal [p. 249], Mr. H. P. Mitchell, Keeper of the Department of Metalwork in the Victoria and Albert Museum, has kindly drawn my attention to another example of this class of matrix which is preserved in that museum. It is of silver, and measures one inch in diameter. Unfortunately the centre piece has been lost, the legend alone remaining. This is in Lombardic capitals, and appears to read :—

✠ S. CONCONHACHT ORA GILLICI.

but so far it has evaded interpretation. The matrix is clearly of the first half of the fourteenth century.

In its semi-Gaelic form the legend may not be immediately intelligible, but when arranged in separate Gaelic words it reads: "S. Con Connacht O Raghallaigh," which may be translated "The Seal of Cu-Connacht O'Raghallaigh." There were other O'Reilly chieftains of the same name, but the son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh was the most prominent of them and we may conclude that this was his Seal. The opinion of experts that it belongs to the early fourteenth century is decisive. Like many other objects of its type its history cannot now be ascertained.

Philip, brother of Cu-Connacht, succeeded to the kingship in 1365, and died in 1384. The next ruler

of Breiffne, Thomas O'Reilly,\* died in 1390, "with victory of Uinction and penance," and was succeeded by John, son of Philip. The closing years of the fourteenth century found the monastery in a very flourishing condition, and each succeeding generation of its princely founders added to its magnificence. Its church, containing the tombs of its benefactors, must have been a splendid edifice in those days.

In 1400 Domhnall, son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh, died and was buried there. John,† a grandson of Giolla Iosa Ruadh, ruled over Breiffne for a period of eleven years and died towards the end of 1401. The *Annals of Ulster*, A.D. 1401, have it that:—

John, son of Philip, son of Giolla Iosa Ua Raighil-laigh, the Red, namely, king of Breifne, to wit, a man of generosity and prowess and who upheld his own dignity, died of a fit in his own bed in Tulach Mongain and was buried the same night in Cavan. A week over a month before the Nativity [Dec. 25] that [happened].

The next ruler of Breiffne, Maolmordha, son of Cu-Connacht, son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh, died in 1411. Richard, i.e., "Richard Oge, Lord of Clanmahon and Breiffne," as he is styled in the *O'Reilly Pedigree*, the son of Thomas, son of Mathgamain, son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh, then succeeded to the lordship of Breiffne. Richard was drowned in 1418 in Loch Sheelin (Loc Sígleann) where he "went in a cot" to meet Foreigners. The accident is described by the *Annalists*, and is also mentioned in the *O'Reilly Pedigree*. Among those who

\* This Thomas was son of Mathgamain, son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh, as appears from the *obit* in the *Annals of Loch Cé*. This is confirmed by the entry in the *Annals of Ulster* sub anno 1418 (*infra*). The Barony of Clanmahon (CLANN MAÉĠAMAIN) is called after Mathgamain.

† His son, Concubor, "a man of hospitality and prowess" (*Annals of Ulster*), died in 1436. Another son, Feidhlimidh, was treacherously captured at Trim in 1447 by Sir John Talbot, and died there of plague towards the close of the same year. He was buried in the monastery of the Friars (probably Franciscan) at Trim.



were drowned were Eoghan, son of Richard, and Philip O'Reilly, Dean of Drumlane and Vicar of Annagh. The sole survivor was the wife of Richard, Finnguala daughter of Mag Raghnaill, who was evidently a powerful swimmer and managed to regain the shore. The *Pedigree* adds that Ruaidhrigh (Rory), a son of Richard Oge, afterwards possessed the barony of Clanmahon.

On the death of Richard the kingship of Breiffne passed into the possession of Eoghan, son of John, son of Philip, son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh. He is usually known as Eoghan na Feasoige (i.e., the bearded) and was, says the *Pedigree* "the right and lawful lord."

The reign of Eoghan coincided with a period of warfare which had serious effects in Breiffne. In 1429 there were somewhat strained relations between the O'Rourkes and O'Reillys, and the English of the Pale, taking advantage of this, attacked the town of Cavan—the *Town of O'Raighilligh* the *Annalists* call it—and plundered and burned it. The monastery shared the same fate as the town. O'Reilly determined that the excesses of the invaders should not go unpunished, and he called to his aid the O'Neills of Tyrone, with the chieftains of Oirghialla and Fermanagh, and marched against the army of the Pale. A battle was fought at *Achadh-cille-moire* \* in which the O'Reillys and their allies were triumphant. Those who fell during the raid on Cavan, together with those who were killed in the last-named battle, were buried beside Cavan monastery. In 1421 died Thomas Oge, son of Eoghan, and was also buried there. Eoghan O'Reilly proved himself a generous benefactor of the monastery, and

\* This place appears to be identical with the *Clochan Cille Moire* one of the boundaries of Clanmahon mentioned by the *O'Reilly Pedigree*. It has been equated with the townland of Aghakillmore in Ballymac-hugh Parish. Both the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Four Masters* agree on the form of the name, but *Achadh Coille Moire*, i.e. the field of the big wood, seems more probable. The 1609 map has "Aghtkillmor" and the *Down Survey* "Agheekillmore."

on his death in 1449 he was laid to rest there alongside his predecessors. His *obit* is thus recorded in the *Annals of Ulster* in that year:—

Eoghan, son of John Ua Raighilligh, namely, king of the two Breifne, died this year about the feast of St. Patrick: to wit, a man that completely defended his territories against their neighbours. He died with victory of penance and was buried in the monastery of Cavan.

In the *Register* of Primate Swayne of Armagh is a Charter of Donat,\* Bishop of Kilmore, dated September, 1438, appointing Nicholas O'Farrelly, Clerk, Coarb of the church of St. Mogue of Drumlane, and principal Herenach of all the lands of the sept of Munter-Farrally (*omnium terrarum nationis de Muntyrfareallaich*). The Charter is dated from the "Cemetery of the House of the Friars Minor of Cavan, of the diocese aforesaid."—*Triburnia*, i.e., Kilmore (*in cemiterio domus fratrum Minorum de Cavan antedictae Diocesis*).†

On the death of Eoghan in 1449 rival kings established themselves in Breiffne, viz., John, son of Eoghan, who had the support of the native chieftains and Ferghal, son of Thomas Mor, who was supported by the Foreigners of the Pale and by a few minor septs of the O'Reillys who were jealous of the power of the house of Tullymongan. However, in the following year peace was made between the rival sections and John, son of Eoghan, assumed the kingship of Breiffne, to which he was justly entitled.

In 1451 the Monastery of Cavan was again burned to the ground, this time through the carelessness of a

\* Donatus O'Gowan, who was Bishop of Kilmore from 1421 until his resignation in 1444.

† *Acts of Archbishop Colton*, 1397, edited by Reeves, Ir. Arch. Soc., 1850, p. 26, note, from *Register of Swayne*. See also *King's Early History of the Primacy of Armagh*, p. 37.



Friar, *Ua Mothlain* by name. The circumstances are described by the *Annals of Ulster* :—

The candle he took with him to his chamber was left lighting and he himself fell asleep and the chamber took fire and the whole monastery afterwards.

The *Annalist* severely censures the friar O'Mothlain for his carelessness and neglect and even suggests his being inebriated ; but such an accident was not an uncommon one in those days, when candles were of a crude type, and owing to their unwieldly dimensions very liable to overturn.\*

During the reign of John O'Reilly the monastery was rebuilt and a complete restoration effected. The reign of John was cut short by his death in battle against the English in 1460, after occupying the kingship for ten years.† According to the *Annalists* the *O'Reillys* suffered great defeat in this year. Aedh, brother of John, was killed, together with Eoghan, son of Mathgamain MacCabe. The popular grief at the passing of John is manifested by the *Annals of Ulster*.

And there came, not since the death of Cathal Crobh-derg Ua Conchobhair ‡ a tale respecting a Connacian that was greater than that tale, namely, [respecting] John, son of Eogan, son of John, son of Philip, son of Gilla-Isa Ua Raighilligh the Red. And Ireland all was full of grief for that king of the two Breifne and the [bardic] bands and pilgrims and poor mendicants of Ireland were grieved after him and after his brother, namely, Aedh Ua Raighilligh.

The victims of this warfare were buried beside the monastery church. The MacCaves, who were the

\* The incident is referred to as follows in one of the manuscripts of Chevalier O'Gorman, as a quotation from the *Annals* : " The Abbey of Cavan was burned by the Friar O'Mothlain at night while he read his prayers with a candle."—*The Genealogy and Spreading Branches of the House of O'Reilly*, MS. 24 D. 7. R.I.A.

† His son, Ferghal, died in 1474.

‡ Obit 1224.

Constables (i.e., leaders of the gallowglasses) of Breiffne, were the faithful adherents of the O'Reillys, and the records tell us that they, too, found a resting-place in the monastery. In the same year (1460) Henry MacCabe, Constable of Breiffne, died in County Longford \* and was accorded a military funeral in Cavan. "There was," says an old record, "the number of 280 axes,† or more, about him going to his burial."

Cathal O'Reilly succeeded his brother John in the kingship of Breiffne in 1460. After a reign of seven years he died in 1467 and was succeeded ‡ in turn by his nephew Toirdelbach (Latinised *Terence*), son of John. The reign of Toirdelbach was an uneasy one. In 1468 Cavan was invaded by the English under John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, and both the monastery of St. Mary's and the Castle of Tullymongan were given to the flames. This great disaster is recorded by the *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno, 1468 :—

The town of Ua Raighilligh and the monastery of Cavan were burned this year by the Foreigners and by the Saxon Earl [i.e., Tiptoft] by whom the Earl of Desmond was beheaded.§

Undeterred by this catastrophe Toirdelbach O'Reilly soon restored the monastery and the Friars continued their labours. Tullymongan Castle was rebuilt and considerably strengthened. In 1480 Thomas Mag Uidhir (Maguire), a scion of the great Fermanagh clan, died and was buried by his own request in the monastery

\* At *Lisardaula*, now Lisardowlin, three miles west of Longford town.

† The battle axe is prominent on the Coats of Arms of all branches of the McCabe family. Some splendid examples are to be seen on monumental slabs in Killinkere, Lavey, Kildrumsherdan and elsewhere. The motto is *Aut vincere aut mori* (i.e., to conquer or to die).

‡ In 1468 according to the *Four Masters*.

§ Thomas, Eighth Earl of Desmond, was treacherously slain at Drogheda in the early part of 1468.



of Cavan. The *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 1480, relate that :—

Mag Uidhir died this year, namely, Thomas junior, son of Thomas Mor, son of Philip, son of Aedh the Red : to wit, a man who was of the greatest charity and piety and hospitality that was in his own time and a man that defended his territory against its neighbours and a man that made churches and monasteries and Mass chalices and was [once] in Rome and twice at the city of St. James\* on his pilgrimage. And full were Ireland and Scotland of the fame of that Thomas. And he was buried in the monastery of Cavan, having chosen to be buried in it.

Toirdelbach reigned for a period of twenty years and “ died of a fit in his own castle in Tulach Mongain,” on September 1st, 1487. He was buried in Cavan monastery with all the honours befitting his rank. The restoration of the monastery after its destruction in 1468 was one of the greatest achievements of his reign.

John O'Reilly, son of Toirdelbach, was the next king of Breiffne and succeeded two weeks after his father's death. In 1489 a plague of much virulence swept Ireland and the *Annals* show that the O'Reillys suffered much from its ravages. The reign of John was a short one, for he died in November, 1491. His death is thus recorded in the *Annals of Ulster*.

\* Compostella in Spain, then a well known place of pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James. In August 1428 Aedh, son of Philip Maguire, died at Kinsale on his return journey from Compostella. According to the narrative in the *Annals of Ulster* he was accompanied by Thomas, Junior, who brought his body to Cork and had it interred there. This was, most likely, the first journey made by Thomas to Compostella. In the Middle Ages Compostella was second only to Rome as a place of pilgrimage from Ireland, as shown by the frequent references to it in our literature. The Christian name James (under its Gaelicised form Séamur) was introduced into Ireland through the influence of these pilgrimages. The troubles of the Reformation brought to an end the pilgrimages from Ireland to Compostella.

Ua Raighilligh, namely, John, son of Toirdelbach, son of John Ua Raighilligh, to wit, a distinguished youth, died this year in the beginning of his felicity [i.e., in the beginning of his reign] and was buried in the monastery of Cavan, the 25th day of the month of November, namely, the feast day of St. Catherine.

John, son of Cathal, son of Eoghan O'Reilly, next assumed the kingship of Breiffne. But his right was vigorously challenged by Cathal,\* son of Toirdelbach, who called in the Earl of Kildare as an ally. However, John had the full support of the native chieftains and he managed to maintain his authority. His reign was a prosperous one. In 1494 he helped to rid Breiffne of a large force of English marauders, many of whom were slain. The Castle of Tullymongan, which had been in possession of Cathal, was retaken by John in the summer of 1495.

The reign of John witnessed a notable event in the history of Cavan monastery. In 1502 the Friars Minor of Stricter Observance were introduced and supplanted the Conventuals who had, hitherto, been in possession. The monastery then entered on a new phase of its religious life. The *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 1502, record that :—

The monastery of Cavan was negotiated from Rome this year by O'Raighilligh, namely, by John, son of Cathal O'Raighilligh, to the Friars of [Stricter] Observance against the Friars of Common Life [i.e. the Conventuals].

The history of the origin and development of these branches of the Franciscan Order is too complicated for discussion here.† Conventualism indicated fixity of abode, and the term was applied at first to all

\* He died in 1497 of an "attack of the glandular disease" according to the *Annals of Ulster*.

† *Vide* Fitzmaurice Little, *Op. cit.*; Rev. Gregory Cleary, O.F.M., J.U.D., in *Studies* (Dublin), Sept., 1927.



formally constituted foundations and monasteries. The chief characteristic of Franciscan Conventualism was the adoption of Papal privileges regarding landed property and fixed incomes, and implied permanence of abode and permanent endowment. These monastic tendencies were not acceptable to all, and Observantism began to grow in popular favour. In 1517 Pope Leo X allowed the Conventuals to form a separate body and declared the Observantines to be the real Franciscan Order.

These changes in the Constitution of the Order on the Continent soon affected the Irish monasteries, where Conventualism had long been established. The Conventuals produced many men of great learning and displayed a marvellous organising capacity; it is unfortunate that their records have almost all perished, leaving us in ignorance of their activities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In 1460 the Observance was formally established in Ireland, and Conventualism from that time gradually declined.\* During the century following the great majority of the Irish Franciscan monasteries passed under the rule of the Observantines.†

\* The Observantines strenuously resisted the imposition of the tenets of the so called Reformation in the 16th century, and their opposition lashed into fury the protagonists of the new innovations. On January 8, 1538, we find the apostate Browne, Henry's chosen Archbishop of Dublin, who signalised his hatred of the Irish Church by burning publicly the Staff of St. Patrick, lamenting that "the Observantines which be worst of all others, for I can neither make them swear, nor yet preach amongst us, so little they regard mine authority" (Ronan, *The Reformation in Dublin*, 1536-1558, p. 82). Later on Browne bitterly refers to them as the "Obstinate Religion." On April 5 of the same year, 1538, a fanatical government official, maddened by the stubborn resistance offered by the Irish Franciscans to Henry's schismatical doctrines, denounced them as "the false and crafty bloodsuckers, the Observants." A Cavan Observantine, Bishop Richard Brady, was later on a vigorous opponent of the heretical novelties of Elizabeth and her officials.

† The following monasteries, for example, passed over to the Observance on the dates mentioned: Athlone, 1518; Drogheda, *circa* 1521; Carrickfergus, 1497; Dundalk, 1549; Armagh, 1518; Trim, 1525; Multifarnam, 1460; Dublin, *circa* 1521.

The early years of the sixteenth century witnessed a great revival of Franciscan activity in Cavan, and the monastery became one of the leading northern houses of the Order. Toirdelbach Maguire, a distinguished Ulster ecclesiastic, who died in 1504, was laid to rest in the monastery church. The *Annals of Ulster* refer to him as "an excellent, virtuous, much learned man" who was Prior of Loch Derg (County Donegal), Canon Choral in Clochar (Clogher) and parson in Daire-Maelain—in Clogher diocese. His body was brought to Cavan from Athboy, County Meath, where he met his death by accidentally "falling from a stone staircase" about the Feast of St. Patrick.

John O'Reilly, who introduced the Friars Minor to Cavan, died in 1510, and was buried in the monastery church. It will be observed that he was fifth in descent from Giolla Iosa Ruadh, the founder.

In 1511 the celebrated Bishop Thomas MacBrady of Kilmore, who died at Dromahaire, was buried with due honour and ceremony in the monastery church.

John O'Reilly was succeeded by his brother Aodh (son of Cathal). In 1514 Breiffne was invaded by Gerald, Earl of Kildare, and the Annalists tell us that great damage was done in O'Reilly's territory. The Castle of Tullymongan—the *Castle of Cavan* as it is called—was captured and partially wrecked, and Aodh O'Reilly and Philip, his brother, and Philip's son, together with several of the O'Reilly chieftains were slain. The *Annals of Ulster* state that "fourteen of the nobles and chief worthies of the Muintir-Raighilligh, besides a multitude of the common people" were slain. The Chief Constable of Breiffne, Maine MacCabe, son of Mathgamain, one of Tullymongan's stoutest defenders, was captured. Amid scenes of general mourning in Breiffne the bodies of the slain were buried beside the monastery church. Although situated near to the scene of slaughter, yet the monastery seems on this



occasion to have escaped the fate meted out to the castle.

In 1516 a boating disaster occurred on Loch Erne in which a large number of Friars belonging to the monastery were drowned. The entry in the *Annals of Ulster* under that year is :—

A large party of Friars of Cavan were drowned upon Loch Erne, and two Friars of Stricter Observance were in it, namely, John, son of Thomas Carrach MagCraith and Nicholas O'Cathain and other persons with them.

From this entry we may infer that in the sixteenth century a large number of Friars were attached to Cavan monastery, also that the Conventuals were still in the great majority there although, nominally at least, the Friars Minor had already taken over possession in 1502. It is recorded that Provincial Chapters of the Order were held at Cavan in 1521, 1539, and 1556.\*

Eoghan O'Reilly was ruler of Breiffne from 1514 until his death in 1526 (*Annals of Ulster*), when he was succeeded by Ferghal, son of John, son of Cathal. Ferghal died in 1535 and in his *obit* in the *Annals of Ulster* he is described as :—

One for whom all Ireland, both clergy and laity, was full of esteem for the excellence of his nobleness and his generosity, [and he] died with victory of Uction and penance.

John O'Reilly, who died in 1510, had three sons, viz., Ferghal, just referred to; Cahir, who was slain in 1538—styled "an eminent leader" by the *Annals of Ulster*; Maolmordha, who succeeded Ferghal in the kingship of Breiffne.

The troubles of the sixteenth century, like birds of evil omen, were now hovering on the horizon, and the native chieftains were being threatened with spoliation

\* Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum*, p. 40.

and the monasteries with confiscation. Breiffne was situated on the borders of the English Pale and the power of the O'Reillys was declining. Maolmordha was married to Margaret, daughter of Hugh Dubh O'Donnell, chieftain of Tir Conaill, and she died at an advanced age in 1582. Their children were Aodh Connallach (i.e. Aodh, or Hugh, of Tir Conaill, on account of his being fostered there by the O'Donnells), Edmund of Kilnacrott, Cahir, Eoghan, and Thomas.

Maolmordha ruled from 1535 until his death in captivity in 1565. His *obit* is in the *Annals of Loch Cé*.

O'Raighilligh, i.e., Maolmordha, son of John, son of Cathal, the best man that ever came of his own sept, and than whom there seldom came of the race of Gaeidhel Glas a better person, according to the information and knowledge of all regarding him—i.e., a man to whom God granted all the virtues at first, viz., the palm of eloquence, the palm of knowledge and learning, the palm of sense and counsel, the palm of bounty and prowess; (and it would not be wonderful that luck should attend the man of these virtues; and for these reasons he was elected chief king over the Ui Raighilligh)—was put to death while detained in captivity by Foreigners.

The *State Papers* inform us that he died at Ardbraccan, County Meath. An entry *sub anno*, 1565, has it that: "old O'Reilly died the last day of August at Ardbraccan."

Aodh Connallach (or Hugh Connallach, as he is sometimes called) succeeded on the death of his father, and his reign was far from proving a tranquil one. Aodh was first married, according to O'Donovan's account, to the daughter of Beatagh\* of Moynalty,

\* The Beatagh family of Moynalty were the owners of considerable property in the Barony of Kells. In 1666 their lands were granted, *inter alios*, to Thomas Taylor one of Sir William Petty's Down Surveyors. Transplanted to Connacht some of the Beataghs appear to have settled at Mannin, Co. Mayo.



County Meath. According to the genealogy of the House of O'Reilly, compiled by Chevalier O'Gorman, he was married, secondly, to Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Nugent of Carlanstown, near Finea, County Westmeath, second son of Richard Nugent, Baron of Delvin. His wife, Isabella Barnewall, whose *obit* is mentioned in the *Annals*, was, evidently, his third wife. She belonged to the great Meath family of Barnewall, whose seat was at Trimleston.

In 1576 the town and monastery of Cavan were destroyed by fire. It appears that Mary, the second wife of Aodh Connallach, during a fit of insanity, was responsible for the holocaust, which is described by the *Four Masters*, *sub anno*, 1576:—

The great monastery of Cavan, and [the town of] Cavan itself, from the great castle downwards to the river, was burned by the daughter of Thomas, son of the Baron, through jealousy [i.e., during a fit of jealousy, or insanity]. There was not so much destroyed in any one town among the Irish as had been in that town.

The passage indicates that the town of Cavan, as it then existed, was on the hill of Tullymongan, surrounding the castle, and stretching westward along the steep slopes from the castle to the river. The monastery lay outside the town, with the river as the boundary between the town and the monastery precincts. The town at that time was of comparatively small extent, but its situation on the western slopes of Tullymongan was not only picturesque but for considerations of health was admirably chosen.

Aodh Connallach died in 1583, and about the same time his wife, Isabella Barnewall, also passed away. They were buried in the monastery, and it may be noted that Aodh was the last Breiffne chieftain at whose funeral in Cavan full Celtic honours were accorded. The *Four Masters* laud him as:—

A man who had passed his time without contests or trouble, and who had preserved Breiffne from the invasions of his English and Irish enemies, as long as he lived, [he] died, and was buried in the monastery of Cavan.

O'Reilly had been knighted in 1579 and in June of the same year "O'Reilly's country," i.e., Breiffne, was shired, as the *State Papers* inform us. The schemes had been prepared and were presented to O'Reilly on "Whitson Sondaie" (Whit Sunday) at the house of Sir Lucas Dillon, at Newtown, beside Trim, County Meath. "I thought it good," wrote Lord Justice Drury, "to honour him with the title of knighthood." \* On August 21st, 1579, the country of O'Reilly had been duly shired and we are introduced to "the new County of Cavan." It is significant, too, that he should have selected his partners in marriage from among the families of the Pale, the Beataghs, Barnewalls, and Nugents; but, no doubt, he was confronted with problems of contemporary diplomacy which allowed him little choice in such matters. But the statement of the *Four Masters*, that he preserved Breiffne from the invasions of his enemies, cannot, in view of the entries in the *State Papers*, be accepted without reserve.

Edmund O'Reilly, brother of Aodh Connallach, should have succeeded, but his claim was brushed aside by Elizabeth's government and John, son of Aodh (by his wife Mary Nugent) was appointed in his stead. Considerable trouble ensued and John's career was a turbulent one. At length, after renouncing his allegiance to Elizabeth, he joined forces with Hugh O'Neill and "died a rebel" at Cavan in 1596. He had two sons, Maolmordha and Hugh. O'Neill, in defiance of English authority appointed Philip O'Reilly, brother of John, to the Kingship of Breiffne. This Philip

\* *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1579.* On this occasion O'Reilly addressed the assembly in English and Latin.



was the companion of the famous Red Hugh O'Donnell in the dark and dismal dungeons of Dublin Castle and shared in his famous escape. His reign was a short one and he was accidentally killed, by some of O'Neill's people, at Cavan, on October 19th, 1596.\* A *State Paper* of June, 1597, states that he was "lately slain in rebellion."

In the meanwhile Maolmordha, son of John, had married a niece of the Earl of Ormond, and fired with avarice, ambition and vanity, went to London, where he was graciously received by Elizabeth, who granted him lands in Cavan with a promise to create him Earl of Cavan. But death cut short his ambitions. He was killed at the battle of Atha Buidhe (the Yellow Ford), leading a party of English cavalry, in 1598.† His brother Aodh died in 1628.

On the death of Philip, in 1596, Edmund O'Reilly, son of Maolmordha, succeeded, and Brehon Law was restored for a few years in Breiffne. Edmund is better known as "Edmund of Kilnacrott" from his residence at Kilnacrott, in Crosserlough parish. He died at Cavan in April, 1601, and is thus lauded by the *Four Masters* :—

O'Reilly, i.e., Edmund (*Eamonn*), son of Maolmordha, son of John, son of Cathal, died in the month of April. He was an aged, grey-headed, long-memoried man, and who had been quick and vivacious in his mind and intellect in his youth. He was buried in the Franciscan monastery at Cavan.

According to another account he was "slain in rebellion at Cavan."‡ He was the last O'Reilly chieftain who ruled over Breiffne, and with him passed away the importance of Cavan monastery.

\* For a reference to him in a contemporary poem see *Erin*, vi, 127.

† A dispatch of August 15, 1598, says that eighteen captains were killed "of which Mr. Mulmorey Reilly is one."

‡ *Patent Rolls*, 5 James I.

Edmund of Kilnacrott was married to Lady Mary Plunket, daughter of Robert, fifth Baron Dunsany, and their sons were Cahir, Terence and John. He married, secondly, Lady Elizabeth Nugent, daughter of the Baron of Delvin, and their sons were Charles, Myles (Maolmordha), and Farrell. John, son of Edmund, was married to Catherine, daughter of Sir James Butler, and their son Brian, who married Mary, daughter of Baron Dunsany, and died in 1631, was the father of the famous Breiffne swordsman, Maolmordha O'Reilly, better known as *Myles the Slasher*, who is believed, traditionally, to have been buried in Cavan monastery.\*

On the death of Edmund, his nephew, Eoghan, son of Aodh Connallach, succeeded, but he died in the same year, according to O'Donovan. On the death of Eoghan his brother Maolmordha, fourth son of Aodh Connallach, succeeded, but his rule was scarcely more than nominal. The Plantation of Ulster in 1609 marked the end of the realm of Brehon Law. Maolmordha lived, according to *Pynnar's Survey* (1618) in the Castle of Commet (Kevit), near Bellananagh, and died in 1635. With him came to an end the succession of the chiefs of Breiffne. He was the father of Primate Hugh O'Reilly.

The pedigree of Maolmordha, compiled by O'Cleirigh, shows his descent from Giolla Iosa Ruadh and may be inserted here as a summary of the history of the O'Reillys. The list may be supplemented by the dates of the *obits* from the *Annals* which have been already given in the foregoing pages.

Maolmordha (ob. 1635), son of Aodh Connallach (ob. 1583), son of Maolmordha (ob. 1565), son of Sean (i.e., John, ob. 1510), son of Cathal (ob. 1467), son of Eoghan na Feasoige (ob. 1449), son of Sean (i.e.,

\* He fought at the battle of Finea, A.D. 1644, and is said to have been killed there. The tradition is accepted by O'Donovan. Space does not permit an account of his life in these pages.



John, ob. 1401), son of Philip (ob. 1384), son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh (ob. 1330), son of Domnaill (ob. 1256), son of Cathal (ob. 1256), son of Andaidh (ob. ?) son of Cathal (ob. 1162), son of Gofraidh (1161), son of Mac na h-Oidhche, son of Cuconnacht, son of Airghiallaigh, etc.

When the power of the O'Reillys was broken the monastery was marked out for confiscation. An *Inquisition*, taken at Cavan on September 19th, 1590, reported that "the site and precinct of the Monastery of Cavan containing half a poll \* (is) worth per annum 3 shillings and 4 pence." This *Inquisition* specifies the values of the church lands of County Cavan, then being surveyed for confiscation purposes, and its report enables us to estimate and compare the values of these *termon* lands, as they are more correctly termed.

Urney, for instance, containing 3 polls, was valued at 3 shillings (in the money of the sixteenth century), and Annaghgeliffe, already noted, containing half a poll, was valued at six pence. The *termon* lands were valued at the rate of one shilling per poll. The inference from the data of the 1590 report is that only a small share, comparatively, of land was attached to the monastery, and that the buildings were highly valued. In fact, the monastery, with its half poll, was valued higher than either Laragh or Moybolge, each of which was possessed of three polls.

In 1592 Edward Barret obtained a grant of :—

The whole circuit and precinct of the late monastery of Cavan, in the County of Cavan, containing half a poll of land.†

The Report of the *Inquisition* of 1609 refers to

\* The poll was the unit of land measurement in Breiffne. It was of variable extent, depending on the fertility of the soil, and waste land, e.g. bog or mountain, was not taken into account. In general the poll was reckoned as approximately twenty-five acres of arable land.

† *Calendar of Patent and Close Rolls*, sub anno 1592.

the late Abbey or house of Franciscan friars of Cavan with a piece of land adjoining thereto called the Moore, 1 poll.\*

In 1608, when the Jacobean Plantation was perfected, the Monastery was confiscated, but the Franciscans continued to reside in the neighbourhood. The cemetery continued for long afterwards to be the favourite burial place of the leading Cavan families. During the reign of James I the monastery was used as a courthouse—one of the many Irish monasteries then used for such a purpose after the Suppression.†

One of the best known of the sixteenth century Friars belonging to Cavan monastery was Richard Brady, who was Bishop of Kilmore from 1580 till 1607. Bishop Brady was one of the brightest ornaments of the Church in Ireland during the dark and evil days of Elizabeth.

Although their monastery had been confiscated the Friars did not desert Cavan. In a *Relatio* presented to Rome in 1634 Bishop Eoghan MacSwiney states that a few Franciscans were then living in Cavan, not in their monastery, however, but in private houses. In that year there were only 28 parish priests in Kilmore and the Franciscans were actively engaged in parochial work amid tremendous difficulties and enduring untold hardships.

After the Revolution of 1641 the Franciscans retook possession of their monastery and lived there in comparative security for a period of about ten years, until finally dispersed after the Cromwellian wars. In the period 1641-50 the monastery was repaired and regained much of its ancient splendour. Monsignor Massari,

\**Patent Rolls*, 7 James I. I take it that "Moore" is the Gaelic word *múr*, i.e., a wall or enclosure, and designated the monastic enclosure or parcel of land belonging to the monastery. This was part of the "Abbey Lands" over which the town now extends.

† Cf. Rev. J. P. Rushe, *A Second Thebaid*, p. 207.



Dean of Fermo, who visited Cavan in July, 1646, leaves us an interesting first-hand contemporary description of the monastery and its precincts.

I went [he writes] to the Convent of St. Francis in the County Cavan. It was situated within a wood and was a marvellous structure, in the Ulster fashion, the church, cells, refectory and all the other apartments being of wood, roofed with sods. I was accommodated with a room well plastered with mud on the outside, and full within of branches of odoriferous shrubs and rushes, with a good bed in the Ulster fashion. I took a hearty supper, slept soundly and tranquilly, and enjoyed the pleasant company of these holy religious.\*

From this account it is clear that at that time a wood occupied the greater part of where the town of Cavan now stands. Some of the trees are still growing around the cemetery, where they have stood for many centuries; the roots of others, cut down a few years ago, are still to be seen among the broken tombstones which are scattered about. Even in its neglected and dilapidated condition the monastery impressed the Monsignor favourably. But it will be observed that all the buildings were of wood and roofed with sods; the statement is quite definite on the point. From this we can only infer that the original church was already in a ruined condition and unfit for use. This state of affairs will easily be understood when we remember that the monastery had already been confiscated for over half a century and its sacred precincts exposed to the plunderer and confiscator. The Friars, on their return in 1641, established wooden structures plastered with mud on portion of the former possessions of the monastery; and in this temporary establishment they received the Dean of Fermo in the summer of 1646. It is only natural to expect that a visitor from sunny Italy

\* *Catholic Bulletin* (Dublin), 1917.

should express surprise at the fashions and customs of the Ulster people of the time. Fortunately, the Monsignor, on his return to Italy, wrote an account of his Irish travels, and his comments are, for us, now most valuable and interesting.

On his arrival in Ulster he first visited the Castle of Lismore (near Crossdoney) where he stayed some time as the guest of Philip O'Reilly, the Black.\* Here he slept in a bed arranged in the "Ulster fashion," as he calls it: bundles of fresh rushes were spread on the floor and over these the sheets and blankets were spread. Nevertheless, he slept soundly and did not awake till daylight. His bed in Cavan monastery was, no doubt, similarly made, and he testifies to its comfort.

The Monsignor remained for two days more in Cavan monastery as the guest of the Friars. He walked around the vicinity and gives us an excellent description of his visit to see "the great fair held in a field near Cavan."

It is [he subjoins] attended by crowds, and great quantities of merchandise are brought thither by the people of the surrounding districts. I was amazed at the abundant supply, especially of animals and of all kinds of eatables, which were sold at an absurdly low price. A fat oxen cost three crowns; a fine wether three *giulii*; a kid or a pair of fat chickens, six *baiocchi*, and so on; for the supplies were as plentiful as money was scarce in the country.†

\* So called to distinguish him from another Philip O'Reilly—the Red. The Irish army, under the leadership of Owen Roe O'Neill, was then encamped within a mile of Lismore Castle; from a hillock beside the Castle the Monsignor could see the army in the distance. Among those who visited the Castle and discussed current questions with the Monsignor were Owen Roe and Bishop Heber MacMahon of Clogher. Bishop MacMahon was afterwards executed at Enniskillen, in 1650, by the notorious Coote of evil memory.

† A *giulio* was the equivalent to sixpence; a *baiocao* to one penny. But the purchasing power of money was at that time very great, and comparisons with modern standards are difficult to establish. Monsignor Massari was, evidently, comparing the Cavan prices with those obtaining in his own native Italy.



This extract shows that despite the havoc of the Revolutionary wars the trade of Cavan was then in a flourishing condition. It also provides an interesting glimpse of the social conditions of the time.

But the monastery of St. Mary's was not destined to pursue its term of peace and tranquillity for long. With the advent of Cromwell and the Puritans in 1649 its doom was sealed. The death of Owen Roe O'Neill at Loch Uachtair Castle on November 6th, 1649, was an irrevocable blow to the Confederate cause. Two days later his body was taken to St. Mary's and buried there with all the honours of Church and State.\* At the graveside there officiated Primate Hugh O'Reilly, Bishop Magennis of Down and Bishop MacMahon of Clogher, who was later on selected, although his military qualifications were quite inadequate, to be the successor of Owen Roe as leader of the Ulster army. In the following year the Irish forces were completely crushed; Bishop MacMahon was executed at Enniskillen, and flying columns of Puritans began to invest the last Irish strongholds in Ulster. "The butcher, the buffoon, and the hired cut-throat," wrote Father Dominick de Rosario O'Daly, "each led his band; and the very dregs of English cities and towns were invested with centurion authority" (in our own times how history has repeated itself!). Possession was taken of the town of Cavan; the monastery of St. Mary's was sacked and the Friars had, finally, to leave and seek refuge in the woods and glens.

At this time Father Anthony Gowan was Guardian of St. Mary's and took a prominent part in the work of the Confederation. On July 29th, 1651, he was present at the Synod of Loch Uachtair and signed its Decrees—*Antonius Gavanus, O.S.F., Guardianus de Cavan.*

\* Owen Roe's wife, the famous Rosa O'Doherty, survived him for many years. She died in exile at Brussels, November 1, 1660, and was buried in the Franciscan monastery of Louvain, where her epitaph may still be deciphered.

Other signatories were Father Thomas Makiernan, ex-Provincial, and Father Thomas Brady, Archdeacon of Kilmore. A letter dated December 13th, 1660, from the bishops and clergy of the Province of Armagh, to the Holy See in defence of the Primate—Edmund O'Reilly—against certain charges made by Ormond and Peter Walsh, is signed, *inter alios*, by Archdeacon Thomas Brady and *Father Antonius Gowan*, O.S.F., *Guardianus de Cavan*. Father Gowan was a vigorous opponent of the infamous Remonstrance, and signed further letters defending the attitude of the bishops and clergy in refusing to sign it.\* On July 11th, 1664, a proclamation was issued from Dublin Castle summoning, *inter alios*, Rev. Thomas Brady, Rev. Thomas MacKiernan, and Rev. Anthony Gowan, to appear before the Council in Dublin Castle on or before July 27th. They were, writes Peter Walsh, "all leading men among clergy and laity, in those parts." Arriving in Dublin they were arrested and imprisoned, but soon afterwards were released on bail.

As described elsewhere, Primate Hugh O'Reilly, who died in 1652, was buried in the monastery. He was, as far as can be ascertained, the last great ecclesiastic laid to rest in that ancient O'Reilly necropolis. Soon afterwards it passed into Protestant hands and the church was used as a Protestant place of worship until 1815, when a new edifice was provided some distance away. Primate O'Reilly was a direct descendant of Giolla Iosa Ruadh, the founder. For three centuries the ecclesiastics and chieftains of the O'Reilly family found a last resting place in the precincts of the monastery. It is pathetic to record that of that long and distinguished line the greatest should be the last whose body was interred there. A tradition which existed among some branches of the O'Reillys maintains

\* Peter Walsh, *History of the Remonstrance*; *The Rinuccini Memoirs*, and other works dealing with the history of the Confederate period.



that Maolmordha O'Reilly—*Myles the Slasher*—who is said to have been killed (according to another tradition) at the Bridge of Finea in 1644, also rests there.

During the last half of the seventeenth century there were occasional periods of temporary toleration during which the Franciscans ministered to the harassed people; but they never regained possession of their former monastery. In a *Relatio* presented to Rome in 1675 the Primate—B. Oliver Plunket—states that there are two houses of Franciscans in Kilmore diocese. This shows that the friars had re-established themselves in Cavan, not, however, in the monastery—which was then in Protestant hands—but in some temporary residence. The other Franciscan house referred to by the Primate seems to have been the monastery of Carricknamaddoo, in Killinkere parish, as I have suggested elsewhere.\*

In the short reign of James II the Franciscans enjoyed a respite from persecution and came back to Cavan, where they lived for a few years.† But the events of the Williamite Wars and the dread reign of Queen Anne compelled them to seek refuge far away from Cavan town, and for a century afterwards we find them travelling around the diocese in disguise while the fury of the penal laws spread terror throughout the land.

\* *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. iii, 1929-30.

† Even after the confiscation of their monasteries the Franciscans continued down to the year 1872 to appoint, at their triennial chapters, Guardians for all monasteries, even those in ruins or in other hands. The Chapter Bills, Provincial and Intermediate, from 1629 till 1872 are in existence and record the names of many of the Cavan Guardians during that period. But in the case of Cavan, as well as of several others, the Guardians were purely titular and appointed merely in the interests of legal continuity. Hence the lists, which may be collected from the Archives of the Order, are of no particular historical value.

## RUINS AND TOMBS.

An extensive cemetery surrounded the monastic church but as the town grew in size the greater part of this cemetery was appropriated for building purposes. Hence it will be observed that the present cemetery, all of which now lies east of the tower and surrounds the site of the chancel, covers a much smaller area than that over which it originally extended. The cemetery surrounded the church, but the western end, where the nave of the church was situated, has long since been obliterated and the present Abbey Street extends over it. How far exactly it extended in the direction of the nave it is now impossible to establish, but it certainly extended westward to where the main road now passes. It may be assumed that the church occupied the centre of the original cemetery. The comparatively small cemetery now remaining represents only the portion which surrounded the chancel. In and around the chancel were interred the ecclesiastics and chieftains and it will be seen that, fortunately, this is the portion which has escaped obliteration. On the east side the chancel end of the cemetery extended to where the Main Street now runs. The cemetery on the north side extended over the space where the Town Hall at present stands, and on the south to the bank of the small river passing through the town. Excavations over this wide area have occasionally unearthed human bones and other traces of burials.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century the ancient sanctuary was seized by sacrilegious hands; tombs were uprooted and desecrated and almost every vestige of ancient worship was swept away to make room for the unsightly mausoleums of the Blackwoods, Cottinghams, Moignes, and other usurpers.\* Before

\*The residence of the Blackwood family was at Drumkeen, now the property of the Loreto College. One of the last of the Blackwoods, a Blackwood MacBrady, lived about the middle



this occurred many splendid altar tombs commemorating the bishops and ecclesiastics and chieftains of Breiffne adorned the chancel. Broken sepulchral slabs, evidently belonging to these older tombs, are strewn around the much neglected and now disused graveyard. Many such slabs have been utilised in building the modern mausoleums. Numerous Coats of Arms, many of them in a broken condition, are scattered about; but none of these belong to the native Catholic families. At the east end of the chancel, alongside a fragment of the gable of the old church, may be seen the broken tombstone of Sir Richard Moigne, dated 1690, with Coat of Arms displayed. From the position of this monument we can infer that the Planters were already using the church for interments before 1690.

Near the southern boundary is a massive horizontal slab bearing the following inscription, now barely legible :—

HERE LYETH THE BODY OF  
WILLIAM DUNGAN WHO DE  
PARTED THIS LIFE MARCH  
THE 15TH 1749 IN THE 52ND  
YEAR OF HIS AGE.

A bell, skull and crossbones, coffin, and other emblems are displayed on the slab. In 1723, according to the

of the last century in Clonervy Castle, in Castletara Parish. The Coat of Arms is displayed on the tomb. The Cottinghams lived at Stradone; in the construction of their mausoleum practically the entire chancel was uprooted. In the period 1697-1714 among the Freemen of Cavan elected were James Cottingham and George Cottnam. The Moignes had their residence at Moynehall. There is a monument to the Davis family, who lived in Cavan in the 18th century. John Davis was Deputy Portreeve (magistrate) of Cavan town from 1740 to 1760 (Corporation Records). Near the main entrance are some monuments of the Donaldson family. In the early years of the 18th century the Donaldsons had an inn in Cavan, at which the facetious Dean Swift (1667-1745) was a frequent visitor. Mrs. Donaldson was a poetess, of a sort, and has left on record some rhymes extolling the inn "so neat and clean," examples of the poetical advertising devices so popular two centuries ago. In 1735 Samuel Donaldson was elected a Free man of Cavan. John Donaldson was appointed Attorney of Cavan in 1728, and was Deputy Recorder in 1749-51.

Records of the Corporation of Cavan, a William Dongan, or Dungan, was elected Attorney. He appears to have been identical with the person named in the inscription.

Very few symbols of Catholicism have survived the iconoclasm of the Penal times, and the visitor will now search in vain for any traces of early inscriptions. Rarely has the work of obliteration and destruction been wrought so thoroughly as here, in the old Franciscan monastery of Cavan.

The old tower of the monastery covered with ivy still survives; the tombs of the sacrilegious intruders are already crumbling to decay and even their very names are passing or have passed into the oblivion which has swallowed up so many once pompous reputations. Truly, the whirligig of time has had its revenge. The venerable tower, like the old Faith which inspired its erection, stands silent witness of the decadence of the eighteenth century monuments of usurpation; it has survived all modern machinations and the minds that devised them.

One of the most fearless and eloquent preachers of the sixteenth century in Ireland was Father Eoghan O'Duffy, O.F.M., who was attached to the Cavan community. In the period 1580-90 he travelled through the country bare-foot, even without sandals, denouncing heresy and was held in esteem even by those who differed from him in religion. His fame as a preacher has survived even down to the present time. We are told that after holding his audience for three hours he would summarise his sermon in Gaelic verses which could be remembered by all. His labours were effective in counteracting many of the evil effects of the Elizabethan innovations.

The manuscript history of the Irish Franciscan foundations compiled by Father Donatus (Donough) Mooney, Irish Provincial from 1615 to 1618, and preserved in Brussels, has the following account of the



Cavan foundation, with references to Father Eoghan O'Duffy and other distinguished members of this house :

Conventus de Cabhan in oppido quodam dioecesis Kilmorensis situs, et in patria quae dicitur Breifne y Reyll, nunc autem vocatur committatus de Cabhan, fundatus jamdudum per principalem Dominum illius patriae, qui dicitur O Reyll. Hic conventus erat insignis, et circiter 30 annis elapsis, si non praecipuus, saltem unus ex praecipuis totius Provinciae, et in eo professi sunt plurimi fratres ex iis qui hanc Provinciam rexerunt, inter quos erat unus frater Richardus Bradeus quondam Provinciae Minister, et postea Episcopus Kilmorensis, de quo, agentes de conventu Montefernandi, aliqua dicemus. Alius etiam erat frater Joannes Gobhan, Provinciae Pater. Alius adhuc superstes frater Cormacus Gobham, Provinciae Pater. Alius frater Eugenius Dughy [Eoghan O'Duífy], Provinciae Pater, et nominatissimus praedicator, qui etiam austeritate vitae, et religiosa conversatione, omnibus ita praeluxit, ut totius sanctitatis specimen prae sese ferre videatur [marginal note : *Fuit profecto vir sanctissimus*] ; et adhuc per omnes regni partes ejus fama in omnium ore percrebescat, de quo tamen nihil particulare hic subjungo, expectans plenior informationem, nisi tantum quod semper nudis pedibus incedebat, etiam sine sandaliis, et quod in concionibus faciendis admirabilem habuerit gratiam, et inter caetera haec de eo notata sunt, quod quamvis fuerit admodum prolixus, ita ut aliquando tres horas in una concione insumeret, nunquam tamen auditoribus fatigationem aut fastidium attulit ; deinde nunquam oculos aperiebat dum concionaretur, sed semper clausos tenebat, quasi nullius vultum vellet respicere ; deinde acriter reprehendebat, et ad maximam compunctionem movebat, nunquam tamen ulli pro concionibus suis erat exosus, sed omnibus gratus, et amabilis ; extra conciones etiam, si quando (quod raro accedebat) in aliquorum saecularium consortio, lepidus, facetus, et

jocundus erat. Prae omnibus videbatur habere Augustinum adeo familiarem, praesertim ejus opuscula pia, ut ex illo totum sermonem contexere videretur, nullo alio interjecto alterius auctoris dicto. Tandem solebat in fine cujuslibet concionis, etiam prolixissimi, summam dictorum elegantibus hibernicis versibus comprehendere, idque non tam arte poetica instructus, quam Spiritus Sancti unctione edoctus. Postremo, magnus erat zelator contra haereticos, quos versibus et soluta oratione est multum insequutus et tamen a plurimis illorum quos maxime omnium reprehendebat, tunc crescente illorum malitia, et erroribus, in magna semper veneratione est habitus, nec illi unquam male facere quisquam illorum voluit, nimirum quia in eo vitae sanctimoniam, et pietatis zelum, quamvis non amabant, tamen admirabantur.

Hic conventus erat valde solemnis, et tamen superiori bello ab haereticis exustus est, et ipsi parietes confracti, et quasi solo aequati sunt; nunc nulli habitant fratres, nec amplius de eo ego addiscere potui. Restant adhuc in custodia fratrum aliqua ex suppelectile pretiotiori illius conventus. Incolae etiam illius patriae et posterorum fundatorum possessionibus amplis privati sunt, nullo juris ordine servato, per plantationem quam vocant jussu Regis Angliae ibidem factam, et nunc in eorum locum suffecti sunt infimae sortis incolae illuc translati ex nationibus Anglica et Scotica.\*

Father Richard Brady—*Richardus Bradeus*—above-mentioned was elected Provincial in 1570 and acted in that capacity until 1576 when promoted to the bishopric of Ardagh; later he was transferred to his native Kilmore. Father Joannes O'Gobhan (John O'Gowan) was Provincial from 1577 till 1580 when he was succeeded by the celebrated preacher, Father Eoghan O'Duffy, who continued till 1583. Another distinguished alumnus of Cavan was Father Cormac O'Gobhan (O'Gowan) who was Provincial from 1590 to 1593;

\* Brussels MS. 3947: "Donatus Moneyus, De Provincia Hiberniae S. Francisci."—*Analecta Hibernica*, vi.



he was arrested with several others at Multifarnam (*Montefernandi*) in 1590 and spent some time in prison until ransomed. He died in 1617. According to the *Brussels MS.* Father Patrick O'Maoláin, who had been elected Provincial for three years, died in Cavan monastery in 1556.

*The Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae FF. Minorum*, a manuscript preserved in the Irish Franciscan College of St. Isidore, Rome, and written by Father Francis Matthews, furnishes many important details of the histories of the several Irish Franciscan foundations. Many authorities have, hitherto, attributed the authorship to Father Hugh Ward, but internal evidence shows clearly that the author was Father Matthews, who was Irish Provincial from 1626 to 1629 and an intimate friend of Father Luke Wadding. From the *Brevis Synopsis*, compiled *circa* 1630, we learn that the monastery of Cavan was taken by the English in 1608, but that in 1616 a temporary residence was erected in the vicinity with Father John Geffry as Guardian. There is also a reference to Father Eoghan O'Duffy. The entry is as follows :

Conventus de Cavane in oppido ejusdem nominis, Dioecesis Killmorensis in Ultonia Anno 1300 fundatus, ad statum observantiae transiit 1502, et ingruentibus bellis ac persecutione, in conventu fratres nihilominus perseverarunt usque ad annum 1608, quo anno ab Anglis occupatus ac brevi postmodum solis parietibus remanentibus exustus, postremo dirutus, aliquot annos vacavit, donec anno 1616 in vicinia erecta fuit residentia, instituto Superiore P. Joanne Geffry, praedicatore eximio et sancto, cujus praedicationibus et exemplo res Catholica in iis partibus multum profecit. Primus hujus conventus fundator fuit D. Joannes O'Reilly Breffinia [*sic*] Toparcha qui sibi suaeque familiae in eo conventu sepulturam erexit, sicut et alii plures ejusdem ditionis nobiles fecerunt. Fuit hic conventus olim celebris, ex quo prodiit P. Aeugenius o Dubhayg, Apostolicus praedicator,

accerrimus Hereticorum impugnator, vitae sanctissimae. Capitulum celebratum 1557.\*

The manuscripts have several entries relating to the labours of Father Eoghan O'Duffy and his efforts to counteract the evil effects of the Religious Revolt. The *Brevis Synopsis*, sub anno 1580, has:

Fr. Eugenius o Dubhuig, vir sanctae vitae et conversationis, Apostolicus praedicator, tam Catholicis quam Hereticis ob suam sanctam vitam et praedicationem dilectus, tribus annis functus est officio Ministri Provincialis.

The *Brussels MS.* refers to the same event—his election as Provincial for the customary period of three years:

Fr. Eugenius o Dubthaigh, Ultoniensis, tribus annis. Hic ob singularem vitae austeritatem et efficaciam praedicationis per totam Hiberniam nominatissimus est.

The last reference to this great Franciscan preacher in the *Brevis Synopsis* is as follows:

Fr. Eugenius o'Dubhigh, Conventus de Cavane sacerdos, officio Ministri Provincialis functus, acerrimus haereticorum impugnator, vitae admirabilis, Apostolicus praedicator, nudis pedibus semper sine sandaliis incedens, ob vitae sanctimoniam haereticis et persecutoribus, quos tamen asperrime reprehendebat, in maxima veneratione, sancto fine vita functus est anno 1590.

It is most probable that these great Franciscans, whose names illumine the dark pages of the sixteenth century, rest in the precincts of the monastery.

The exact locations of the tombs of Bishop Thomas MacBrady, Primate Hugh O'Reilly, Owen Roe, Myles the Slasher, or in fact of any of the distinguished personages who repose in this hallowed spot, cannot now be determined. It is said, traditionally, that

\* *Brevis Synopsis*, pp. 28-29: *Analecta Hibernica*, vi.



owing to the fear of desecration, a fear only too well justified, no monuments ever marked the graves of the Primate, Owen Roe, or Myles. If tradition be reliable, that the Primate was buried in the chancel, it is quite certain that his tomb was uprooted to provide place for the Cottingham mausoleum.

The grave of Owen Roe is shown, traditionally, a few paces north of the base of the tower; a small *Dualtraid*, or elder tree, which decayed a few years ago, was supposed to indicate the spot. Alongside is shown the reputed burial place of Myles the Slasher—Breiffne's mighty swordsman, our Irish Hercules. How far these traditions may be accepted it would be futile now to speculate, and it is hardly likely that the question will ever be brought beyond the region of speculation.\* The very secrecy which surrounded their places of burial has caused a veil of mystery to hang over this ancient sanctuary. It is not unreasonable to accept the tradition that the Primate and Bishop MacBrady were buried in the chancel. When the Primate died, in 1652, the menacing clouds of Puritanism were hovering over Breiffne and we may well believe that in the circumstances no monument was ever erected—for the blasting fury of Puritanism spared neither the living nor the dead.

The splendid altar tombs which adorned the chancel commemorated Breiffne's greatest ecclesiastics and chieftains. It is scarcely necessary to inquire for the motives which prompted those who, over two centuries ago, laid violent hands on this ancient cemetery and proceeded to uproot it with such demoniacal fury; the motives which inspired such ruthless conquerors since the days of the Romans were ever the same, namely, to crush finally the hopes of a defeated people by scattering to the winds the dust of their leaders and

\* The vague tradition, that a ground plan of the ancient cemetery showing the grave of Owen Roe was preserved in some Spanish library or private collection, I am unable to verify.

ancestors. This policy, which was put into practice in at least a hundred other places in Ireland, is responsible for the complete disappearance of the many magnificent tombs which once adorned the church of Cavan Franciscan monastery.

The massive square tower, about sixty feet in height, is practically all that remains of the fourteenth century church; it owes its preservation to the fact that it was continued in use as a belfry when a portion of the church was reconstructed for Protestant services. The tower has two circular-headed doorways facing east and west, respectively; the eastern doorway has been built up at some modern period. Two tiers of square windows are in the upper compartments. The doors and windows, where intact, are of the same style. Some modern additions and repairs have been added at the top; otherwise the tower is the original one, and its construction is similar to that of the other Franciscan towers elsewhere in Ireland. East of the tower extends the only portion of the cemetery which escaped obliteration.

According to a local authority, about the year 1740 or 1750 the tower was found to be in a dangerous condition necessitating extensive repairs; at this period the upper portions were restored. The last Protestant service was held in the old abbey church on Christmas Morning, 1815. Shortly afterwards the edifice was demolished and the stones sold: two houses in the Main Street were built with some of the materials. At the time of the sale the tower is said to have been purchased by one Martin Neill, the bell-ringer of the old church, from whom it was re-purchased by the then Lady Farnham and thus escaped demolition.

Adjoining the tower on the west side is a small building which has two doorways, built in the same style, one leading from the tower and the other from the west end. This building is too small to have served as a chapel but evidently occupied a portion of the original



nave. The passage from the tower to the nave led through this small building, which judging from its style of architecture must have been nearly as old as the church. The exact purpose of this structure is not immediately obvious, but a tradition remembered in Cavan has it that many years ago this building contained three tombs, one of which displayed a bishop's mitre and other episcopal insignia. At any rate such a statement is attributed to an old resident of Cavan who passed away some fifty years ago at a very advanced age and who remembered seeing these monuments. No traces of any monuments now survive, but if the tradition can be relied upon the structure may have been erected to contain the tombs of some notable ecclesiastics. Careful excavation may throw further light on the matter.

Although the church has disappeared we can easily establish its original position. As in the other Franciscan churches of the period the tower occupied a central position; to the east was the chancel and to the west the nave. In the cemetery east of the tower may be seen a fragment of the chancel gable; it supported a comparatively modern inscribed slab over the Moigne tomb, and, utilised for this purpose, escaped the vandalism of the modern Tamerlane. It is, indeed, significant and worthy of remark that the mural tablet has long since fallen to pieces while the older wall which supported it still stands sentinel over the comparatively modern but broken and crumbling monuments around.

The choir arch which separated the nave and chancel has entirely disappeared; its position was alongside the tower and just beside the present entrance gate. The passage connecting the nave and chancel led through the tower; hence the two doorways already described. How far west of the tower the nave extended is not easy to determine, as the site is now occupied by the west end of Abbey Street and the adjoining

gardens. A modern laneway passes by the base of the tower and through the original nave. Judging from the dimensions of the chancel the church must have been a spacious one. It is likely that some future excavations will reveal the foundations of the nave and determine the exact position of the west gable.

Every trace of the western section of the original cemetery has been obliterated. It is stated that early in the last century when clearing the site for the foundations of the two houses in Abbey Street, beside the entrance to the cemetery, the workmen unearthed a massive sarcophagus, or stone coffin, which, unfortunately, they smashed. Evidently it belonged to some famous medieval personage. Traces of burials have been discovered in the Abbey Street area during the excavations of recent years.

Some of the Holy Water stoups which belonged to the ancient church are now preserved in the garden attached to the residence of Messrs. Fegan, Solicitors, Farnham Street—now Roger Casement Street—Cavan; also the carved stem of a Cross which stood at the monastery. Some of these stoups may have been used in early times as Baptismal Fonts. The larger of the two stoups in the garden measures one foot and three quarter inches in height: it is one foot five and a quarter inches in width. The depth of the bowl, at centre, is eight and a quarter inches: its diameter is one foot one inch. The smaller stoup is seven and three quarter inches in height and of somewhat unusual shape. At the top it is square with sides measuring nine inches. At a distance of about two and a quarter inches from the top the shape becomes octagonal, but the sides are irregular: four of these measure four inches in length and the remaining sides are three and three quarter inches in length. Below the four corners—that is, above the four shorter sides—are displayed carved heads, probably representing the Evangelists.



The depth of the bowl is five and a half inches ; its diameter is six and three-quarter inches.

Two other stoups are also preserved at the residence of Messrs. Fegan. One of these is said to have been used as a Baptismal Font in the old church when utilised for Protestant services. Its height is one foot one and a quarter inches, and the width at top is one foot nine and a quarter inches : the bowl is one foot six and three-quarter inches in diameter and seven and three quarter inches in depth.

A number of roughly carved stone heads, varying from eight to twelve inches in height, are also preserved at the residence of Messrs. Fegan.\* These evidently also belonged to the monastery. A stone head, discovered several feet under the surface of an adjoining garden, is now built into the wall of No. 4 in the same street.

Scarcely anything of interest remains to indicate the former greatness of this Franciscan monastery. The vandalism of centuries has succeeded only too well in effacing almost every vestige of its Catholic splendour in the age of its glory. The very monuments which recorded in stone the successive chapters of its history have disappeared and their loss is irreparable. The soil of this venerable necropolis is sacred, for here reposes the dust of Breiffne's greatest ecclesiastics, princes, soldiers and statesmen. Innumerable Franciscans also rest here ; but

Multi . . . . illacrymabiles  
carent quia vate sacro.

\* I am indebted to Messrs. Joseph and Arthur G. Fegan for some interesting particulars ; also for the dimensions of the stoups which have been preserved with commendable care by the family for several successive generations. Mr. Joseph Fegan informs me that one of his ancestors—between the years 1760 and 1770—built a house in the Main Street, still in the possession of the family, to which some of these sculptured stones (already in the possession of the family) were then conveyed. Afterwards the stones were transferred to the present residence of Messrs. Fegan.

## CHAPTER XIII

## BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE TWELFTH CENTURY

AEDH UA FINN, MUIRCHEARTAGH UA MAOL-MOICHEIRGE,  
TUATHAL O'CONNACHTAIGH, FLANN O'CONNACHTAIGH

## AEDH UA FINN (Obit 1136)

THE Continuator of the *Annals of Tighearnach*\* registers under the year 1136, "Aedh Ua Finn, *airdespoc* (i.e., Chief Bishop) of Breifne, died at Inis Clothran." This is the earliest reference, as far as I can discover, to a Bishop of Breiffne, or Kilmore. Of the date of his appointment to the episcopacy we are not informed, but it is probable that he was already ruling as bishop at the time of the Synod of Rathbreasail; at any rate, his appointment must date from very soon after, which is a definite proof—if such, indeed, be required—that the diocese was then already in possession of full episcopal status.

It will be observed that Bishop Ua Finn is described as *airdespoc*, or chief bishop. Editors, sometimes, translate this to read "archbishop." Great, indeed, would have been the honour conferred on our historic diocese to have had an archbishop preside over it, but we had no archbishops, in the present sense of the word, before Cardinal Paparo distributed the four *Pallia* at Ceanannus in 1152. The Annalist indicates that Aedh Ua Finn was the *Chief* Bishop of Breiffne, that is, the bishop who had spiritual charge of Breiffne's royal

\* *Annals of Tighearnach* (Rerum Hibernicarum Scriptores). Rev. Charles O'Connor.



family, with plenary episcopal jurisdiction over all the territory ruled by the reigning family. Furthermore, it implies that Breiffne must then have had other bishops, obviously attached to the monasteries within the petty kingdom.

The O'Finns were a well known West Breiffne family occupying the position of *brughadha*, i.e., farmer-hostellers, an important office in early times. The Barony of Coolavin (Cuil Ó bhFinn, i.e., the corner of the O'Finns), bordering Loch Techet (now Loch Gara), in Co. Sligo, was a portion of the territory belonging to this family.

Bishop O'Finn had, apparently, surrendered his episcopal charge some time previously and retired to the monastery of Inis Clothran, in Loch Ree, where he died. It may have been only a coincidence that the founder of the monastery, St. Diarmait, was reputed to have been a brother of St. Feidhlimidh. However, it is not at all unlikely that Bishop Ua Finn's choice of a sanctuary in which to end his days may have been dictated by the link which the two brothers, Feidhlimidh and Diarmait, had established between Kilmore and Inis Clothran.

#### MUIRCHEARTAGH UA MAOL-MOICHEIRGE (1136-1149)

Muircheartagh Ua Maol-Moicheirge (the modern surname *Early*), who is described by the Annalists as "Bishop of Ui-Briuin Breifne," ruled from 1136 until 1149. The *Four Masters* who record his death in that year style him a "noble senior" and a "noble bishop"; this is the earliest reference to a Bishop of Breiffne in these Annals.

The family of Ua Maol-Moicheirge is closely connected with the early history of Breiffne. The *Four Masters*, sub anno, 1512, record the name of Hugh O'Mael-mocheirghe, Coarb of Drumlane, who was drowned in

that year. The *Calendar of Papal Registers* (Pope John XXII), 1414, records the appointment of John O'Mulmochori, of Kilmore Diocese, as Papal Notary. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the names of members of this family are frequently recorded as pastors of Drumreilly and Oughteragh.\*

#### TUATHAL O'CONNACHTAIGH (1149-1179)

Bishop Tuathal O'Connachtaigh, who succeeded in 1149, is well known as the "Bishop of the Ui-Briuin," who assisted at the historic Synod of Ceanannus in 1152. He belonged to an ancient Breiffne family, the present day form of which is O'Conaty. During his long episcopate of 30 years he introduced many reforms, and the Annals record his *obit* sub anno 1179.

#### FLANN O'CONNACHTAIGH (1179-1231)

The next bishop of whom we have a record is Flann O'Connachtaigh, who is mentioned as bishop in 1215. As there is no reason for assuming that a hiatus intervened after the death of Bishop Tuathal we may place his namesake, Bishop Flann, as his successor. In the *Annals of Loch Cé*, where he is titled "Bishop of Ui-Briuin," his death is recorded sub anno 1231.

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, pp. 238 and 239.



## CHAPTER XIV

## BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

CONGALACH MAC IDHNEOIL, SIMON O'RUAIRC, MAURICE.

## CONGALACH MAC IDHNEOIL (1231-1250)

BISHOP MAC IDHNEOIL succeeded in 1231 and ruled until 1250, when he resigned. Later in the same year his death took place. We have few particulars of his life, but in the *Annals* he is described as "Bishop of the Breifne."

## SIMON O'RUAIRC (1250-1285)

On the resignation of Bishop Mac Idhneoil a royal licence was sought by the Dean and Chapter of the diocese to elect a successor. On May 27th, 1250, the king granted licence to the Dean and Chapter *Tirbruinensis*, at the request of "Patrick, their clerk," the See being described as "vacant by the resignation of Congal, late bishop." \* This procedure was often adopted in pre-Reformation times as may be seen from Sweetman's *Calendar of Documents*. The main object was to secure the temporalities which were only granted when the bishop-elect was confirmed by the Crown. This royal permission was known as the *Congé d' elire*. In the reign of Henry III an attempt was made by that unscrupulous monarch to ensure that no Irishman

\* *Patent Rolls*, 34 Henry III.

should be appointed to an Irish bishopric.\* But a decree of Pope Honorius III in the year 1220 declared this proposal to be null and void.† The Irish bishops resisted the unwarranted interference of an English monarch in Irish ecclesiastical affairs, and the insolent claims of the English Crown were generally ignored. It is scarcely necessary to add that only by virtue of their political supremacy could the English monarchs claim any privilege, for such it was, in the election of Irish bishops.‡

Simon O'Ruairc was elected to the bishopric in 1250 and ruled till his death in January, 1285. During his long episcopate he proved himself worthy of the noble family to which he belonged. In his *obit* in the *Annals of Loch Cé* he is styled "Bishop of the Breifne."

#### MAURICE (1286-1307)

Maurice, Abbot of St. Mary's, Ceanannus (Kells), Co. Meath, succeeded, the royal licence having been granted on October 13th, 1286. The *Patent Rolls* describe him as Bishop of *Tirburnensis*. From the Exchequer Roll of 1306 we have already seen that the Abbot of Ceanannus was then possessed of extensive property in Kilmore diocese. The close connection which existed between Ceanannus and Drumlane, having its origin in the veneration paid to the common founder, would have influenced the election of Abbot Maurice to the bishopric. His full name is not recorded, but it seems probable that he belonged to Breiffne. Bishop Maurice was one of the assistants at the consecration of Matthew Casey, Bishop of Clogher, which took place at Lisgool on

\* See letter dated January 17, 1217, from the King to Geoffrey de Marisco, Justiciary of Ireland: *Calendar of Documents*, p. 113.

† *Calendar of Papal Registers* (Honorius III); see also the entries in Theiner's *Vet. Monumenta*.

‡ *Vide* MacCaigrey, "Irish Episcopal Elections in the Middle Ages." *Irish Theological Quarterly*, April, 1907.



June 29th, 1287. On that occasion the consecrating prelate was Tigernach, Bishop of Dromore, and the other assistant was Florence, Bishop of Raphoe.\*

Bishop Maurice died in 1307.† During his episcopate Cavan Abbey was founded and the Franciscans introduced. It was also during his episcopate that the notorious valuation of Irish benefices was made (1298-1306) to enable the English King to tax the Irish bishops and clergy. The Kilmore Taxation of 1306 has already been discussed.

\* Ware and Harris give Maurice as Bishop of Down and Connor. This is an error. The only Ulster Bishop in that year whose Christian name was Maurice was the Bishop of Kilmore.

† Ware, *Bishops*, p. 227.

## CHAPTER XV

## BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

MATTHEW MAC DHUIBHNE, PATRICK O' CRIDIGAN,  
CONCOBUR MAC CONSNAMHA, RICHARD O'REILLY,  
JOHN O'REILLY, THOMAS RUSHOOK, O.P.;  
NICHOLAS MAC BRADY.

## MATTHEW MAC DHUIBHNE (1307-1314)

THE *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1314, have the *obit* of Matthew Mac Dhuibhne (Mac Givney), "Bishop of the Breifne." Similar entries are given by the *Four Masters* and the *Annals of Ulster*. The date of Bishop MacDhuibhne's election is not mentioned in any of the records of the period, but by inference it may be ascribed to the later part of 1307. It is evident that he was Bishop Maurice's immediate successor.

The *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 1296, have the *obit* of Maol-Pedair O' Duibhgennain,\* "Archdeacon of Breiffne from Druim-Cliabh to Ceanannus."

## PATRICK O'CRIDIGAN (1314-1328)

Patrick O'Cridigan succeeded in 1314. He belonged to a West Breifne family, the modern form of whose

\* The modern surname O'Duigennan. The residence of the family was at Baile Coillte Foghair, now Castlefore, Co. Leitrim. The O'Duigennans were the bards of Breiffne and were living at Castlefore in 1636. One of them assisted O'Cleirigh in collecting materials for the *Annals* now known as the *Four Masters*. In the ruins of the old church of Fenagh may be seen a monument, dated 1671, and erected by "Torna O'Dugenan, Sacerdos et Rector." O'Donovan believes that this Torna was Parish Priest of Fenagh in that year. See *Ordnance Survey Letters*, Mohill, June 26, 1836.



name is O'Cregan. In 1450 the death occurred of Andrew Ytridagan, pastor of Drumlease, and in the same year Donatus Ytridagan was recommended for the vacant parish.\* These are Latinised forms of the name.

On February 24th, 1320, Bishop O'Cridigan assisted in the Friary of Lisgool at the consecration of Nicholas Mac Catasaíd (Mac Casey), Bishop of Clogher.† The consecrating prelate was Michael, Bishop of Derry, who was also assisted by Thomas, Bishop of Raphoe.

The *Four Masters*, sub anno 1328, have the entry: "The Bishop of Breifne, O'Cridigan, died." This entry does not furnish his Christian name, but Ware (*op. cit.*) supplies the omission. Cotton, while stating that *Patrick* succeeded in 1314 could only surmise that he was identical with the bishop whose *obit* is recorded by the *Four Masters*.‡ Collating the evidence there can be no doubt that the *Patrick* of Cotton and Ware is identical with the bishop whose demise is recorded in 1328.

#### CONCOBUR MAC CONSNAMHA (1328-1355)

Bishop Concobur Mac Consnamha, who succeeded on the death of Bishop O'Cridigan, belonged to the well known Breiffne family of Mac Consnamha, whose tribal territory of Muintir-Cionaith (still traditionally remembered as Muintir Kenny) lay west of Loch Allen and north of the Arigna mountains.§ At a later period the name became attenuated to Mac Kinnawe, or MacKinaw. But in most cases, on the mistaken assumption that this represented *Cenn-atha* (or "head of the ford"), the name by a curious metamorphosis

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 251.

† Ware, *Bishops*, p. 227.

‡ *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae*, s.v. "Kilmore."

§ The territories of Tir-Tuathail (coextensive with Kilronan parish in Ardagh Diocese) and Muintir Cionaith are separated by the Arigna River.

was translated (or transformed) into "Forde" which is, therefore, based on a false etymology. The name, as clearly indicated by its earliest recorded forms, is *Cu-Snamha*, i.e., the hound of the swimming, and has reference to some of the swimming feats of the progenitors of the clan.

The comparatively small territory of Muintir-Cionaith is now represented by the Parish of Inishmagrath (or Drumkeeran). O'Dugan, in his *Topographical Poems*, written in the early fourteenth century, has it that "Mac Consnamha is over Clann Chionaoith." The Muintir-Cionaith belonged to the Muintir Maolmordha, i.e., O'Reilly, branch of the Ui-Briuin Breiffne, and Consnamha and Raghallach, the progenitors of the Muintir-Cionaith and Muintir-Maolmordha, respectively, were—according to the most trustworthy genealogies—second cousins.\*

The Castle of Mac Consnamha was built on an island—Inis-na-Conaire—in Loch Allen. In 1530 when West Breiffne was "destroyed and desolated" by the army of O'Donnell we are told by the *Four Masters* that O'Donnell's forces "burned the best wooden house in all Ireland, i.e., the mansion of Mac Consnamha on Loch Allen." Near the summit of Inis-na-Conaire is shown a heap of stones beside which there are some clumps of bushes; this is now all that remains to mark the site of the ancestral home of the chivalrous and noble chieftains of Muintir-Cionaith.

Bishop Mac Consnamha died in 1355. In the *Annals of Ulster* he is described as "Bishop of the Breifne from Druim-Cliabh to Ceanannus."

#### RICHARD O'REILLY (1356-1369)

On the death of Bishop Mac Consnamha the diocesan

\* See the Pedigree of MacConsnamha as recorded by O'Donovan in the *Ordnance Survey Letters*—Cavan and Leitrim.



Chapter provided Richard O'Reilly\* to the vacant See, and the appointment was sanctioned early in 1356 by Pope Innocent VI. He is styled "Bishop of the Breifne" in the *Annals of Loch Cé*. In the Register † of Primate Sweteman of Armagh (1361-1380) we find several letters from Bishop O'Reilly to the Primate; the letters deal with matters of ecclesiastical discipline. Bishop O'Reilly seems to have been the possessor of an irascible temperament and was frequently in trouble with the higher ecclesiastical authorities on questions of discipline. In 1366 he was excommunicated by Primate Sweteman for breaches of discipline; but after due reparation he was absolved by Master Thomas Ossiridean (O'Sheridan) who was granted the necessary faculties by the Primate. For a few years the Primate directed the episcopal administration of the diocese. A memorandum, dated January 15th, 1368, issued from the Primate's residence at Dromeskyn, Co. Louth, to his clerks Masters James Scotelare and John Kenan states that he (the Primate) was then exercising episcopal jurisdiction in the Diocese *Tirbrunensis* and authorises the clerks, just named, to enter into negotiations with Bishop O'Reilly and terminate the dispute.

The meeting took place, as the *Register* informs us, "at Rathdycke, ‡ a place in the Diocese of Kilmore

\* Bishop Richard was a grandson of Giolla Iosa Ruaidh (*obit* 1330) as appears from the following entry in the Genealogy of Ó Cleirigh: "Fergal et Riocard Epscop, Enri, Gofraidh, Donnchadh clann Mhael Sechlainn m Giolla Isa Ruadh," i.e., "The children of Maol Sechlainn, son of Giolla Iosa Ruadh were, Fergal; Richard, the Bishop; Henry and Gofraidh."—*Book of Genealogies*, Royal Irish Academy, MS. 23 D 17.

† *A Calendar of the Register of Archbishop Sweteman*, edited by Rev. H. J. Lawlor, D.D. *Proc. Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxix, section C, 8.

‡ I have not identified Rathdycke with certainty. Clearly it was close to the Meath border and was convenient, as the Primate lived in County Louth. Dr. Lawlor suggests Rantavan, at Mullagh, and the identification is a likely one as the parishes of Mullagh and Moynalty are coterminous; but the names have no close resemblance. The original manuscript (which I have examined) is blurred and indistinct and the spelling of the name is not quite certain.

(Tirbrunensis) near Moyalthe, in the diocese of Meath."

Bishop O'Reilly was there sworn to abide by the commands of the Church (*de stando mandatis*) and received absolution and restoration of episcopal jurisdiction.

At this meeting Bishop O'Reilly was accompanied by Master Thomas Ossiridean, his official-general (i.e., Vicar General), Luke Mc Gauergan, Dionysius Ossiridean, Luke McMonchan, Patrick MacBrady, and other priests of the diocese, who swore that they would cause the letters about the foregoing to be drawn up and "sealed with the common seal of the bishop and clergy."

It may be of interest to add that in the writ of excommunication, dated August 27, 1366, the bishop and those obedient to him were

denounced as excommunicate in Kenlys [Ceanannus], Nobyr [Nobber], and Fauoria [Fore] in the Diocese of Meath, and near that of Kilmore . . . He [the Primate] now commands the above [officials] to make similar denunciations through the Diocese of Kilmore and elsewhere. . . .

On July 17th of the same year the Primate wrote to Philip O'Reilly, King of Breiffne, suggesting that a meeting or conference should be held "on some march of his country beyond Kellmagnean Beg." I take it that this refers to the Parish of Kilmainhamwood in Co. Meath and in Kilmore Diocese. On November 14th of the same year a metropolitan Visitation was held by the Primate "in the parish church of Kilmaynan in the Diocese of Kilmore." Bishop O'Reilly and Patrick MacBrady, proctor of the clergy of Kilmore, attended this Visitation and a conference was held "in the cemetery, to the east end of the said church." That these extracts from Primate Sweteman's *Register* refer to the parish church of Kilmainhamwood is



obvious. A Protestant edifice now occupies the site of the old parish church; which stood in a prominent position overlooking the present village. South-east of the site of the church stretches the extensive cemetery mentioned in 1366.

Other references to this place occur in the *Register*. In a letter dated June 12th, 1366, the bishop was cited to appear "in the parish church of Kylmaynan beg"; and another letter of October 9th of the same year has the "parish church of Kilmagnean beg in Kilmore Diocese." Some editors have equated it with the townland of Kilmainham in the barony of Clanmahon, Co. Cavan, but a closer examination of the text would show this view to be untenable. In the first case there never was a parish church at Kilmainham in Clanmahon. Again, the parish church of Kilmainhamwood (as it is now called) is situated at the eastern extremity of Kilmore Diocese, and as the Primate then lived in Co. Louth—at Drominiskin and occasionally at Termonfechin—it was a most convenient place to meet for a conference.

The extracts from the *Register* are significant as showing that in 1366 the eastern boundaries of the diocese were the same as at the present day. At that time, of course, Kilmainham was a distinct parish; the union with Moybolge took place at a much later date.

Throughout the *Register* the diocese is called *Tirburnensis*, and from its pages we obtain valuable information, topographical and biographical, of the diocese in the fourteenth century. A careful study of the mediaeval *Registers* in the Library of Armagh would enhance our knowledge of the ecclesiastical history of Ireland in the Middle Ages.

The matrix of the seal used in 1366 is, without doubt, that which is now preserved in the British Museum. It bears the inscription:

S' : COMMVNE : CLERI : TIRBRIVNENSIS.

which may be translated: "Common Seal of the Clergy of Kilmore." Competent authorities, including Sir C. H. Read and Mr. I. C. R. Armstrong, have closely examined this seal and have declared that it belongs to the fourteenth century.\* The seal displays the Virgin and Child seated on a throne under a crocheted canopy; on her right is shown an episcopal figure (probably St. Feidhlimidh) kneeling. It is made of brass, circular, and is  $1\frac{7}{8}$  inches in diameter with loop at back.† Although this matrix belongs to the fourteenth century yet it is evident that the original seal is of much greater antiquity. According to Sir C. H. Read the matrix was already in the possession of the British Museum in 1838 "and may have been presented by one Dr. O'Reilly." A representation of the seal, neatly sculptured, is displayed over the main entrance to the new parish church of St. Michael, Cootehill.

Bishop O'Reilly died in 1369 when his *obit* is entered in the *Annals of Loch Cé*: "Richard O'Raighilligh, Bishop of the Breifne, in *Christo quievit*." His episcopate was an untranquil one and his actions led to censure and excommunication. But from the meagre details of his life which have been recorded it is clear that ill-health had seriously impaired his mental faculties, and that his condition both of mind and body was seldom normal. Under such circumstances his frequent violation of ecclesiastical discipline, causing much trouble to the Primate, may easily be explained. That he made due reparation before his death there can be no doubt.

\* Armstrong, *Irish Seal Matrices and Seals*: *British Museum Catalogue of Seals*, vol. iv. plate xii, No. 17. 379.

† See Frontispiece.



JOHN O'REILLY' (1369-1393)

THOMAS RUSHOOK, O.P. (1389-1393)

John O'Reilly was appointed to the Bishopric in 1369. Like his predecessor he seems to have got into trouble with the higher ecclesiastical authorities and in 1389 Thomas Rushook (or de Rushook), a Dominican, exiled Bishop of the English See of Chichester, was appointed to Kilmore by Pope Urban VI, and for a period of four years there was much controversy regarding the temporalities.\* For some reason it appears that about the year 1389 Bishop O'Reilly's episcopal rule was not acceptable to all and he was not recognised at Rome. Exactly in what way he failed in his episcopal duties is not fully explained in contemporary records, but he was deposed, temporarily at least, and Bishop Rushook was given charge of the diocese.

Thomas Rushook, who was Provincial of the English Dominicans, first appears in the pages of English ecclesiastical history in 1352, when he was Prior of the Black Friars of Hereford. It appears from the rather meagre accounts which we possess regarding his earlier years that he was a native of Hereford. In 1377 he was appointed confessor to King Richard II and in 1383 was promoted to the See of Llandaff by Pope Urban VI. He wielded much influence at the English Court and in October, 1385, was translated to the See of Chichester. In 1386 the tyrannical disposition of Richard II became manifest and many of the leading statesmen and ecclesiastics were banished. Bishop Rushook became involved in the complicated political imbroglio, incurred the displeasure of his crazy monarch, and was compelled to leave England for a time.

\* Vide Rev. Walter Gumbley, O.P., "A Friar at Court, Thomas Rushook, O.P., Bishop of Llandaff, Chichester and Kilmore, 1383-1393," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Sept., 1920 : Cf. *De Annalis Hiberniae* vol. i, p. 255.

Declared guilty of high treason he was banished into Ireland for life and ordered to reside in the city of Cork or its immediate neighbourhood. Translated to Kilmore he was unable to secure the temporalities which were retained by Bishop O'Reilly. The revenues of Kilmore were so small that Bishop Rushook's friends petitioned Parliament that a subsistence might be assigned to him for life; whereupon, he was granted an allowance of £40 per year. This pension was paid to him regularly from March, 1390, until January, 1393. We have no evidence that he ever took possession of the See of Kilmore although recognised as bishop for a few years. It seems probable that for some time at least he acted in the capacity of Coadjutor. Towards the end of his life he returned to his native land, to which he seems to have been very much attached despite his bad treatment at the hands of the king and the political disgrace which overshadowed his life and brought him finally to the grave. Once more at the royal court he was vainly endeavouring to regain favour when death overtook him in 1393. He passed away at Sele, in Kent (where he appears to have resided), and was buried within the church of that place.

In the same year—1393—Bishop O'Reilly also passed away. His *obit* is entered by the *Four Masters* and the *Annals of Loch Cé* thus: "John, son of Geoffrey O'Reilly, Bishop of Breifne, died." Whatever crux may have arisen in 1389 seems to have been satisfactorily adjusted before his death, and he exercised plenary episcopal jurisdiction over his diocese.

At this period existed the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Kilmore. Archdeacon John Lynch of Tuam in his unpublished Latin manuscript *De Praesulibus Hiberniae*, compiled in the seventeenth century, has the following reference to it:

Statua B. Virginis Kilmorae in Hibruin [i.e., Ui-Briuin] vocem humanam et miracula ediderit.



which may be translated : " The Statue of the B.V.M. of Kilmore, in Breiffne, which spoke with a human voice and performed many miracles." Archdeacon Lynch, the distinguished author of *Cambrensis Eversus*, was a native of Galway where he was born about 1600 ; he died in exile, probably at St. Malo, about 1673. His contemporary and patron was Primate Hugh O'Reilly from whom, most likely, he obtained his information concerning Kilmore. No later reference to the miraculous statue of Kilmore has been discovered, nor are we informed whether it survived the iconoclasm of the sixteenth century and after.

#### NICHOLAS MACBRADY (1394-1421)

Early in 1394 the Chapter of Kilmore elected Nicholas\* MacBrady to the vacant See. He was Rector of Cuil Brighdin, a benefice *sine cura* in MacBrady's territory in East Breiffne. The election having been duly confirmed by Pope Boniface IX, the bishop-elect proceeded to Rome, where he was consecrated on August 27th, 1395.

The territory of Cuil Brighdin, i.e., the corner or territory of the MacBradys, comprised the greater part of the Parishes of Castletara, Drung and Laragh. To this district Bishop MacBrady belonged and here he laboured as rector. In the fifteenth century Cuil Brighdin was practically co-extensive with Castletara, and was in general use as the tribal name. An entry in the Papal documents relating to Kilmore and dated 1429 refers to Philip MacBrady, perpetual vicar of " Culbridin, alias of the parish church of St. Patrick of Casselterien."† In 1398 a petition was presented to Pope Boniface IX on the part of Augustine MacBrady

\* Ware calls him " Roderick," which is incorrect.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 233.

stating that the vicarage of Drung, to which St. Brigid's parish church of Laragh is canonically united, was vacant by the promotion of Gilbert MacBrady\* to the bishopric of Ardagh, and that he, the said Augustine, who had been provided to succeed him, was entitled to the fruits of the benefice.† Augustine MacBrady is again mentioned in 1409 as perpetual vicar of "Drong and Leatrach canonically united."‡ He died in 1428. The *obit* of Matthew Mac Conaing, vicar of Laragh (Leat Rat, i.e., half rath), is entered in the *Annals of Ulster*, sub anno 1490. The *Annals of Loch Cé*, sub anno 1348, have "Donnchadh Mac Bradaigh dux of Cuil Brighdin, *quievit in Christo*." The death of MacBrady, "Chief of the Cuil Brighdh," is entered by the *Four Masters*, sub anno 1412.

In 1378 the annalists record the *obit* of Domhnall Mac Bradaigh, chief of *Teallach Cerbhaill*, or of *Cuil Brighdin*, according to the *Four Masters*. In early records *Teallach Cerbhaill* (i.e., the family, or descendants, of *Cerbhaill*—one of the ancestors of the MacBradys) occurs as an *alias* for *Cuil Brighdin*. The genealogy of the MacBradys is given thus by Dubhaltach Mac Fírhisigh :

Niall, son of Domnall, son of Donnchaidh, son of Gille Iosa, son of Tighernain, son of Gallbruit, son of Domnaill, son of Bradaigh in Gesdaill, son of Cerbuill, son of Maolmordha, son of Cernachain, son of Duibh Dothra, son of Dunchaidh, etc. §

\* In the Papal Bull he is called "Gilbert alias Comedinus Mac Bradayach in priest's orders . . . *litterarum scientia peditus, vite ac morum decorus*, etc." He ruled the Diocese of Ardagh from 1395 to 1400.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 242.

‡ Lawlor, *A Calendar of the Register of Archbishop Fleming* (Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. xxx, 1911.)

§ "Genelach Meg Bhradaigh"—*Book of Genealogies*, compiled in the period 1630-1670. The section dealing with Breiffne was completed in Galway in 1649 as appears from a note in the work. The original manuscript, a work of great worth, is now preserved in the Library of University College, Dublin.



Cerbuill, son of Maolmordha, was the progenitor of the Teallach Cerbhaill. According to Mac Fírbhisigh (*Op. cit.*) this Maolmordha had twelve sons among whom were Gairbeth, ancestor of the Teallach nGairbeth (Tullaghgarvey) and Cerbhaill, "a quo Teallach Cerbhaill .i. Még Bhrádaigh"—that is, "ancestor of Teallach Cerbhaill, i.e., Mac Bradaigh."

It is not always possible to establish with certainty the periods during which these personages flourished, and the genealogists rarely supply dates. Duibh Dothra of the above genealogy was, most probably, identical with "Dubhdothrae, tigherna Ua mBriuin Cualann" whose *obit* is entered by the *Four Masters* sub anno 738. The *Annals of Ulster* have sub anno 742: "Iugulatio Duibdoithre regis nepotum Briuin," referring obviously to the same person. That this Duibh Dothra was the ruler of the territory of the Ui-Briuin is manifest from the entry in the *Annals of Tighearnach* corresponding to the year 742: "Guin Duib Dothra ríg Húa mBriuin agus Conmacne."\*

Cerbhaill was third in descent from Duibh Dothra, so we may infer that he lived in the ninth century. Domhnall, chief of Teallach Cerbhaill, who died in 1378 may have been identical with Domnall, son of Donnchaidh, of the genealogy. The first entry relating to the MacBradys occurs in the *Four Masters* sub anno 1256.

O'Donovan's conjecture that the Cuil Brighdh of the *Four Masters* was identical with the present Kilbride, a parish on the banks of Loch Sheelin, in Meath Diocese, is therefore erroneous.† Such an error is, however, no

\* *Revue Celtique*, xvii, 245.

† Letter dated June 6, 1836. St. Patrick was patron of the churches of Drung and Castletara. Laragh was dedicated to St. Brigid, a fact of which O'Donovan was unaware when compiling his notes from this parish. The church of Cliffernagh (*Cliaithbhearna*) in Laragh parish was in Cuil Brighdin and a MacBrady foundation. In the townland of Killycrone in Laragh parish, and near the site of the old parish church, are shown traces of the site of another early church.

reflection on the great topographer, as the documents which would have exemplified the matter were then inaccessible to him. The title Cuil Brighdin as an alias for Castletara has long since passed out of use, and is no longer remembered locally. It is not marked on the early maps. The Bradys are still numerically strong in their ancient patrimony.\*

In January, 1407, Bishop MacBrady paid his diocesan taxes to the Holy See as duly recorded in the Papal records.† During his episcopate the diocese, owing to internal and external civil strife, was in a troubled state, and he became involved in much litigation, both civil and ecclesiastical. From the *Register* of Primate Fleming we learn many particulars regarding the affairs of the diocese during his episcopate. A letter of inhibition, dated September 15th, 1408, from the Primate to Bishop MacBrady states that:

Augustine MacBrady, Vicar of Dronge [Drung] and Learath [Laragh], in the Diocese of Kilmore (*Tirburnensis*), presented to the Primate sitting in St. John's Church, Athirde [Ardee], an appeal from the hearing of the bishop to the Court of Armagh. The Primate admitted the appeal and cited him to appear in St. Peter's Church, Drogheda, on October 1st of the same year. . . .

Towards the end of 1408 a peculiar crux arose in the diocese. David O'Farrelly, rector of the Church of St. Brigid of Disertfynchil,‡ was in Rome on a visit and

\* Most Rev. Dr. John Brady, the first Bishop of Perth, Western Australia, was a native of Castletara parish, where he was born about the year 1800. Ordained to the priesthood about 1826, he served for some years in Mauritius, when he was transferred to the Diocese of Sydney. In 1845 he was appointed Bishop of West Australia. He founded the Cathedral of Perth. It may be noted that he was the first priest who celebrated Mass in Western Australia, and built the first church there. He retired in 1853 in failing health and died in 1871 at Amelie-les-Bains, near Perpignan, France. His portrait is in St. Patrick's College, Cavan. Materials for a biography of him are being collected.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 255.

‡ I have identified the *Disert Fincheall* (i.e., St. Fincheall's Hermitage) of our ecclesiastical records with the present parish of Kildrumsherdan.



while there a false report of the death of Bishop MacBrady appears to have reached the Papal Court. Thereupon, Pope Gregory XII, at Rimini, provided David to the Bishopric of Kilmore and had him consecrated. On March 26th, 1409, "David, Episcopus Triburnien, in Ybernia," promised, in person, to pay the Papal taxes.

On returning to Ireland a strange and unusual situation confronted Bishop David. Bishop MacBrady was alive and active, and the rumour of his death proved to have been a hoax. It would be idle now to speculate on the probable origin of the rumour, but it is not unlikely that it may have been an invention of some of Bishop MacBrady's enemies. Such a rumour would then be difficult to verify owing to the slow modes of travel obtaining in the fifteenth century.

Primate Fleming was called upon to readjust the situation. From his *Register* we find that Bishop MacBrady, and "David, claiming to be bishop," together with Master Thomas, Archdeacon of Kilmore, were cited to a Visitation at St. Patrick's Church, Moybolge, on July 18th, 1409. The matter was duly rectified and David's appointment was annulled soon afterwards. David then started for Rome, where he died in 1410, as we can infer from a reference to him in the *Register* of Pope John XXIII, dated December 29th of that year.\* It is scarcely necessary to add that David has no legitimate claim to occupy a place in the episcopal succession of our diocese. Nevertheless, we cannot doubt that he accepted consecration in good faith and was the victim of unforeseen circumstances.

Other problems of a pressing nature were confronting Bishop MacBrady at the same time. As already pointed out in these pages a large number of the parish churches

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 243. He had gone to Rome to appeal against the Primate's decision.

of Kilmore belonged to the Abbeys of Ceanannus (Kells) and Fore in Meath Diocese, and very considerable revenues were paid annually to these Abbeys out of the church lands of Kilmore. These tithes had been paid from early Christian times and even in the fifteenth century the origin of these impositions seemed to be veiled in obscurity. But tradition had established their permanency. However, as Kilmore grew in importance, with some important Abbeys within its boundaries, the payment of these tithes to outside Abbeys seemed to become unpopular, and early in the fifteenth century we find evidence of attempts being made to retain these revenues for diocesan purposes.

In 1410 Primate Fleming wrote to Bishop MacBrady on the subject and the substance of the correspondence preserved in the Primate's *Register* helps to illustrate the rather intricate points involved:

The Prior and Convent of Fauoria [Fore] in the Diocese of Meath complain that certain clerks [i.e., clerics] and laymen of the Diocese of Kilmore (*Triburnensis*) detain the tithes, oblations, and obventions of churches appropriated and united to the priory, and therefore, by the provincial constitutions of the church of Armagh, have incurred sentence of greater excommunication. The bishop is therefore to admonish all who have done so to restore such tithes, etc., within twelve days or to make a reasonable composition for them, and if this is not done to excommunicate them. If he is negligent or remiss in the matter, the archbishop will do justice to the prior and convent.

But the trouble was not peculiar to Kilmore; the neighbouring Diocese of Clogher presented similar occurrences. A letter written by the Primate on February 21st, 1411, and entered in the *Register*, states that:

Gilbert Oscheyg [O'Shea], clerk of the Diocese of



Clogher, disturbs the Priors of St. Mary's, Louth, and St. John's, Athirde [Ardee], in their possession as rectors of the parish churches of Dounaghmayn [Donaghmoyne] and Rosse [Magheross], Diocese of Clogher, and disputes their title to them, though these churches were lawfully appropriated to the priories, and they had been in peaceful possession of them from time immemorial; and that the priors had appealed to the Apostolic See, and "tutorie" to the court of Armagh. The clergy of the diocese of Clogher (Clochoren) are commanded to inhibit Oscheyg from disturbing the priors in their possession while the appeal is pending.

In a letter dated July 21st, of the same year, and substantially the same as that just quoted, the Primate refers to a specific case in Kilmore Diocese. Donat Ogoun (i.e., O'Gowan), rector of the parish church of Disert Fincheall, and the immediate successor to David O'Farrelly, disputed the right of the Prior of Fore to the revenues of the parish although "from time immemorial" the church had been appropriated to the Priory. The Prior appealed to the Primate, who examined the facts of the case, and the decision was in favour of the Abbey of Fore. According to the provincial constitutions of Armagh the various rectors and hereditary patrons—the latter being laymen who according to the custom of the time had charge of the church endowments and termon lands—were bound to pay an annual revenue to the Abbeys of Ceanannus and Fore. Although the rights of these Abbeys to receive revenues had long been established yet the amounts to be paid may have been considered excessive and the question caused prolonged controversy at the time.

From Papal documents we obtain further details regarding Donat O'Gowan. When the rectory of "St. Brigid of Disertfynchill" was vacant by the appointment of David O'Farrelly to the bishopric, as

above described, the vacant benefice was conferred by Pope John XXIII on Donatus Ogaband. The following document is dated December 29th, 1410 :

Subsequently, however, it became known to the Pope, on the part of said Donatus, that the aforesaid church is not governed by a rector, but that formerly a certain perpetual benefice without cure of souls, *rectoria ipsius ecclesie nuncupatum in ipsa ecclesia auctoritate apostolica fundatum seu erectum fuerit*, and was held by the aforesaid David at the time of his said provision. Wherefore said Donatus fears lest his Bulls of Provision should be reckoned surreptitious, and that the said benefice which he holds, was not, and is not, void in the way named above, but by the death of said David, which occurred lately *in curia Romana*.\*

The Pope duly confirmed the Bull of Provision, but soon afterwards Donatus resigned and his successor was David MacBrady, who died in 1423, and whose successor in turn was Philip MacBrady.

In other parts of the diocese the resistance to the payment of the revenues was manifest and proved a source of much trouble for the bishop. In 1411 Patrick O'Sheridan succeeded as rector of Kilmore Parish and in the following year brought certain charges against Bishop MacBrady at Rome as well as at the Court of Armagh. Writing on May 24th, 1413, to Bishop Philip Nangle of Clonmacnoise and the Chapter and clergy of Kilmore the Primate refers to these unjust charges and accusations and inhibits the clergy from doing anything to prejudice the appeal of Bishop MacBrady to the Holy See. Kilmore parish church was a dependency of Fore, and although the cause of the dispute between Patrick O'Sheridan and Bishop MacBrady is not recorded yet we may infer that the dispute over the tithes was the real difficulty.

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 243.



On July 5th, 1419, Augustine MacBrady, perpetual vicar of the parishes of Drung and Laragh, then canonically united, represented to Pope Martin V that he had not only the care of souls in these two parishes, but was also bound to keep the two churches in repair, practise hospitality *juxta morem patriae*, and bear all the other burdens inherent to his office and as

the tithes and the greater part of the revenues of these two churches are payable to the Prior and Convent of the monastery of Fore, O. S. B., in the Diocese of Meath, what remains is so scanty and meagre, that it does not suffice for his fitting maintenance and for the discharge of his official obligations. Thereupon the Pope . . . directed the Bishop of Ardagh, *vocatis dictis Priore et Conventu et aliis qui fuerint evocandi*, to make diligent inquiry regarding the matter of complaint, and if he should find it to be as represented, to assign all and singular the revenues, rights, dues and emoluments of the churches in question (saving two-thirds of the grain, to be taken by the aforesaid Prior and convent) for the increase of the income of the perpetual vicar, or to assign from the income, etc., to the said Augustin and his successors *pro tempore*, such a part thereof as shall be sufficient for their fitting support, and for the due discharge of all their official obligations.\*

The payment of these revenues to Ceanannus and Fore continued for many years later but the terms seem to have been modified in deserving cases. From the *Inquisition* of 1609 we find that of the tithes accruing from the parish of "Killsardinny" (Killdrumsherdan) one-third was paid to the vicar and two-thirds to the Prior of Fore; the proportions in Kilmore parish were the same. In the case of Drung and Laragh, as may be observed from the report of the *Inquisition*, a more favourable adjustment followed the appeal of Augustine

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i., p. 245.

MacBrady. But the question remained for long a thorny one and proved a source of much litigation.

Among the bishops attending the Provincial Council, held in St. Peter's Church, Drogheda, on October 12th, 1411, was Nicholas MacBrady, *Triburnensis*. He proved himself a wise and prudent ruler and was a guiding light to his people amid the troubles and dissensions of his age.

He died in 1421,† after an episcopate of 27 years. In chronicling his *obit* the *Four Masters* pay a simple but eloquent tribute to his worth :

Nicholas MacBrady, Bishop of Breifne, a man distinguished for wisdom, piety, chastity and purity, died.

† Brady (*Episcopal Succession*) erroneously enters the date of his death as 1420. Lynch (*De Praesulibus Hiberniae*) agrees with the Annals in ascribing his *obit* to 1421.



## CHAPTER XVI

BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE FIFTEENTH  
CENTURY

DONATUS O'GOWAN, ANDREW MACBRADY, THADY  
MAGAURAN, JOHN O'REILLY, [CORMAC MAGAURAN],  
THOMAS MAC BRADY.

## DONATUS O'GOWAN (1421-1444)

DONATUS O'GOWAN,\* perpetual vicar of St. Patrick's parish church, Ballintemple, was provided to the vacant bishopric by Pope Martin V on August 13th, 1421. In the Papal document of provision he is described as :

in priest's orders, who on trustworthy testimony had been recommended to him [Pope Martin V] for his learning, blameless life and conversation, foresight and prudence in matters spiritual and temporal, etc., and whom, *ob suorum exigenciam meritorum sibi et fratribus suis (cardinalibus) acceptum*, he has provided to said church as its bishop and pastor. . . .†

The Pope, on June 30th, 1422, granted permission to Donatus to receive consecration from any bishop of his choice. On April 13th, 1423, when he promised to pay the Papal taxes, he is styled Elect of Kilmore. Towards the end of the same year he received consecration.

\* In Papal records the name usually assumes a Latinised form "Ogoband." The old Gaelic name "O'Gowan," or Mac Gowan, is now, in Breiffne, usually anglicised "Smith."

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 256. Furthermore, Pope Martin V ignores the appointment of David O'Farrelly. David's appointment was never confirmed.

An interesting letter of Bishop Donat, *Triburnia*, dated September 6th, 1438, from the "House of the Friars Minor of Cavan," is to be found in the *Register* of Primate Swayne of Armagh.\* The letter, which has been already quoted, has reference to the grant of the Coarbship of Drumlane to Nicholas O'Farrelly. Bishop Donat—or Domhnall, the Gaelic form of the name—ruled the See until 1444, when he resigned early in the same year, probably to enter the monastery.

#### ANDREW MACBRADY (1444-1455)

Andrew MacBrady, Archdeacon of Kilmore and Rural Dean of Drumlane, was provided as bishop on March 9th, 1444.† On March 17th of the same year the Papal Bulls were entrusted to Robert de Martellis, an honourable man and a prominent citizen and merchant of Florence, who promised the *Camera Apostolica* and the College of Cardinals that within the next ensuing eight months he would either restore these said Bulls sealed, as they had been consigned to him, or pay their tax of common and minute services. Shortly afterwards Bishop MacBrady was consecrated.

In 1454 he raised to cathedral status the parish church of St. Feidhlimidh, Kilmore, and placed in it thirteen canons. From the *Register* of Pope Calixtus III it appears that Andrew, Bishop of *Triburnia*, seeing that he had neither a cathedral church nor canons, summoned the clergy of the diocese and with their consent erected the parish church into a cathedral. However, as these steps had been taken without the permission of the Holy See and as the Bishop was doubtful of their validity he humbly requested Pope Nicholas V—who then occupied the Papal Chair—to confirm them by

\* King's *Early History of the Primacy of Armagh*, p. 37.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 256.



apostolic authority. The Pope thereupon ordered a Bull to be addressed to the Prior of Drumlane,

directing him, should he find what was related above to be as stated, to approve and confirm by apostolical authority the erection of the above parish church into a cathedral, and the creation of the canonries before mentioned, *et quecunque inde secula fuerint*, and to supply for all defects which might have occurred in the above proceedings.\*

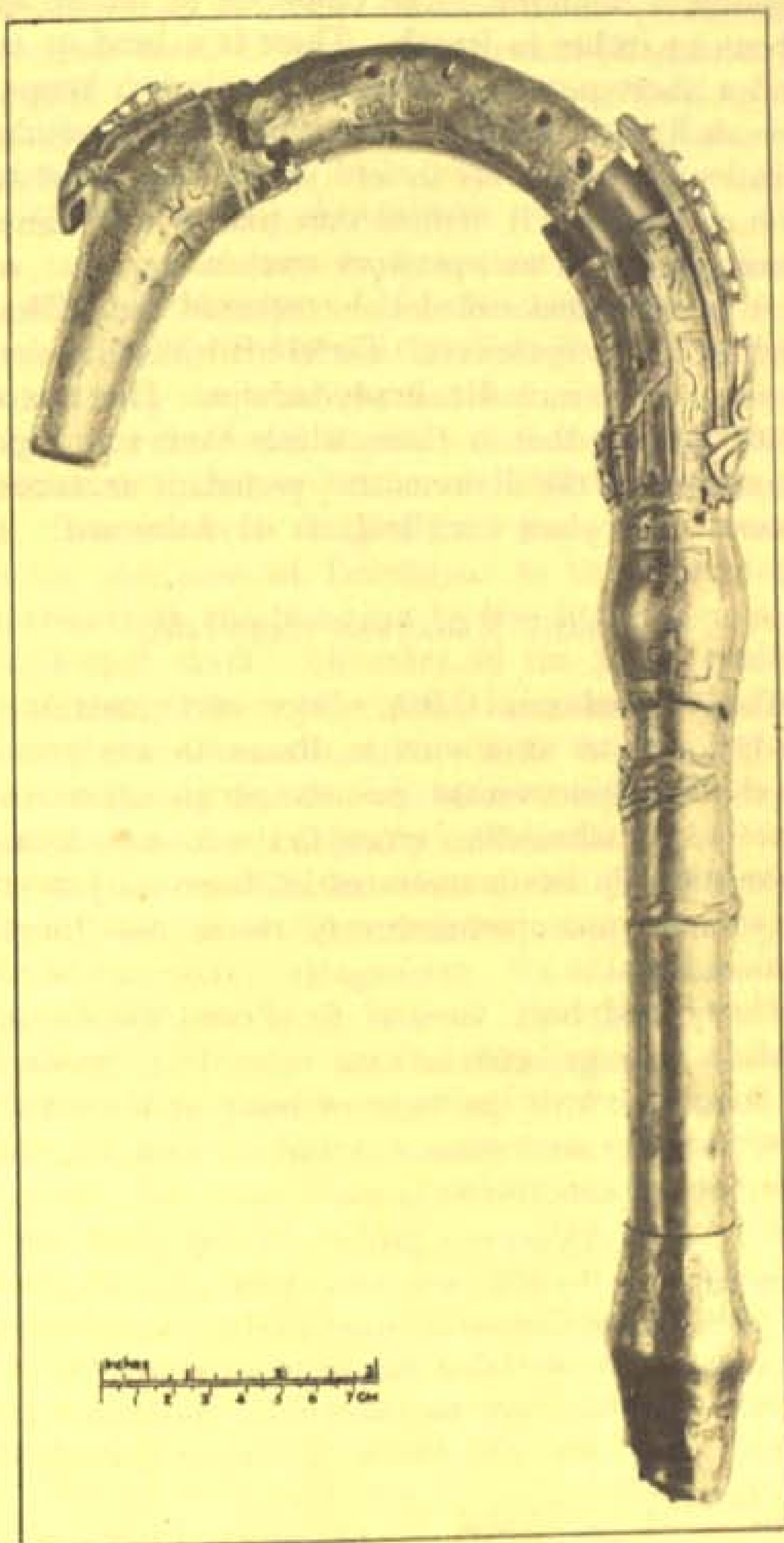
Before the Bull was expedited Pope Nicholas died, but lest the bishop and his chapter should be deprived of the concessions intended for them, his successor, Calixtus III, issued a Bull, dated April 20th, 1455, confirming that of his predecessor.

A month later—May, 1455—Bishop MacBrady died. In converting St. Feidhlimidh's parish church into a cathedral Bishop MacBrady was duly observing the early monastic traditions of the sixth century. We have already seen that Kilmore parish contained the *sedes episcopalis* long before 1454—in fact from the days when St. Feidhlimidh resided there. By inference from the recorded facts we may assume that the newly endowed cathedral was enlarged and renovated by Bishop MacBrady, and that it occupied the site of the sixth century "great church" of St. Feidhlimidh. It was an event of great importance in the history of the diocese. Although no longer serving its original purpose the old cathedral of Kilmore still stands, and its massive walls and outline of the once splendid High Altar window bear testimony to the skill of Breiffne's ecclesiastical builders in the fifteenth century.

The crozier of the MacBradys is preserved in the Royal Irish Academy collection in the National Museum, Dublin.† It belonged to County Cavan, but the exact

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 252.

† Coffey, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Christian Period*, p. 64; Sir William Wilde, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. vii (1857), p. 178.



*Photo]*

THE CAVAN CROZIER

*[National Museum*



locality is unknown. The crozier is of bronze and is about 13 inches in length. There is a head or crook, and a short portion of the stem with two knops. It reveals little attempt at ornamentation. A number of small plain crosses are incised on the uppermost knop. The curved part is divided into panels, and there are some remains of an openwork crest.

It is sometimes called the crozier of the O'Bradys, and its history is obscure. Certain it is that it belonged to some of the early MacBrady bishops. Like the other Irish croziers, that is those which have survived the fanaticism of the Reformation period, it remained in some hidden place until brighter days dawned.

#### THADY MAGAURAN (1455-1465)

Thady Magauran, O.S.A., Prior of Drumlane, succeeded. While on a visit to Rome he was provided to the bishopric vacant *per obitum quondam Andree Macbradaus, ultimi illius episcopi extra Romanam curiam defuncti*.<sup>\*</sup> He was consecrated in Rome on July 11th, 1455, and given permission to retain his Priory in *commendam*.

Thady had been vicar of St. Feidhlimidh's parish church, Kilmore, and in 1444 entered the monastery of Drumlane with the right of being appointed Prior after his vows were made. A Bull of Pope Eugene IV specifies the conditions:

Tycheus [Thady] perpetual vicar of St. Fylemey's parish church, Kilmore, wished to enter among the [Augustinian] Canons of Drumlane [and an order dated 1444 was made] that he should be received there provided there was no canonical impediment in the way, and that the priory should not be thereby unduly burdened, and also that after he had made his vows he should be appointed Prior there in

<sup>\*</sup> *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 256.

succession to Patrick Offerkeallaych [O'Farrelly] deceased, *vocato Cormaco* Magawrakan [Magauran], a Regular Canon of St. Austin, lately promoted to the bishopric of Ardagh, and who for more than five years has held, and still holds possession of this priory on the plea *dispositionis ordinarie*.\*

On his appointment to Drumlane in 1444 Thady resigned the vicarage of St. Feidhlimidh's church, but was permitted to retain the vicarage of St. Brigid's church, Urney, to which he had been already collated in 1436. In the *Papal Registers* we find Bishop Thady described as springing "from a noble even princely stock" renowned for hospitality. He was descended from the chieftains of Tullyhaw. At the time of his appointment to the bishopric he was in Rome paying the episcopal taxes. An entry in the *Papal records* (*Lib. obligat.*), dated July 20th, 1455, has "Thadeus Electus Triburnen personaliter obtulit florenos 33½."† It is worth noting that this was his *third* visit to Rome—a journey of no small difficulty in those days.

The *Register* of Calixtus refers to the promotion of Thady to the See of Kilmore and the appointment of Peter Magaurughan (Magauran), "a canon of the Augustinian Priory of St. Mary's, Drumlane," as his successor in the Priory. In the following year we find this Peter Magaurughan reporting to Pope Calixtus that the Bull authorising Thady to retain the Priory of Drumlane *in commendam* after his promotion to the bishopric was surreptitious as it was obtained on the false plea that the revenues of the See were not sufficient for his support. The Pope thereupon commanded the Dean and Archdeacon of Ardagh, and Eugene Oradochain, a canon of Ardagh, to inquire into the facts of the case.‡ The episcopal revenues of Kilmore were then comparatively small and this was sufficient argument in

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 251.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 257.

‡ *Op. cit.*, p. 252. Letter dated July 3, 1456.



his favour for the retention of portion at least of the revenues of Drumlane.

Bishop Thady was present at the Provincial Council, presided over by Archbishop Bole, in Drogheda, in June, 1460. He died in the early part of the year 1465 as appears from the Brief of appointment of his successor.

An entry relative to a Bishop Mac Dhuibhne (Mac Givney) who died in 1464 is found in our Annals and has puzzled some commentators on our episcopal succession. The *Four Masters*, sub anno 1464, have the following entry: "Fearsithi Mac Dhuibhne, bishop of the two Breifnes, died." His name is also entered in Ware's list, and by Cotton under the same year.\* The *obit* in the *Annals of Ulster* is as follows:

The bishop of the two Breifni, namely, Fersithi Mag Uibne, died this year on the 5th of the Kalends of December [November 27].

These entries would seem to suggest that perhaps the death of Bishop Thady had taken place earlier than 1465—in 1464 as Ware implies—and that Bishop Fersithi succeeded him. But a Roman document of May 17th, 1465, fortunately removes any doubt which may have existed on the point: the Brief of provision to the vacant bishopric clearly states that the See is "vacant by the death of Thady *extra Romanam curiam*,"† thus passing over the name of Fersithi Mac Dhuibhne. It is evident that the latter was a coadjutor. When raised to the dignity of the episcopate the sturdy Thady must have been advanced in years and required a coadjutor to assist in the administration of his extensive diocese. "Bishop of the two Breifnes" is, of course, the exact equivalent of "Bishop of

\* Ware's *Bishops*, p. 229; Cotton, *Fasti Ecclesiae Hibernicae*.

† *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 257: Reg. Paul II.

Breifne Ua Ruairc and Breifne Ua Raghallach," or of "Breifne from Druim-cliabh to Ceanannus," or of "Tirbruinensis"—which is the form to be found in earlier Papal documents. Although Bishop MacDhuibhne was never vested with plenary episcopal jurisdiction in Kilmore, yet from the notices in the *Annals* we may infer that he was an important figure in the ecclesiastical life of the diocese.

By a rescript of Pius II, dated January 9th, 1462, it appears that the rectory of the rural parts of the parish of Kilmore which was not specially reserved for the bishop's use was long vacant and belonged to the Benedictine Abbey of Fore. A petition from Cormac O'Sheridan, Canon of Kilmore, was sent to Rome requesting that the rectory be erected into a canonical prebend. Three judges—Cormac Magauran, Cormac Magranail (Reynolds), and Eugene O'Rodaghan—were directed to hold an inquiry and induct the petitioner.\* In 1471 we find Cormac O'Sheridan promising to pay the Papal taxes for the parishes of Kilmore and Ballintemple.

The Magaurans (*Mac Samhradhain*), chieftains of Tullyhaw (*Teallach Eathach*), are mentioned in the *Annals* as early as 1220. The genealogy of the family, compiled by Cu Coigríche Ó Cléirigh, circa 1650, is in his *Book of Genealogies*—Royal Irish Academy, MS. 23 D 17. There is also a genealogy in the *Book of Ballymote*. The Magauran *Duanaire*—also known as the *Book of the Mac Samhradhains*—a mid-fourteenth century vellum containing the fullest account we possess of the Magauran family is in the possession of the Right Hon. The O'Connor Don. This important manuscript contains fifty-four pages of Irish matter, mainly Bardic Poetry, and is one of the earliest books of family poems

\* Theiner, *Œtera Monumenta*, p. 434 : *Calendar of Papal Registers*, XI, p. 435.



now in existence in the Irish language.\* It throws some interesting sidelights on the manners and customs of the fourteenth century chieftains of Teallach Eathach.

The scribe of the existing *Duanaire*, which is only a fragment of a larger manuscript, appears to have been Ruaidhri Ó Cianán, who died in 1387. At the end of page 1 occurs the following note: "Ruaidhri Ó Cianán do sgríbh in duanair-se do Thomas mac Briain mic Dondchaidh mic Giolla-na-naemh mic Gilla Isu mic Gilla-na-naemh mic Muireadhaidh Mc Samhradhan." From this it is evident that the *Duanaire* was compiled by Ruaidhri Ó Cianán (Rory O'Keenan) for Thomas Magauran, chief of Teallach Eathach, who died in 1343. The *Four Masters* in chronicling the death of Ruaidhri Ó Cianán, sub anno 1387, describe him as "Saoi seanchadha agus ollamh Oirgiall," i.e., "a learned historian and ollamh of Oriel." The date of compilation of the *Duanaire* may be placed between the years 1339 and 1343. The manuscript which is much faded is now barely legible. The district of *Gleand nGaibhli*, i.e., Glangevlin, is mentioned in one of the poems.

### JOHN O'REILLY (1465-1476)

John O'Reilly, O.S.A., Abbot of Ceanannus (Kells), Co. Meath, was provided by Pope Paul II on May 17th, 1465. From the *Papal Registers* we learn that Paul II

after maturely considering with his brethren, the Cardinals, the matter of providing for the vacant church *personam utilem et fructuosam*, reflecting on the merits of John, Abbot of Kells, in the Diocese of Meath, *consideratus grandium virtutum meritis quibus personam suam illarum largitor, Dominus insignivit*,

\* Ó Raghallaigh, *The Magauran Duanaire—Irish Texts*, Fasciculus iv (1934).

Under its modernised form *MacGovern* the family is still numerically strong in its ancient patrimony of Tullyhaw. Members of the family have risen to positions of eminence in Church and State in America.

and that he, who in so praiseworthy a manner had presided over his monastery, would know how and be able (*sciet et poterit*), *auctore Domino*, to rule well and wisely the vacant church, hence made choice of said John as bishop of the aforesaid diocese, and by his Bull *Apostolatus officium*, dated St. Peter's, Rome, . . . set him over it as pastor, committing to him plenary power for its rule and administration in spirituals and temporals.\*

Bishop O'Reilly was consecrated early in 1467, having been privileged to receive consecration from any bishop of his choice.† On December 5th, 1466, a short time before his consecration, he paid the apostolic taxes to the Holy See. The proctor for the bishop in this year was John Macolmar *alias* Aluchi, vicar of the parish church of Enach (Annagh).

During his episcopate Breiffne suffered much from war and invasion and his task was a difficult one. He was a wise and energetic bishop, who laboured incessantly to mitigate the abuses which followed in the train of the English invasions.

Bishop O'Reilly was alive on May 26th, 1470, according to Ware's researches, but no later reference to him has, so far, been discovered.‡ The exact date of his death is a matter which awaits further investigation, but the available data show that it must be ascribed to the close of 1475, or the early part of 1476. A Brief of Pope Sixtus IV, dated November 4th, 1476, refers to the See of Kilmore as "vacant by the death of the last bishop" (*vacan per obitum ultimi Episcopi*). Another Brief, issued four years later, refers to the diocese as "vacant by the death of John," proving

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p. 257.

† In the Bull granting this permission he is called John Oragill. Brady (*Episcopal Succession*) enters him as "Engill"—a copyist's error.

‡ Archdeacon Lynch—*De Praesulibus Hiberniae*—has a reference to him in which the date May 14, 1470, is mentioned; probably Ware's reference was taken from the same source.



that the bishop referred to in 1476 was John O'Reilly. It is most probable from these references that he passed away in the early part of 1476. Evidently his closing years were spent in the seclusion of his monastery.

#### THOMAS MACBRADY (1480-1511)

On November 4th, 1476, Cormac Mac Gauran, Prior of Drumlane, was appointed to the vacant See and given permission to hold his Priory *in commendam*. But his appointment was never confirmed and after much litigation was finally annulled. It appears that soon after his appointment the question of his legitimacy was raised and after a prolonged inquiry the Holy See decided against him.\* His claim was set aside and on October 20th, 1480, Thomas MacBrady was provided to the bishopric. But Cormac never ceased to urge his own claims and for many years afterwards much trouble ensued in the diocese.

From the *Papal Registers* it appears that while the See was still under the rule of John O'Reilly (who was probably incapacitated through age or ill-health), Pope Sixtus IV

desiring when its next voidance should occur to set over it by the providence of the Apostolic See a useful and suitable person reserved its provision for that occasion specially to himself. Subsequently the said church being vacant by the death of John aforesaid outside the Roman *curia*, lest it should be subjected to the injury of a prolonged vacation Pope Sixtus turning *paternis et sollicitis studiis* his thoughts to the question of making a speedy and happy provision for the widowed church aforesaid, after mature deliberations thereupon with his brethren, the Cardinals, in view of the merits of Thomas, Archdeacon of

\* *Calendar of Papal Letters*, xii, p. 277.

said church of Kilmore, of noble race, born in legitimate wedlock and of legitimate age, and who, on trustworthy evidence, is recommended to him for his literary acquirements, integrity of life and conversation, etc., made choice of him for its rule and government.\*

Cormac Mac Gauran contested Thomas MacBrady's right to the bishopric and some friction resulted. In 1489 a Provincial Council, presided over by Dr. John Payne, Bishop of Meath, was held in the church of St. Mary's, Ardee, Co. Louth, to consider the respective claims of Cormac and Thomas. At that Council the Bishops of Clogher and Ardagh, together with the Bishop of Meath, were appointed to endeavour to find a solution of the crux. However, no satisfactory settlement was reached, and at a later Synod held in Drogheda, July 6th, 1495, over which the Primate, Octavian de Palatio, presided, both Cormac and Thomas presented themselves and were, strange to say, styled *Episcopi Kilmorensis*.†

In the Consistorial Archives there is a document, dated November 21st, 1483, which refers to Cormac "Electus Kilmorensis." This was seven years after his appointment and shows that the appointment never received the Papal sanction. We have no record of his ever having paid the Papal taxes, and the absence of such an entry lends additional weight to the belief that he never exercised episcopal authority in the diocese.‡

Notwithstanding the impediment which rendered Cormac's claim to the bishopric an impossible one yet the controversy continued and Cormac did not cease to urge his demands. That he believed he had a griev-

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, vol. i, p: 257.

† *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 86.

‡ Lynch—*De Praesulibus Hiberniae*—enters Thomas MacBrady (*Thomam Bradaeum*) as the successor to John O'Reilly, and passes over the name of Cormac Mac Gauran.



ance there can be no doubt, but as clearly expressed in Roman documents the Holy See could, on no account, yield to his demands. The Provincial Council of Ardee, in 1489, had decided against Cormac and in favour of Thomas. They had

adjudged the rule, administration and property of said church to said Thomas, and the proceedings regarding them of said Cormac they declared to be rash, unlawful and *de facto* presumptuous, and imposed on him perpetual silence, which sentence not having been appealed against, *in rem transivit indicatam*.\*

Cormac continuing to intrude himself into the rule and administration of the church, an appeal was made by the *de jure* bishop to the Pope

*ut dictam sententiam robur debite firmitatis obtinere faceret, aliasque sibi in premisis oportune providere de benignitate apostolica dignaretur*.†

Pope Julius II issued a Bull, dated 3rd Nones of June, 1512, commanding the Bishop of Meath, together with the Dean and Archdeacon of Kilmore, to review the decision of the Council of Ardee in favour of Bishop MacBrady.

Cormac and any others *evocandis* being cited, if it should be evident to them then that in the matter adjudicated upon the sentence had been rightly given, to cause it by apostolic authority *appellatione postposita*, to be firmly observed.‡

Thus ended this prolonged controversy. A few months after receiving the final decision Cormac passed away—before Christmas, 1512. His appointment in 1476 gives him no legitimate title to be numbered among the bishops of Kilmore, as fully explained in

\* *De Annatis Hiberniae*, p. 258.

† *Op. cit.*, Reg. Julius II.

‡ *Op. cit.*

the Papal documents of the period. The *Four Masters* enter his *obit* in the following carefully guarded words :

Cormac Magauran, who was called bishop in Breifne, died before Christmas.

Bishop Thomas MacBrady was an eminent ecclesiastic and in every way a worthy scion of the noble Breiffne family to which he belonged. He was the son of Andrew MacBrady and belonged to the territory of Cuil Brighdin (Castletara) where he was born about the year 1444. In 1474 he was appointed Archdeacon of Kilmore in succession to Eoghan O'Reilly.\*

Regarding his genealogy it may be necessary to correct some errors concerning him which seem to have been adopted without question even by well-informed Catholic historians. Some writers have interpreted a passage in the *Four Masters*, sub anno 1511, viz., that Thomas was the son of Andrew MacBrady, to mean that he was the son of a former Bishop of Kilmore—Andrew MacBrady, who died in 1455. This curious interpretation could only have arisen from a careless reading of the original passage, which is as follows :

Thomas, son of Andrew MacBrady, Bishop and Erenach of the two Breifnes during a period of thirty years.

In this passage it is sufficiently clear that it is to Thomas, rather than Andrew, that reference as bishop is made ; the clause, "son of Andrew MacBrady," is merely parenthetical. The punctuation in the original Gaelic may have made the construction somewhat vague, but a closer study of the available data would have avoided such an unwarranted inference. Furthermore, if the construction of the sentence should have left the least room for doubt—which it does not—it has been already shown that Bishop Andrew MacBrady ruled over the diocese for a period of *ten* years ; therefore

\* " Thomam Bradaeum Andrae filium, utriusque Brefniae annorum 30 spatio Episcopum et Archidiaconum "—*De Praesulibus Hiberniae*.



he could not have been the bishop referred to in the passage.\*

Bishop MacBrady died in 1511 at Dromahaire, County Leitrim, where he had gone to consecrate a church in the territory of the O'Ruaircs; he was then in his sixty-seventh year. The erection of the great Franciscan monastery of Dromahaire had been begun by O'Ruairc in 1508, and it was fitting that such a distinguished churchman as Bishop MacBrady should have consecrated it. It was his last ecclesiastical function. His body was carried back to Cavan and buried with full pomp and ceremony in the Franciscan monastery of St. Mary's. The *Four Masters*, in a lengthy eulogy, laud him as:

the only dignitary whom the English and Irish obeyed; a paragon of wisdom and piety; a luminous lamp that enlightened the laity and clergy by instruction and preaching; and a faithful shepherd of the church—after having ordained priests and persons in every degree—after having consecrated many churches and cemeteries—after having bestowed rich presents and food on the poor and the mighty, gave up his spirit to Heaven on the 4th of the Calends of March (or August), which fell on a Tuesday, at *Druim-da-ethiar*, having gone to Breifne [Ua Ruairc] to consecrate a church, in the sixty-seventh year of his age—and was buried in the monastery of Cavan, the day of the week being Friday.

This extract, unusually lengthy and eulogistic, shows that he died on February 26th, or July 29th, of that year. He was probably a member of the Franciscan Order. No trace of his tomb can now be found in the Abbey graveyard of Cavan; it has been long since swept away. In the Brief of appointment of his successor he is called "Thomas of good memory."

\* I am indebted to my friend Right Rev. Monsignor Richard Brady, Loretto Heights College, Colorado, U.S.A., for drawing my attention to some of the misinterpretations of the passage from the *Four Masters*. Cf. *Journal of the Breiffne Antiquarian and Historical Society*, vol. iii, (1927-28), pp. 103-105.

## CHAPTER XVII

## BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

DERMOT O'REILLY, O.S.A. ; EDMUND NUGENT, O.S.A. ;  
JOHN MACBRADY, HUGH O'SHERIDAN, RICHARD  
BRADY, O.F.M.

## DERMOT O'REILLY, O.S.A. (1511-1529)

TOWARDS the end of 1511 Dermot O'Reilly, O.S.A., Abbot of Ceanannus (Kells), County Meath, was appointed to the vacant See, and his consecration took place in the following year. Cormac Mac Gauran once more advanced his claim to the bishopric, but his claim was rejected and the appointment of Dermot confirmed.

Bishop Dermot was a famous canonist and his advice was frequently sought on all matters of ecclesiastical law. In 1523 he was appointed as arbitrator in an important suit between Archbishop Hugh Inge of Dublin and the Bishop and Chapter of Kildare regarding questions of rights of Visitation. Ware says of him that he was a man of learning and a lover of peace and tranquillity. He worked incessantly to promote peace, and as Breiffne was then in an unsettled condition he withdrew, in 1519, to the monastery of Swords, County Dublin, where for some years he officiated as vicar. He died at Swords in 1529.

## THE TEMPLEPORT CHALICE

A chalice of this period, the only Kilmore chalice of pre-Reformation times now known to exist, is preserved



in Dublin. It stands on a hexagonal base, and is known as the "Templeport Chalice," to which parish it belongs. The chalice was exhibited at the Art Loan Exhibition, in Kildare Place, Dublin, in May, 1886,



THE TEMPLEPORT CHALICE

and according to the catalogue it is "believed to be the only specimen of pre-Reformation plate extant in Ireland."

The base is dated 1529, but the stem and cup belong to a later period, probably the end of the seventeenth, or beginning of the eighteenth, century. The cup is seventeenth century, as shown by its size and shape.

It differs from the small bowl-shaped cups which are characteristic of pre-Reformation chalices. The Templeport chalice is 8 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches in height and bears the following inscription around the cup: "This chalice belongs to Templeport in ye Diones of Kilmore." For the accompanying illustration, with permission to reproduce it, I am indebted to the Representative Church Body, who are the present custodians of the chalice. No details of its history seem to be preserved.

EDMUND NUGENT, O.S.A.

(Succeeded 1530—Deposed 1540—Died 1550)

Edmund Nugent, O.S.A., Prior of the Abbey of Tristernagh, County Westmeath, was provided to the See of Kilmore on June 22nd, 1530, with permission to retain his Priory *in commendam*. His episcopate was destined to coincide with the greatest cataclysm that ever convulsed Europe, the Religious Revolt or, as it has been euphemistically termed, the Reformation. In 1534 the Great Apostasy, which had already been spreading over Europe, found a fertile soil in England. Henry VIII renounced Papal authority and assumed ecclesiastical supremacy.\*

\* For a comprehensive account of the attempts made to introduce the principles of the Reformation into Ireland two recent works by Rev. M. V. Ronan are invaluable: *The Reformation in Dublin, 1536-1558* (London, 1926), and *The Reformation in Ireland under Elizabeth, 1558-1580* (London, 1930).

Even among non-Catholics the term "Reformation" seems to be falling into disfavour, at least in America. At a joint session of the American Historical Association and the American Society of Church History held at Boston, Mass., in December 1930, the question was discussed at some length whether the series of religious events which occurred in Germany in the early 16th century should, correctly, be called the Protestant "Revolt" or "Reformation." No Catholics took any part in the discussion, yet there seemed to be a majority in favour of the term "Revolt," or "Revolution," rather than "Reformation." That there was a revolt there could be no doubt, but there was certainly no reformation, or even an attempted one. On the Continent the name "Religious Revolt" has been long in use. Cf. *Studies*, March, 1931: *Catholic Historical Review* (Washington), April, 1931.



The waves of schism and fanaticism soon reached the shores of Ireland and the royal plunderer perfected his schemes for the wholesale confiscation of Irish monasteries. For three centuries afterwards the Catholic Church in Ireland felt the brunt of the hurricane which continued to sweep over the land.

Bishop Nugent, on November 30th, 1539, surrendered his Priory to the Royal Commissioners of Henry VIII—there was no option in the matter—and on March 20th, 1540, was promised a yearly pension of £26 13s. 4d. out of the revenues of Tristernagh. This act of surrender was regarded as evidence of heterodoxy and Bishop Nugent was deprived of his bishopric, which was declared vacant and a successor appointed.

It may be necessary to point out that Bishop Nugent who ruled the diocese for a period of ten years (1530-1540) cannot be accused of apostasy; he never renounced the Catholic Faith and his act of surrender must be judged in the light of the peculiar political circumstances of the time. He had been appointed to the See of Kilmore by Pope Clement VII on the recommendation of Henry VIII, who was then a Catholic monarch, whose allegiance to the Holy See was beyond question.

Between the years 1509 and 1547 there were about 73 appointments to Irish Sees. About 42 of those appointments were made during the years previous to 1534, while Henry clung faithfully to his allegiance to the Holy See. It will be remembered that until Henry's failure to secure a divorce from Queen Catherine, the Holy See had no more devoted son than he. He enjoyed all the privileges of a rich monarch in whose fidelity the Holy See placed implicit trust. It is not surprising that amongst the privileges handed down to him through a long line of Catholic ancestors, the power of presenting bishops to Irish Sees should have been one of the most important.\*

\* Rev. T. Gogarty "The Eve of the Reformation," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, October, 1912.

Except in the case of Bishop Nugent we do not find that this royal privilege of presentation was generally exercised, or recognised, in regard to Kilmore, and we may assume that our historic diocese did not look with favour on royal interference in its ecclesiastical affairs. We need not discuss the origin of this royal privilege of presentation which in the hands of unscrupulous monarchs like Henry VIII proved a very sinister weapon, but in Ireland the ruling power of the Church was sturdy enough to resist, in great part, these audacious encroachments. For instance, during Henry's reign of 38 years, scarcely 12 out of the 73 appointments went to Englishmen.\*

In acknowledging Henry VIII as ruler in temporals Bishop Nugent bent, it is true, before the storm; but there was no compromise in religious matters and he lived, and died, in full communion with the Holy See. The circumstances of the time must be clearly understood. Henry had at his disposal the temporalities of many Irish Sees. All sources of ecclesiastical revenue were, on the vacancy of the See, controlled by the State Exchequer, and the restitution of all these ecclesiastical properties to the bishop or bishop-elect was dependent on a royal mandate. In 1534, when Henry declared himself Supreme Head of the Church in England, he used this power to thwart Papal authority and to force the submission of the bishops. Recognition of the king's authority over the temporalities was quite consistent with the absolute non-recognition of his heretical and schismatical conduct; and this seems to have been the attitude of Bishop Nugent. Although acknowledging the civil supremacy of Henry VIII there can be no doubt of the bishop's adherence to Papal authority and that during the closing years of his life in retirement he learned to regret his policy of

\* Ronan, *The Reformation in Dublin*, 1536-1558, p. 304n.



temporising with a monarch who precipitated upon the Church in Ireland the most dangerous crisis experienced in its history.

Bishop Nugent belonged to the noble family of Delvin, County Westmeath. According to Sir James Ware he died in the reign of Queen Mary [1553-1558],\* but it is certain that he had already passed away a few years earlier. This may be inferred from the following letter, found among the *State Papers* of the period, from Lord Deputy St. Leger and the Irish Privy Council to the Privy Council of England, dated October 28th, 1550. After stating that the bishopric of the Brenny (i.e., Breiffne) "is now void" the statement proceeds:

And for that one John Brady, Clerk [i.e., in Holy Orders], a man born in these parts, had by the late bishop's time the same benefice conferred on him by provision from Rome, who, nevertheless, did not only surrender the Bulls thereof to be cancelled, but also without any interruption permitted the said late bishop quietly to enjoy the same.†

Obviously Bishop Nugent—the *late bishop* of the above letter—had passed away a short time previously, and this establishes the middle of October, 1550, as the correct date of his demise.

#### JOHN MACBRADY (1540-1559)

After the deprivation of Bishop Nugent the Holy See provided John MacBrady, Doctor of Canon Law, to the vacant bishopric. He was pastor of St. Patrick's church, Kildrumfertan (now united with Crosserlough), and his Brief of provision is dated November 5th, 1540. By permission of Pope Paul III he was permitted to retain his parochial church. Bishop MacBrady, although

\* Ware's *Bishops*, p. 230.

† *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1509-1573*, p. 109. I have slightly changed the orthography and have substituted modern forms for the somewhat archaic originals.

*de jure* Bishop of Kilmore, allowed his predecessor, Bishop Nugent, to enjoy the spiritualities and temporalities of the bishopric while contenting himself with the revenues of his parish church. This is conclusive evidence of the orthodoxy of Bishop Nugent, who would certainly not have been allowed to retain the benefits of the bishopric had there existed the least suspicion regarding his spiritual allegiance. The letter of October 28th, 1550, just quoted, shows that Bishop MacBrady, who held the See "by provision from Rome," in accordance with the custom of the period surrendered the Papal Bulls; furthermore, the Lord Deputy and Council recommended him for preferment to the vacant See.

It must be clearly understood that the surrender of the Bulls was a purely civil ceremony and that the bishop's action was in no way schismatical. The act of surrender secured for the bishop—already canonically appointed by the Pope—the temporalities of the See.

In January, 1551, Bishop MacBrady had his temporalities duly restored, and during the reign of Queen Mary the diocese enjoyed a short period of tranquillity. He vigorously opposed the innovations of the so-called Reformation and in a temporising age proved his unbending orthodoxy. He proved himself worthy of his trust and after a strenuous episcopate passed away in 1559. In the Bull of provision of his successor the See of Kilmore is described as "vacant by the death of John MacBrady of happy memory" (*vacan. per obitum bonae memoriae Joannis MacBrady, olim episcopi Kilmorensis*).

#### HUGH O'SHERIDAN (1560-1579)

Hugh O'Sheridan succeeded. He was a Canon of the Diocese of Raphoe and was provided by Brief of Pope Pius IV, dated February 7th, 1560. In the Bull



of provision he is described as "a priest of the Diocese of Raphoe and Canon," and by privilege he was allowed to retain his canonry. Breiffne was then in a troubled state and the native chieftains were busily engaged in repulsing the encroachment of the English invaders. Bishop O'Sheridan was a vigorous opponent of the novelties of the Reformation and stood firmly against the inroads of heresy. Some years after his appointment his health began to fail, and after much suffering he died towards the end of 1579. In the Bull of provision of his successor he is referred to as "Hugh of happy memory." He was probably interred beside Kilmore Cathedral, but no trace of his tomb survives.

#### RICHARD BRADY, O.F.M. (1580-1607)

The Penal Laws were now in full blast in every part of Ireland where English law could be enforced. During the reign of Henry VIII the attack on the Church was mainly schismatical and while the authority of the Pope was challenged yet there was little attempt to interfere with Catholic dogmas. But during the long and evil reign of Elizabeth the attack was not merely schismatical but was openly heretical, and many dogmas of the Catholic Faith were denied by the followers of that heretical Queen.

At that critical period, when the English Government, with fire and sword, sought to impose the principles of the Elizabethan heresy on the Irish people, the Holy See provided to the vacant diocese one of the most eminent men of his time—Richard Brady, O.F.M., Bishop of Ardagh. He arose at a time when dark clouds of heresy were gathering on the horizon, and when the agents of Elizabeth were threatening to obliterate every vestige of the ancient Faith. Bishop Brady was a native of Breiffne, and was born, most probably, in the district of Cuil Brighdin (Castletara)

—the patrimony of the MacBradys. At an early age he joined the Franciscan Order in Cavan monastery, where his great talents were soon recognised and he was called upon to stem the tide of heresy then threatening the land.

Father Donough Mooney, the Irish Franciscan Provincial, who was one of the contemporaries in the monastery of Multifarnam, Co. Westmeath, writing in 1617, gives a vivid account of the life and sufferings of Bishop Brady.\*

That illustrious individual [writes Father Mooney] sprang from the noble house of his name, which for many an age ruled with princely sway in Breiffne-O'Reilly. At a very early period of his life he distinguished himself as a jurist, for indeed he was profoundly versed in the canon and civil law. Family influence and talents such as his would, doubtless, have raised him to eminence had he chosen a secular career; but, caring little for the fame or fortune which he might have won so easily in the senate or in the forum, he renounced the world, and took our poor habit in the convent of Cavan. His piety, learning, and prudence, were the theme of every tongue; and although he never left Ireland or sought for himself any dignity, the Supreme Pontiff promoted him to the Bishopric of Ardagh, on the 23rd of January, 1576. Resigning that diocese, he was translated to the See of Kilmore, and held the office of Vice-Primate after the death of Raymond O'Gallagher, Bishop of Derry, who was slain by the English in 1601.

\* Father Mooney's Latin Manuscript History of the Irish Franciscan houses is preserved in the Burgundian Library, Brussels. It has been translated and published with copious annotations by the late Rev. C. P. Meehan, M.R.I.A., under the title *The Rise and Fall of the Irish Franciscan Monasteries* (First Edition, Dublin, 1869) a work which embodies great research and has passed through six editions. Father Meehan, whose parents belonged to Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim, was born in Dublin in 1812 and died in 1890. When a student in Rome Father Meehan had as a classmate a young Italian student who became one of his closest friends and companions: that student became afterwards Pope Leo XIII.



He ruled the Diocese of Ardagh from 1576 till 1580, and on March 9th of the latter year was translated to Kilmore by Brief of Pope Gregory XIII, dated March 12th, granting him all the faculties possessed by his predecessor.

During the early years of Bishop Brady's episcopate the power of the O'Reillys was still intact in Breiffne, and he exercised full and unfettered jurisdiction over his diocese. At length, in 1585, Queen Elizabeth attempted to deprive Bishop Brady and actually appointed John Garvey, Protestant Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, and Archdeacon of Meath. But the pseudo-bishop was unable to get possession of the See, and Bishop Brady continued to perform his episcopal functions.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century the power of the native chieftains was gradually growing weaker, and English law was encroaching on Breiffne. In 1592 it is stated that :

In O'Reilly's country [i.e., Breiffne] is Richard Brady, Bishop of Kilmore, who exercises his authority there, although that country is governed by English laws and officers.\*

A similar account is furnished by the apostate Miler Magrath of Cashel in a document, dated December 17th, 1590, which is preserved in the *State Papers* of the time.† That preparations were being made for the arrest of Bishop Brady is evident from the following letter, from Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam and others, to Chancellor Hatton and Burghley, dated May 13th, 1591, and printed in the *State Papers* of that year. The document states that :

they had used all the means which they could devise for the apprehension of the Popish Bishop of Kilmore. . . . The bishop is most secretly harboured by the Nugents, especially by the Baron of Delvin.

\* Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, vol. i, p. 281.

† *Cal. State Papers, Ireland*, 1588-1592, p. 375.

Towards the close of Elizabeth's reign Breiffne was beginning to feel the full brunt of the Penal Laws, and Bishop Brady, now advanced in years, lived mostly with his brethren in the Abbey of Multifarnam, from which he seldom travelled except when performing the Visitations of his diocese. After the death of Dr. Raymond O'Gallagher, Bishop of Derry, in 1601, Bishop Brady, as Senior Suffragan of the Province, succeeded to the office of *Vice-Primate*. During the vacancy of the See of Armagh, or in the absence of the Metropolitan, the office of *Vice-Primate*, according to immemorial custom, developed on the Senior Suffragan of the Province.

In October, 1601, the Abbey of Multifarnam was raided by a strong detachment of English soldiers, commanded by Francis Shane, who was sent from Dublin by Lord Deputy Blount with orders to burn and pillage the monastery. Bishop Brady was arrested, together with a number of the Friars, and sent under escort to the Castle of Ballymore, about 12 miles south-west of Mullingar. Two days later—October 3rd, 1601—the monastery was put to the flames.

While in the Castle of Ballymore, where both were prisoners, the famous Father Mooney—the Provincial and historian of the Franciscan Order—made his profession and was received into the Order by Bishop Brady. Some days later Father Mooney (who as a soldier had taken part in the battles of the Yellow Ford and Clontibret) made good his escape from the castle, so Shane sent his remaining prisoners to Dublin Castle for safer keeping. The details of Father Mooney's escape, by means of a rope fastened to the iron stanchion of a window, furnish an interesting episode of adventure.

Bishop Brady, who was now very advanced in years and very feeble, was allowed to reside at the house of a Catholic nobleman, living in the neighbourhood, on condition that he would present himself to the English



authorities in Dublin at the close of winter. Towards the end of March the aged prelate went to Dublin and on his arrival was thrown into prison, where he remained until the summer of 1602, when his friends secured his release on payment of a heavy ransom.

He returned immediately to Multifarnam, which in the meanwhile had been partially rebuilt. But his troubles were not over. Towards the end of 1602 the monastery was again raided and burned, this time by the notorious Francis Rochfort of evil memory—a family whose fanatical hatred of Catholicism was hereditary—who arrested those of the Friars who could not escape by flight and conveyed them to a prison in Dublin. The Bishop of Kilmore was arrested, but as he was decrepit and unable to walk or stand he was beaten and flung into a brake of briars, where he was left for dead. Surviving this terrible ordeal he continued to reside at the monastery, which once more arose, phoenix-like, from its ashes.

A reference in the *State Papers* of 1606—the examination of Teig O'Corkran taken at Camp, near Devenish, on August 11th, 1606—has it that the “supposed Bishop Bradie” was then living at Multifarnam.\* Three months later, on November 12th, 1606, Sir John Davys informed Salisbury that:

Richard Brady is the titular Bishop of Kilmore; he is very aged, but lurketh for the most part in Westmeath.†

The simplicity of the bishop's life in the monastery of Multifarnam is thus described by Father Mooney:

He dwelt constantly in Multifernan, and never left it except on the business of his diocese, when he always preferred such accommodation as he could find in some house of our Order to the comforts and

\* *Cal. State Papers, Ireland, 1606*, p. 566.

† *Ibid. Carew MSS., 1606*, p. 18.

hospitality which he might have received from the Catholic nobility and gentry. During his residence among us, he invariably wore the habit, partook of such fare as our poor refectory afforded, and never dined apart from the common table of the friars, except when strangers were entertained in the guest-house. His entire retinue consisted of his confessor, chaplain, and two boys, who attended him when saying Mass. I had frequent opportunities of witnessing the austerities he practised ; and can vouch that Franciscan never lived who took greater delight in obeying the rigid ordinances of our holy founder. Even when broken down by old age and infirmities, he could not be induced to wear a coarse linen shirt ; and despite all remonstrances of our friars, he rejected any little luxuries we could procure for him, graciously thanking those who offered them, and saying, at the same time, that he had chosen a life of mortification, and would die as he had lived.

Sir James Ware tells us that Bishop Brady came from Rome with Papal Bulls commanding the Irish Catholics to take up arms against the English Government. This fantastic assertion lacks corroboration and seems to have had its origin in the bigotry which sometimes warped the judgment of one who was otherwise a historian whose writings evince the most creditable research. The statement of Father Mooney, that the bishop never left Ireland, is sufficient contradiction of Ware's assertion.

In his history of Multifarnam Father Mooney devotes many pages to the life and sufferings of Bishop Brady :

Whose virtues and sufferings [he adds] should never be forgotten by the future historian of our calamitous times.

The narrative describes in vivid detail how the bishop was arrested *three* times by the English authorities



who, on two occasions, released him on payment of a heavy fine; on the third occasion his habit was torn off and he was, as already stated, thrown in a thicket. We are indebted to the manuscript of the great Franciscan historian for the details of the life and labours of the great Bishop Brady, who in the long and bloody reign of Elizabeth ministered to the harassed people of Kilmore Diocese.

Early in 1607 the aged bishop resigned the See of Kilmore, and died at Multifarnam in September of the same year. In compliance with his own wishes he was buried in the usual burial-place of the Friars, that is, in the cloisters and right under the door leading to the church. No inscription survives to mark his grave. Neither does any inscription mark the grave of Bishop Roche Mac Geoghegan of Kildare (1629-1641) who was buried in the same precincts.

### THE CLOONCLARE CHALICE

A chalice belonging to this period is preserved in the Protestant church of Manorhamilton, in the parish of Cloonclare, and is usually known as the "Cloonclare Chalice." It is described in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (Vol. xxviii, p. 130), also in the *Journal of the Association for the Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead in Ireland* (Vol. i, p. 212), where an engraving is shown.

The base carries the date 1596. On one side is engraved the Figure of our Saviour, as if hanging on an invisible Cross, with drops of blood falling from His hands. The letters I.N.R.I. are above the head, and there is a covering thrown over the middle of the body. The chalice is of silver but without a hallmark. It weighs 12 ozs., is 8 inches in height, and the diameter of the cup is 3 inches. A paten fitting the cup accompanies

it. Round the base of the chalice is the following inscription :

IACOBVS FILIVS DORINI MAC'  
DOMHNAILL ME FIERI FECIT  
ANNO DNI 1596.

Below this inscription, which runs around the entire base, is an ornamental band.

A comparatively modern inscription around the upper edge of the cup is as follows :

✠ ECCLESIAE CLONCLARIENSI  
D.D. NATHANIEL COME DE  
LEITRIM, ANNO DOMINI MDCCCXXXIX.

Of the history of the chalice nothing seems to be known. It is believed to have been discovered by some workmen in a bog where it had been most probably hidden during the Penal times.



## CHAPTER XVIII

## VACANCY OF THE SEE (1607-1625)

AFTER the death of Bishop Richard Brady the See remained vacant for a period of eighteen years, during which it was governed by Rev. Dr. James Plunket as Vicar-General. During this period, covering the reign of James I, the native power was broken and the chieftains either murdered or exiled, the churches confiscated, and the native landowners dispossessed. After the Flight of the Earls resistance was hopeless and vengeance was wreaked on the Catholic population of Ulster. While the storm raged it was found impossible to fill the vacant See.

An *Inquisition*, held at Cavan on September 19th, 1590, declared all the parish churches of County Cavan (forty-four in number) forfeit to the English Crown. A later *Inquisition*, taken at Cavan on September 25th, 1609, enumerates them in still greater detail and assigns them to the Established Church of James I. In early times those parish churches had been endowed by the native chieftains with generous donations of termon lands. The chieftains kept the churches in repair, endowed schools and colleges, and maintained the ecclesiastical establishments throughout their respective territories. In those days the Irish Church was the light of western Europe and the proudest jewel in the diadem of Rome. But in the reign of James I the old order was swept away, the property of the Church was confiscated and aliens and apostates were presented with the proceeds of church plunder. Except in the mountainous districts of Kilmore no Catholic house of

worship was allowed to exist and the plight of priests and people was piteous in the extreme. But the Irish Sees, although deprived of bishops, were not abandoned to the fury of foreign fanaticism. Vicars-General, furnished with all the necessary powers, administered to the needs of all vacant dioceses until happier days should dawn.

At this critical period we find Dr. James Plunket governing Kilmore as Vicar-General. He was a priest of Meath Diocese and seems to have belonged to the family of Loughcrew—where Blessed Oliver was born in 1625. From the records of the period it is clear that Dr. James Plunket was Vicar-General of both Kilmore and Meath (then also vacant) at the same time. In a government paper preserved among the manuscripts in Trinity College, Dublin, and numbered E. 3. 15, is a list of archbishops and bishops said to have been consecrated and authorised by the Pope.\* It was compiled about the year 1618 and has the following notice of Kilmore: "James Plunkett ellected [*sic*] of Kilmore liues [*lives*] by privie tyethes [*private tithes*] and his function." In many details the document is unreliable, for instance, Dr. Thomas Dease is described as "ellected of Meath" although not consecrated until 1622. The compiler of the paper seems to have been mis-informed of the status of many of the Irish dignitaries. It is true that Dr. Plunket is among those elected "but not as yet consecrated," but we have no record of his election and there is no reason for believing that he was ever proposed for the bishopric. In the capacity of Vicar-General his function was difficult enough.

In his researches among the Roman archives Cardinal Moran discovered a record, dated 1625, which states that Dr. James Plunket governed the See of Meath for

\* This document is published in Canon Carrigan's *History and Antiquities of the Diocese of Ossory*, vol. i, pp. 90-91.



many years as Vicar-General.\* It is said that he was proposed for the See of Meath before the appointment of Dr. Dease. In the *Regal Visitation*, dated 1615, in the Royal Irish Academy, is the following entry regarding him: "James Plunkett, priest, V.G. of Westmeath, living at Killalon, in the house of Lord Killeen."

Dr. Plunkett was an eminent ecclesiastic and his task must have been both difficult and dangerous. Shortly after 1609 he appears to have been given charge of Meath and a few years later Kilmore was also assigned to his care. Time has obscured many of the lights and shades of his personality and the details of his life and trials have, unfortunately, passed beyond hope of recall. The proverbial intolerance of the English and Scottish Undertakers in Ulster rendered the work of ecclesiastical administration one of the greatest difficulty. The Franciscans, driven from the monastery of St. Mary's, travelled in disguise among the people, administered the Sacraments and celebrated Mass in secret glens or in the homes of the peasantry. This was the unhappy state of affairs which presented itself to Dr. James Plunkett when he was called upon to guide the affairs of the diocese. The exact date of his death has not been ascertained, but by inference from the Roman document, above referred to, he must have passed away about 1625, in which year the bishopric was restored.

During the reign of James I the condition of the Protestant Church in Ireland bespoke utter neglect, with no attempt at ecclesiastical organisation. The churches which had been confiscated from the Catholics were in a ruinous condition, as shown by the Plantation Map of 1609, and without any religious services. The Established Church, through its bishops, urged the extermination of Catholicism but itself lacked vitality

\* Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. ii, p. 7.

and its influence was negligible. After the *Inquisition*\* of 1590 the churches became derelict, and in 1609 were already roofless. A few years later, after 1612, some of the churches were repaired and used for Protestant services. An *Inquisition*, held in 1620, found that only seventeen churches in Kilmore Diocese were then used for religious services, and, even in these, none had been held before 1612.† The churches were :—Kilmore, Kildallan, Kildrumfertan, Drung, Laragh, Drumgoon, Moybolge, Templeport, Killinagh, Kinawley, Annageliffe, Keadue, Annagh, Castletara, Drumlane, Tomregan, and Killeshandra.

The Protestant clergy were for the most part illiterate, unable to read or write. Writing in 1604, Justice Saxey, in his *Discovery of the Decayed State of the Kingdom of Ireland*, says that the clergy of the Established Church were "more fit to sacrifice to a calf than to meddle with the religion of God."‡ He adds that the entire kingdom did not possess "three sufficient bishops."§ In his correspondence with Cecil Sir John Davies, Attorney-General of Ireland, deplores the lack of religion and the absence of religious services; there is, he says, "no more demonstration of religion than among the Tartars or Cannibals."||

The Protestant clergy were hardly to blame for this anomalous condition of affairs. In the reports of the

\* The Reports of the Elizabethan and Jacobean *Inquisitions* are too lengthy for insertion here, and I reserve them for a future publication.

† *Patent Rolls*, 17 James I.

‡ *Calendar of State Papers*, James I., 1603-1606, pp. 217 *et seq.*

§ Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), who in 1713 was appointed (Protestant) Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, comments with sardonic humour on the bishops of the Established Church who were sent from England to rule over the Irish Sees. The English Government, he says, always chose holy and learned men, but these on their journey to Ireland were invariably waylaid on the outskirts of London by robbers who murdered them and having disposed of their bodies donned their episcopal apparel and by masterful personation came to Ireland and occupied their Sees.

|| *Calendar of State Papers*, James I., 1603-1606, pp. 142-147.



*Inquisitions* the rectories are generally described as "impropriate," that is, the parsonages were in lay hands. These lay appropriations had their origin in the Reformation period, when Henry VIII granted the rectorial tithes to laymen, who duly appropriated for their own uses the profits of the benefices and collated the living to a vicar, or curate, who was allowed a meagre, and totally inadequate, salary for his maintenance. The lay patrons displayed no inclination to repair the churches or to endow schools, and, in 1604, the Lords of the Council in England took alarm and sent an order to the Privy Council in Dublin to have performed a visitation of all the dioceses in Ireland and a return of same to be sent to England. The Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, who conducted several of these visitations, reported, in 1607, that the abuses which he had detected were so glaring that he could hardly have believed them.\*

In 1607 the Lord Deputy, accompanied by Sir John Davies, made a tour through the Counties of Monaghan, Fermanagh and Cavan, and they reported the results of their observations, portraying the plight of the Established Church. Sir John Davies writes as follows to Robert, Earl of Salisbury, regarding the position in Kilmore:†

The state of the lay possessions being discovered, we did not omit to inquire of the number and value of parsonages and vicarages, of the reparation of the churches, and of the quality of their incumbents. By which inquisition we found that the greatest number of the parsonages are appropriate unto two great Abbeyes lying within the English Pale, viz., the Abbey of Fore in Westmeath, granted to the Baron of Delvin, and the Abbey of Kells, whereof one Gerard

\* *Op. cit.*, 1606-1608, pp. 235-236.

† *Ireland Under Elizabeth and James I.* (Davies Letters). Edited by Henry Morley, LL.D. Emeritus Professor of English Language and Literature, University College, London. Pp. 377-378.

Flemynge is farmer. To the first of these fourteen parsonages within this country [i.e., Cavan] are appropriate, and to the other eight; besides, there are two or three more belonging in like manner to the Abbey of Cavan,\* in this county, being now in possession of Sir James Dillon. As for the vicarages, they are so poorly endowed as ten of them being united will scarcely suffice to maintain an honest minister. For the churches, they are for the most part in ruins; such as were presented as being in reparation [i.e., repair] are covered only with thatch. But the incumbents, both parsons and vicars, did appear to be such poor, ragged, ignorant creatures—for we saw many of them in the camp—as we could not esteem any of them worthy of the meanest of those livings, albeit many of them are not worth above forty shillings per annum. This country [i.e., county] doth lie within the diocese of Kilmore, whose bishop, Robert Draper, was and is parson of Trim in Meath, which is the best parsonage in all the kingdom, and is a man of this country birth worth well-nigh £400 a year. He doth live now in these parts where he hath two bishoprics [i.e., Kilmore and Ardagh]; but there is no Divine Service or sermon to be heard within either of his dioceses. His Lordship might have saved us this labour of inquiry touching matters ecclesiastical if he had been as careful to see the churches repaired and supplied with good incumbents as he is diligent in visiting his barbarous clergy to make benefit out of their insufficiency, according to the proverb which is common in the mouth of one of our great bishops here, that an Irish priest is better than a milch cow.

Robert Draper, the subject of this unflattering report, was appointed to the united Dioceses of Kilmore and Ardagh in 1603 and died in 1612. His predecessor, John Garvey—the first Protestant Bishop of Kilmore—was appointed by Queen Elizabeth in 1585, but never secured possession; he resigned in 1589 when translated

\* This refers to the Augustinian Priory of Drumlane.



to Armagh. Thomas Moygne, who succeeded on the death of Draper, died in 1628 and was buried in St. Patrick's, Dublin. Moygne's successor was William Bedell, who was a prolific writer and who initiated a scheme for preparing a Gaelic translation of the Scriptures. Bedell died in 1642.\*

These adverse reports of Sir John Davies thoroughly alarmed James I, who, in 1614, ordered the Lord Deputy to have a Commission appointed to investigate the real position of the Established Church in Ireland. No progress was made, however, until the following year, when a Commission comprising the (Protestant) Archbishops of Dublin, Armagh and Tuam, with the Bishops of Meath and Clogher and a number of lay members, commenced the preparation of a detailed report for each diocese. In order that these reports might be as comprehensive as possible a series of instructions were forwarded to the several members of the Commission indicating the scope of the information required. Accounts were to be prepared describing in detail the values of the benefices and impropriations in each diocese with the names of the patrons and incumbents, to suggest sites for new churches and to provide houses for the clergy, to determine the values of the glebe lands, and sundry other details. The reports of the *Visitations* of 1615 are preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and provide valuable historical data for the various dioceses.

\* The names of the Protestant Bishops for the century afterwards are as follows : Robert Maxwell succeeded in 1643 and died in 1672. Francis Marsh ruled from 1672 until 1681, when he was translated to Dublin. William Sheridan, appointed in 1681, was deprived in 1691 on his refusal to subscribe to the Oath of Allegiance to William and Mary. William Smith ruled from 1693 until his death in 1698, when he was succeeded by Edward Wetenhall, who died in 1713. Dr. Wetenhall is best remembered as the author of a famous *Greek Grammar*, the popularity of which—among teachers if not among students—is evidenced by the fact that for two centuries afterwards it was recognised as the standard work in the Irish and English Classical Schools and in the Universities. Dr. Timothy Goodwin ruled from 1713 until his resignation in 1727, when his successor was Josiah Hort, who was translated to Tuam in 1742. He was succeeded by Joseph Story.

The reports were duly forwarded to England but the matter seems to have rested there. In 1629, when Dr. Bedell was appointed to Kilmore, he found the Established Church in a deplorable condition.

Pluralism, non-residence, and the most shameless nepotism were rampant, and even the bishops frequently impoverished their successors by granting long leases of ecclesiastical properties to wives, sons, or other near relatives. In fact, ecclesiastical property was looked upon as spoil for the conquering race, to which certain duties were attached that might or might not be performed, but could at any rate be safely neglected. . . . It is true, of course, that there was a period in English Church History when a state of things prevailed almost as bad, but in Ireland it was aggravated by the fact that it was an establishment entirely alien to the people, to which they never gave any allegiance, and the property of which they regarded as rightfully belonging to the church to which they were for good or evil devotedly attached and loyal.\*

Writing to his intimate friend, Dr. Samuel Ward, Master of Sidney Sussex College, on May 30th, 1633, Dr. Bedell reveals the state of the Established Church in Kilmore :

And to tell you the whole truth I was loth myne owne example should serve for a pretext to the detestable practice of many of our Nation, who have gotten 4, 5, 6 or 8 benefices apiece and commonly vicarages, and which is yet worse maintaine no Curates, unlesse, it be sometimes one for 2 or 3 livings, by meanes whereof the Popish Clergy is double to us in number, and having the advantage of the tounge [tongue, i.e., Gaelic language], of the love of the people, of our extortions upon them, of the very inborne hatred of subdued people to their

\* *Two Biographies, of William Bedell, Bishop of Kilmore*, edited by E. S. Shuckburgh, M.A. (Cambridge University Press, 1902). Introduction, pp. xvii-xviii.



conquerors, they hold them still in blindness and superstition, ourselves being the cheefest impediments of the work that we pretend to set forward.\*

The extortions to which Bedell refers were those of the Ecclesiastical Courts, and in justice to him it should be recorded that he endeavoured to mitigate these evils—a fact which brought him into violent conflict with his Chancellor, Dr. Alan Cooke. Bedell recognised that the Established Church was hampered in its activities by the language difficulty, and he introduced ministers who could speak the Gaelic language; but his selections were singularly unhappy and his schemes failed miserably. The bishop himself had studied Gaelic and had attained a commendable proficiency in the native language, but the two cringing sycophants, King and Nangle, who were selected by him to translate the Scriptures and Gaelicise the pulpits were hardly of the type likely to enhance the prestige of the Establishment.

In a letter† to Archbishop Ussher, dated September 18th, 1630, Bedell states that in the Dioceses of Kilmore and Ardagh there were then 66 priests, besides the bishop and the Primate, while the number of ministers and curates was only 32. Most probably the number of priests is under-rated and 66 can hardly have been better than a rough estimate; but his statement of the number of Protestant clergymen would have been based on first-hand information and cannot be questioned.‡

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 332.

† *Burnett's Life of Bedell*, p. 46.

‡ Archbishop James Ussher, who was Bishop Bedell's close friend, was born in Dublin in 1581 and died in England in 1656. He was a prolific writer, an insuppressible controversialist, and gained a European reputation as a theologian and historian. He urged the more rigorous enforcement of the penal laws, and every phase of his life and writings manifests that aggressive spirit of anti-Catholicism which has always been associated with his name. It is, therefore, a revelation to learn—from the testimony, only recently made available, of the Capuchin historians, Fathers O'Connell and O'Ferrall who were his contemporaries—that this redoubtable champion of the Revolt was, during

The *Episcopal Taxation* of 1617 furnishes a detailed account of the values of the various benefices in that year. The value of money at that time was much greater than it is now. In the following Returns of the Taxation\* the recorded forms of some of the parish titles are very imperfect and hardly intelligible, so I have placed in brackets the identifications. The letters R. and V. represent Rectory and Vicarage, respectively.

## DIOCESE OF KILMORE

	£	s.	d.
V. de Kilmore, valoris . . . . .	8	0	0
V. de Ballyntemple, valoris . . . . .	6	0	0
Extenditur in toto ad . . . . .	20	0	0
V. de Urney taxatur ad . . . . .	6	0	0
R. & V. de Hanaa [Annagh], <i>alias</i> Belturbet	30	0	0
V. de Drumlaghan [Drumlane], <i>alias</i> Bolgan	8	0	0
R. & V. de Castleterra . . . . .	20	0	0
V. de Kildallon . . . . .	5	0	0
V. de Kilshandra . . . . .	15	0	0
V. de Drung & Terra [Laragh] . . . . .	15	0	0
V. de Killisherдинin [Kildrum sheridan] . . . . .	10	0	0
R. & V. Dengoone [Drumgoon] . . . . .	16	0	0
V. de Tauragh [Lavey] . . . . .	4	0	0
V. de Moybolge . . . . .	4	0	0
V. de Mally [Mullagh] and Balliclanphilip [Killinkere], <i>alias</i> Templecally . . . . .	10	0	0

the closing years of his life, receiving instructions from the Capuchins and consulting books on Catholic doctrine; furthermore, that he became convinced of the truth of the Catholic Faith and finally made his submission to the Church, although delaying until he was *in articulo mortis*.—Vide *Commentarius Rinuccinianus*, vol. i., 1932.

A recent writer, himself a convert, ventures the suggestion that some day, perhaps, a similar revelation would be made concerning the death of Bishop Bedell who was buried, with the permission of the Catholic bishop, in the Cathedral precincts and at whose grave a priest was said to have exclaimed, *O sit anima mea cum Bedello!*

\* Seward's *Topographica Hibernica*—Dublin, 1795.



## DIOCESE OF KILMORE

	£	s.	d.
Decanatus Kilmor. consistens de :			
R. de Keydie, valoris . . . . .	6	0	0
V. de Dim [Denn] . . . . .	4	0	0
V. de Anaghgelue [Annaghgeliffe] . . . . .	6	0	0
V. de Kildrumfertan . . . . .	8	0	0
V. de Killeenagh [Killinagh] . . . . .	3	6	8
V. de Killasser [Killesher] . . . . .	6	13	0
V. de Kinawley . . . . .	10	0	0
R. de Kilcann [Killann] . . . . .	4	0	0
R. de Knochtyde [Knockbride] . . . . .	2	1	4
V. de Turgan [Lurgan] . . . . .	4	0	0
R. de Castleraghen . . . . .	2	1	4
V. de Templepurt . . . . .	13	6	8
[In Kilmore Visitation Book, in Library, T.C.D.]			
V. de Urney . . . . .	6	0	0
R. de Moybolge, <i>alias</i> Killinker . . . . .	10	0	0
V. de Dromlane . . . . .	8	0	0

## CHAPTER XIX

BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE SEVENTEENTH  
CENTURY

HUGH O'REILLY, EOGHAN MACSWEENEY

HUGH O'REILLY (1625-1628)

OF the many names that have shed lustre on the episcopate of Kilmore there is none which shines with a greater brilliancy than that of Hugh O'Reilly. As an ecclesiastic, scholar and statesman, he towers head and shoulders above his contemporaries, and he is one of the noblest figures in that gallant band who tried to rally the country in favour of the policy of Rinuccini.

Hugh O'Reilly, the son of Maolmordha and Honora O'Reilly, was born in the year 1580. He belonged to the Tullymongan branch of the family, and in that castle, overlooking Cavan town, he appears to have been born. He was in direct descent from Giolla Iosa Ruadh O'Reilly, who founded Cavan Abbey.

Receiving his early education at home, chiefly at the hands of the Franciscans in Cavan, he made rapid progress in philosophy and the classics. His father had intended that he should adopt a military career and join some of the Irish regiments then serving in the Spanish Netherlands, but he chose the ecclesiastical life, and continuing his studies was ordained priest in 1618. He then set out for Rouen, where he pursued his study of Canon Law in the same college as the celebrated Archdeacon John Lynch, author of *Cambrensis Eversus* and of the yet unpublished work *De Praesulibus*



*Hiberniae*.\* Having distinguished himself in every department of theological studies he returned to Ireland and was provided to Kilmore by Pope Urban VIII on June 9th, 1625. He was consecrated in St. Peter's church, Drogheda, in July, 1626, by Dr. Thomas Fleming, Archbishop of Dublin.

Soon after his appointment two Lords Justices of evil memory—Boyle, Earl of Cork, and Viscount Ely—arrived in Cavan for the purpose of harassing the Catholic population and compelling them to attend Protestant places of worship. Hearing that Bishop O'Reilly was exercising episcopal functions they made elaborate preparations for his arrest; so he was obliged to take refuge in the homes of the peasantry and remain in hiding until Boyle and Ely, with their lawless hordes of plunderers and assassins, had taken their departure from Breiffne.

The Primatial See of Armagh was now vacant by reason of the death of Dr. Hugh Mac Caghwell, and Pope Urban VIII, on May 5th, 1628, elevated Bishop O'Reilly to the vacant See, the translation being confirmed on August 31st of the same year. During the three years of his rule over Kilmore he reorganised the diocese and did much to mitigate the sufferings of the people.

In his *Relatio Status*† for Kilmore, dated 1629, and preserved in a Roman Archive, he gives an account of his administration of the diocese. The document is in Latin, and is substantially as follows

YOUR LORDSHIPS,

The husbandman and guardian of the Lord's universal vineyard has adopted and sanctified the

\* This manuscript, which deals with the history and succession of the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland from the earliest times until 1672 (about which time the work was completed), is preserved in the Burgundian Library of Brussels. A copy is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and another copy, made for Dr. J. H. Todd from the Bodleian Codex, is in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin.

† *Archivum Hibernicum*, vol. v, p. 81.

example of that man in the Gospel who, fearing for the dissipation of his goods, demanded an account of his stewardship from the prodigal steward. He has therefore bound all Prelates of Cathedral Churches by a solemn oath to render an account of their spiritual stewardship at certain fixed times, varying however, in accordance with the different circumstances of different countries. For if from him, to whom the lesser things, viz., the temporal, are entrusted a strict account may be demanded, a still more strict account may justly be demanded from him to whom the greater, viz., the spiritual, have been entrusted.

More desirous of nothing, therefore, than to obey the Apostolic mandates in accordance with the obligation of the oath taken by me and the prescribed rule of this Kingdom, I freely acknowledge that I am bound to visit every fourth year the threshold of the Apostles and there to render an account of my pastoral office.

However owing to the present calamitous times (*temporum calamitatem*), and the many dangers existing on land and sea, I am unable to perform this duty either in person or through the medium of a capable member of my Chapter or through the general body of my clergy. I therefore discharge it though the medium of a Regular Priest, who has a special mandate herefor and who shall explain my legitimate hindrances (*legitima impedimenta*) to the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Cardinal Ludovisius, Protector of our Kingdom. Through him aforesaid I render as follows, an account of my pastoral duty performed by me during the past four years in the Diocese of Kilmore of the Province of Armagh.

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On attaining some time ago to the pastoral charge of Kilmore Diocese, deprived as it had been of the consolation of a zealous pastor, I found much confusion and deviation from ecclesiastical discipline, and have



reduced affairs in general to a more satisfactory condition.

1. As the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was being celebrated either in the open air or in unbecoming places (*sub dio aut in locis indecentibus*) and the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist was being administered to the faithful with great danger of sacrilege, I ordered that ecclesiastical houses (*domos ecclesiasticas*) or neat oratories be erected in every parish.

2. I have directed every parish priest to buy and maintain either gold or silver chalices and clean and becoming ornaments.

3. I have ordered that the Holy Oils be renewed at the times specified by (Canon) Law and the Sacraments administered with proper ceremonies.

4. I have commanded my clergy to wear becoming dress and to refrain absolutely from improper conversation and illicit acts, and whatsoever priests I have found acting or conducting themselves otherwise I have either deprived of all benefice or office, or removed them from the scope of my jurisdiction.

5. I have administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to an innumerable multitude of children and adults. So great have been the numbers that—omitting the smaller numbers continually approaching me—at one time I confirmed no less than fifteen hundred persons a day, throughout a period of three entire weeks.

6. Following the injunctions of the Sacred Councils I have ordained none save suitable subjects to the priesthood—those suitable or useful or highly necessary to the country.

7. The prescribed announcements of pending marriages have been here omitted for a long time. I have ordered that such announcements be made and adopted as a practice.

8. Frequent divorces were occurring here either from the ignorance of officials or from avarice. From

these divorces very many scandals and disorders were arising ; I have compelled the aforesaid divorces to cease.

9. To the great benefit, peace and quietness of the country I have frequently adjusted and settled the law suits and quarrels of the nobles, clergy and people.

10. By using various means I have banished from my territories (diocese) thefts, robberies, drunkenness, and various pests to the State.

And all these—and others which for the sake of brevity I here omit to transcribe—have been ordered by me during the past four years and carried into execution ; and that without any murmurs or contradictions from our enemies in the faith, yea, with the greatest joy, consolation and benefit to all. Your Most Illustrious Lordships shall hear of greater things hereafter accomplished by me, if the times permit and with God's help. Meanwhile, however, may the great and good God safely preserve Your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordships for the very great good of His Church.

Your Lordships' most humble servant in Christ.  
Hugo Relly, electus Archiepiscopus Ardmachanus.  
Given at our place of abode,

September 7th, 1629.

To the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Cardinals  
of the Sacred College.

It is hardly likely that the bishop's orders regarding the erection of chapels in every parish could have been carried out at the time except in some remote parishes. The circumstances of the time rendered such a project extremely difficult. In the following year, on December 2nd, 1630, the Primate wrote another letter to Rome furnishing an account of the progress of his labours and the difficulties which confronted him.\*

\* *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. i, 171.



When his translation to the Primatial See was announced he asked Father Cahill, parish priest of SS. Michael and John, Dublin, to make two seals, one bearing the episcopal arms of Kilmore, which he intended to present to his successor, and the other, bearing the arms of the Primacy, for himself. But the Lords Justices took alarm at what they regarded as the arrogance of Catholic dignitaries in assuming ecclesiastical titles and a warrant was promptly issued for the arrest of Father Cahill, who was thrown into the dismal and filthy dungeons of Dublin Castle, from which he escaped after a lengthy imprisonment.\*

As Primate the task of Archbishop O'Reilly was an arduous one. The Plantation of Ulster had already been effected and the new colonists were imbued with the spirit of bigotry and hate. In 1637 the Primate was arrested for daring to convene a Synod and was thrown into the gloomy dungeons of Dublin Castle, where he remained for six weeks. We learn these particulars from a letter by the Primate himself addressed to Dr. Dwyer in Rome, and dated October 24th, 1637, in which he states that his health had hardly recovered from the severe shock it received in the damp dungeon of the Castle.†

During the Puritan régime the Primate frequently administered Confirmation in the woods and on the hillsides. The colonists, or undertakers, were now in possession of the greater part of Armagh, while English garrisons held the towns, and in face of such difficulties his task was always fraught with danger and anxiety. His pastoral vigilance was ever exercised in combatting the depravity and corruption which followed so freely in the path of the new Plantation, and despite the difficulties of the times he met with well merited success.

\* For some interesting details of the Primate's career see Rev. C. P. Meehan's *Irish Franciscan Monasteries*, a work which has run through several editions.

† Cardinal Moran, *Archbishops of Dublin*, vol. i, p. 402.

Father Meehan tells how for fully eleven years before the Revolution of 1641 the Primate was obliged to discharge all the functions of his office as it were clandestinely, and

had to proceed with the greatest caution, frequently administering confirmation in the woods or on the hillsides, and occasionally resorting to some shieling for the celebration of Mass. Withal, in the face of these multiplied difficulties, he bore himself courageously as beseemed a great archbishop, with the blood of an ancient and noble race in his veins. When the representatives of the old septs grew wrathful, and would have thought it not ill done to slay the "planters" for whom they had been evicted from their rightful inheritance, he had only to instance the calamities which had befallen his own family and kindred, in order to stay the uplifted hand and angry blow ; but when he addressed himself to their religious sensibilities, and showed that suffering and oppression have ever been the portion of the predestined, and that God, in His own good time, might foreclose the term of endurance, they listened to him with reverence, and drew hope and comfort from his holy counsels.

During the Revolution of 1641 Primate O'Reilly did his utmost to restrain the dispossessed Irish chieftains from wreaking vengeance on their oppressors and the plunderers of their estates. He urged Sir Phelim O'Neill and Lord Iveagh to hold the armed multitudes in check and prevent the massacres which were threatened.

Such salutary restraint [writes Rev. C. P. Meehan], enforced by the exhortations of the Primate, produced most happy results ; for the northern chieftains, and the rude array they commanded at the first outbreak, respected him too much to violate the lessons of forbearance and charity which he perseveringly inculcated. It is not our province to deal with the gross misrepresentations which have been written



of the conduct of the Irish insurgents at this period, or with the calumnies heaped on the head of Phelim O'Neill and his followers, for they cannot stand the test of historical criticism ; but we may safely assert, that Archbishop O'Reilly's interposition saved many a life, and protected innumerable homesteads from fire and sword. Borlase, Temple, and others, have utterly ignored his interference on behalf of the Protestant colonists, who were then wholly at the mercy of the insurgents ; but we have only to repeat that the exaggerations of those writers would wear some show of truth, if O'Reilly had not interposed his high authority to curb the fierce impulses of men grown desperate by reason of the flagrant injustice with which they had been treated by the canting knaves and bigots who then misgoverned Ireland.

The Primate proposed that the movement should be moulded into a great national movement to secure the civil and religious liberties of the persecuted people. The Revolution was spreading through Leinster and Munster, and the Catholic lords of the Pale were, through force of circumstances, compelled to defend their religion. A national movement supported by an efficient parliament and army would easily secure the demands of the people.

This, indeed, was a grand idea [subjoins Rev. C. P. Meehan], worthy of the brain of a great statesman, and never since then, or before that period, has Ireland produced a greater prelate than he who originated the Catholic Confederacy.

In March, 1642, the Primate convened a Synod of the bishops of the Province of Ulster at Ceanannus (Kells), County Meath. This Synod, over which he presided, declared that the war undertaken by the Irish Catholics was just and lawful ; also, that all who entered the war through motives of avarice or revenge were declared excommunicated.

Another Synod, which he attended, was held in Kilkenny in the following May, and an oath of association was drawn up which was intended to unite the Anglo-Normans of the Pale with the old Irish.\*

In October, 1645, John Baptist Rinuccini, Archbishop of Fermo, was sent by Pope Innocent X as Nuncio Extraordinary to the Irish Catholics, and Primate O'Reilly was a firm supporter of the wise and uncompromising policy of the Nuncio. The lamentable lack of cohesion in the national ranks disappointed him keenly, and he foresaw that the subserviency to the notorious Ormond would only lead to ruin and desolation.

Leaving the Nuncio to preside over the Council at Kilkenny the Primate spent the years from 1646 to 1648 in attending to his diocese. He promptly rejected the peace with Ormond and placed his reliance in his favourite general, Owen Roe O'Neill.† The Primate's residence during this period was in the neighbourhood of Loch Uachtair, where his kinsmen still retained much power. In the narrative of Monsignor Massari, Secretary to the Nuncio, written in July, 1646, is the following reference to an interesting interview with the Primate in Loch Uachtair Castle:

The Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of Ireland, arrived that day on a visit to me. He is a man of noble birth, great influence, prudence, learning, goodness, noble heart, is worthy of the highest esteem, and is most devoted to the Holy Apostolic See and to the Supreme Pontiff. I detained him for dinner, and after a stay of many hours with me, he returned to his temporary residence, not far away, leaving me with a high idea and extraordinary impression of his worth, wisdom and learning. The

\* Rev. C. P. Meehan, *The Confederation of Kilkenny*, p. 28.

† Vide *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii, p. 32, for correspondence with Pope Innocent X from the Primate and Owen Roe; the letters are dated May 18, 1649—"Ex campo nostro apud Cavan."



good prelate was particularly anxious that while the glow of victory was still fresh, a march should be made on Dublin to smash the Marquis of Ormond; for, said he, that venomous serpent must be struck on the head, and were that city once captured we would be delivered from the perfidious artifices and iniquitous wiles of an adversary, who is no Irishman, but rather an enemy to his country.\*

This contemporary account is an excellent presentation of the policy and character of the Primate. But the severest blow of all was yet to fall and the heaviest affliction to be endured; for Owen Roe O'Neill† died at the Castle of Loch Uachtair on November 6th, 1649. A few days later the body of the great soldier was conveyed to the Franciscan monastery of Cavan, where the Primate, assisted by a great concourse of clergy, officiated at the graveside of his life long friend, in whose grave Ireland's last hope was interred. The Primate then hastened to Clonmacnoise, on the banks of the Shannon, where he presided at a Synod of nineteen prelates and subscribed to a manifesto urging the people to unite against the common enemy.

Events were now crowding fast. On February 25th, 1649, the Nuncio set sail from Galway, his prudent and statesmanlike policy having been rejected by the

\* *The Catholic Bulletin* (Dublin), April 1917.

† His nephew, Daniel O'Neill, was for some years Postmaster-General of England in the reign of Charles II. Samuel Pepys, of *Diary* fame, who was intimately acquainted with him, classifies "Mr. O'Neale" among the "great men" of the period. In the *Diary* entry for October 26, 1654, Pepys has the following quaint reference to the death of Daniel O'Neill:—"This day the great O'Neale died: I believe to the content of all the Protestant pretenders in Ireland." Pepys had a great admiration for O'Neill as had also Charles II, who, writing to his sister, the Duchess of Orleans, informing her of the death of O'Neill (who had suffered from an internal ulcer) added that he was "as honest a man as ever lived." Rinuccini styles Daniel O'Neill *heretico* which would imply at least a temporary estrangement from the ancient Faith; but Pepys' entry indicates that the Protestants did not regard him with high favour—evidently suspecting him to be a Catholic. In London in Pepys' time open profession of Catholicism would only fan the flames of anti-Catholic fanaticism.

Supreme Council. In August of the same year Cromwell landed in Ireland and the campaign of extermination began in deadly earnest. The condition of the country was now lamentable in the extreme and the people discovered, when it was too late, that the rejection of the policy of Rinuccini had paved the way to national disaster. In this dread hour Primate O'Reilly convened a Synod in the Franciscan monastery of Jamestown, County Leitrim, and seldom, indeed, had a Synod ever been convened under such difficult circumstances. On this occasion a famous declaration was drawn up indicating the origin and scope of the Confederation. In this lengthy and detailed document we are presented with a vivid picture of the wretched state of the country ; it is dated August 12th, 1650, and is signed by the leading Irish dignitaries.\* But it was too late ; the Cromwellians were devastating the country with fire and sword and there was no Irish military leader of the stamp of Owen Roe to meet the onslaught. The Primate, accompanied by some of the other prelates, retired to Galway, where they continued their deliberations.

Six Commissioners, including the Primate, were empowered to negotiate with the Catholic Duke of Lorraine and place the country under a protectorate, which the Duke had offered. But this proposal ended in failure owing to the opposition of the advisers of Charles II, who preferred the rule of Cromwell to that of a Catholic prince.

The Primate having appointed the Bishop of Raphoe, Dr. John O'Cullinan, to take his place in carrying on the negotiations, returned, broken in health and spirits, to his native Breiffne, where he took up his abode on Trinity Island in Loch Uachtair. In this peaceful retreat he spent the last year of his life.

\* *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. iii, p. 78 ; Walsh's *History of the Remonstrance* ; Burke's *Hibernia Dominicana*.



The Nuncio, on his departure from Ireland, took with him copies of all the official documents and correspondence connected with the Confederation, and in the period 1661 to 1666 these were handed over to two Irish Capuchins, Father Robert (Daniel O'Connell) and Father Richard (Barnaby O'Ferrall) who copied them with the greatest care and skill and produced a consecutive history consisting of 2,666 folios in six volumes. This voluminous work, which is of the utmost importance, providing as it does a detailed and intimate account of the Confederation, is now preserved in the Trivulzian Library in Milan. Quite recently, under the auspices of the Irish Manuscripts Commission, it was decided to publish the entire work, and the results have fully justified the immense labour expended.\* A study of the work emphasises the noble part which the Primate played in the history of that difficult and trying time.

The writers of the MS. were contemporaries of the Nuncio and Primate and write from a first-hand knowledge. Father Robert, who was a native of Desmond, studied at Cork, went to France in 1640, and was professed there in 1645. Father Richard was a native of Longford, and, in 1644, was appointed Superior of the Capuchin Friary of Galway and met the Nuncio there in July, 1648. When in the same year English influence was being used in Rome to undermine the prestige of the Nuncio it was Father Richard who was sent to Rome to defend the actions of the Nuncio. His knowledge of the people and affairs of the period was therefore unique, and he was eminently qualified to compile the Nuncio's Memoirs. In 1661 he commenced, in Florence, at the request of the

\* *Commentarius Rivuccinianus De Sedis Apostolicae Legatione ad Foederatos Hiberniae Catholicos per annos 1645-1649. Volumen Primum.* Edited by Rev. Father Stanislaus, O. Min. Cap., Dublin—1932. Vol. i. covers the history of the period down to the Nuncio's arrival in 1645. It is estimated that the remaining materials will occupy four further volumes. An inclusive index will enhance the value of the work.

Nuncio's relatives, to collect and arrange the vast collection of papers which the Nuncio had brought. He was joined at Florence, in the same year, by Father Robert, who was also a profound classical scholar, and from 1661 to 1666 they continued the work. Owing to ill health Father Richard was unable to continue the work and the task of completion fell to Father Robert, who completed it up to the year 1649. From 1170 until 1641, when the narrative begins, Father Robert traces the history of Ireland and this forms the introduction to the work. About the middle of the eighteenth century the manuscript passed into the possession of the Trivulzi family, in whose private library, in the city of Milan, it has since remained. It is well-known that Carte, in his *Life of James, Duke of Ormond*, published in London, in 1736, had access to a copy of this work which had been prepared for Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester. But Carte only wrote for the glorification of Ormond and was careful to omit anything and everything which might be in favour of the Confederates. Carte's extracts were useless as history, although later writers quoted them without question. No historian of the tragic period, 1640-1650, can afford to ignore the Rinuccini Commentaries, where the towering figure of the Primate, the bosom friend of the Nuncio, and the dread of the treacherous Ormondists, follows through every page. The publication of this great work, this monument of Catholic and Irish scholarship of the seventeenth century, this brilliant classical history reflecting credit on its compilers—Daniel O'Connell of Desmond and Barnaby O'Ferrall of Longford—will throw new light on the personality of the Primate and reveal him in true perspective. The consummate skill with which he countered the wily Ormondist schemes shows clearly his powers as a diplomatist. The papers of Rinuccini emphasise a



fact which was always recognised : that the Primate was the brain-centre of the Confederate movement.\*

The Primate's last official act was to preside over the Synod of Loch Uachtair on July 29th, 1651.† This Synod was concerned with matters of ecclesiastical administration and organisation, as well as the adoption of suggestions for countering the Puritan régime, and was attended, *inter alios*, by Bishop MacSweeney of Kilmore and Bishop Anthony Geoghegan of Clonmacnoise. Among those who signed its Decrees were Donatus Georgan (Garrigan), Dean of Kilmore ; Thomas Brady, Archdeacon of Kilmore ; Bernard Kelly, Pastor of Kilmore ; Antonius Gavanus (Gowan), O.S.F., Guardian of Cavan monastery ; Ferdinandus Ferially (Farrelly), Prior of Druimleamh (Drumlane) ; Thomas Makiernan, Exprovincialis Minorum ; Henricus Mellan,‡ ordinis Minorum pater ; Antonius Heslenan, Guardian of Muntereoile (the territory around Dromahaire).

The Synod of Loch Uachtair, or "Clochuactir," which is the form occurring in the Rinuccini Memoirs, which was held while the forces of Puritanism were ravaging the land, seems to have been convened in the Premonstratensian Priory on Trinity Island, in Kilmore parish, where the Primate had his retreat.

\* The *Commentarius Rinuccinianus* is a source which provides much new materials concerning the Irish Martyrs ; it is the most detailed account of the Confederate Wars, as well as the most authentic, which has yet appeared. A useful summary of the materials contained in the six folio volumes at Milan is readily accessible in a recently published work—*The Mission of Rinuccini, Nuncio Extraordinary to Ireland, 1645-1649*, by M. J. Hynes, M.A., Ph.D. (Dublin : Browne and Nolan, 1932).

† The Decrees of this Synod are in the Rinuccini Memoirs ; they are also given in Dean Monahan's *Records Relating to the Dioceses of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise*, p. 107.

‡ Father Henry O'Mellan was a distinguished member of the Franciscan Order, and the well-known Irish Diary of the Confederate Wars, 1641-1647—*Cín Lae Ó Mealláin*—has often been attributed to him. However, the diary itself furnishes internal evidence that he cannot have been the compiler, but that it was really the work of another Franciscan, Father Turlogh O'Mellan, of Brantry, Co. Tyrone. This Father Turlogh was chaplain to the army of Sir Phelim O'Neill. For the text of the *Cín Lae Ó Mealláin* see *Analecta Hibernica*, No. 3, pp. 1-49 (1931).

On Trinity Island, in 1652, the Primate breathed his last. Cardinal Moran thus describes his sufferings and death :

Hugh O'Reilly, a descendant of the old Irish monarchs, was at this time Primate and Archbishop of Armagh. . . . He frequently administered Confirmation in the woods or on the hillsides, and surrounded as he was by Scottish settlers, he endeavoured clandestinely as best he could to instruct his flock. . . . When at length the province of Ulster was overrun by the Puritan armies he chose for himself a silent retreat on the little island of the Blessed Trinity, in the County of Cavan, where, after suffering incredible hardships (*post plurimas aerumnas in eo recessu patientissime toleratus*), he died in 1652, aged 72 years.\*

The body of the Primate was conveyed to the Franciscan Monastery of St. Mary's, in the town of Cavan, where it was interred with his ancestors ; according to popular tradition he was buried in the choir of the ruined church—long since uprooted and desecrated. In the same sacred precincts rests the body of his close friend, Owen Roe O'Neill. "It was a holy thought," says the Franciscan historian, "to lay the bones of so true a prelate in the same loam with the chieftains of his own race and kindred."†

The date of the Primate's death recorded by Renehan‡ is July 7th, 1651, which is incorrect, as shown by the date of the Synod of Loch Uachtair, which was held at the close of the same month and over which the Primate presided. A manuscript in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, gives 1653 as the year of the Primate's demise—*Aodh O Raghallaigh priomfaidh na hEireann do dol deg 1653* (E. iv. 1, fol. 51, 52). In his

\* *Persecutions Suffered by the Catholics of Ireland*, p. 99.

† Rev. C. P. Meehan, *Irish Franciscan Monasteries*, Fifth Edition, p. 183.

‡ *Collections on Irish Church History*, p. 47.



notes to the *Spicilegium Ossoriense* Cardinal Moran gives the date as February, 1653, and in this he is followed by Maziere Brady.\* In his later works, however, Cardinal Moran accepts 1652 as the most likely date, and Father C. P. Meehan (*Op. cit.*) adopts the same view. There is no evidence to show that the Primate was living in 1653; and he seems to have died towards the end of 1652.

The Primate's chalice, a precious diocesan heirloom, is preserved in Cavan Cathedral. It is of silver and carries the following inscription:

*Hugo Reilly Killmorensis Eps. in honorem pretiosi sanguinis Xti me fieri fecit 1628.*

Primate O'Reilly is one of the noblest figures in our history. His native Breiffne will, no doubt, one day raise a fitting monument to his memory. All his life he was closely connected with his native diocese, and although his episcopal rule over it continued only for a few years yet he never ceased, as is shown by his correspondence with the Holy See, to take a deep and abiding interest in its people as well as in every phase of its national and ecclesiastical affairs. During the years of his Primacy he lived mostly in Breiffne—in the vicinity of Loch Uachtair. And when he found death approaching, he returned to his native district where, on Trinity Island, he spent his closing days. His heart was in Breiffne and his body was laid to rest in the family mausoleum of St. Mary's Franciscan monastery.

There is one fact of his life which clearly demonstrates his clear-sighted vision and highly trained scientific mind. He was an authority on the reformation of the Calendar and was the first Irish bishop who endeavoured to supplant the old Julian system of computation and

\* *Episcopal Succession*, vol. i, p. 226.

have the Gregorian Calendar adopted in Ireland. Shortly after his elevation to the Primacy he attempted to have the new Calendar adopted throughout Ireland; but the circumstances were not yet propitious and his proposal received little support. Owing to the Catholic origin of the Calendar it was rejected immediately by non-Catholics, and in the absence of a unanimous acceptance his proposal was dropped. Had he lived in more peaceful times it is quite certain that the new Calendar would have been introduced much earlier. Not until 1752—just a century after his death—was the Gregorian Calendar adopted in England. There is some evidence, afforded by "Old Style" and "New Style" on early eighteenth century monumental inscriptions in Breiffne, that the "New Style" was adopted—at least in Breiffne—by Catholics many years earlier than 1752.

As a patron of learning Primate O'Reilly occupies an honoured place in the history of his time. It was at his suggestion and encouraged by his help and patronage that Father John Colgan, the Irish Franciscan historian, compiled his monumental work, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*. In the Preface to that work—which is dedicated to Primate O'Reilly—Father Colgan acknowledges his obligations to the archbishop, "who cheered him on in his undertakings, and secured for him the sympathy and aid of his suffragans." Father Colgan and his community in Louvain were unable to undertake the publication of such a voluminous work, but the Primate, out of his scanty revenues, advanced the money for its publication. The *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* is the greatest work on Irish hagiology which has ever appeared. It is a monument to the industry of the Irish Franciscans of Louvain and remains an eloquent testimony to the generosity and patronage of Primate O'Reilly who, in a merciless age, when terrorism and persecution reigned supreme in Ireland, contrived to help and encourage them in their great work.



### EOGHAN MAC SWEENEY (1628-1669)

In 1628, on the translation of Bishop Hugh O'Reilly to the Primacy of Armagh, Pope Urban VIII provided Eoghan MacSweeney (MacSuibhne) to the vacant See on September 18th of the same year.

Eoghan MacSweeney was a native of the territory of Tir Conaill—Donegal—where he was born—in the neighbourhood of Derry—about the year 1580. He belonged to a family which for many years ruled over Tir Conaill and gave many heroic priests to the Church. If we can trust the testimony of Dr. Bedell, a brother of Bishop MacSweeney was residing in the district of Kilmore in 1641.

After pursuing his ecclesiastical studies in Paris Dr. MacSweeney was appointed, in 1626, Vicar Apostolic of Derry.\* On December 17th, 1626, he wrote an interesting Latin letter from Paris to Rome in regard to appointments to the Ulster episcopate. The letter, which is addressed to a Cardinal of the Sacred Congregation and dwells on a topic that at that period largely occupied the solicitude of the Ulster clergy, is as follows:†

Although personally unknown to your Lordship, I would rather be thought presumptuous than forgetful of my duty. Being about to revisit my country after having completed my course of studies, and there to labour to the best of my energy in clearing the Lord's vineyard of tares of heresy and schism, two obligations present themselves to me. First, I am to thank your Lordship in writing, as I cannot

† Rev. C. P. Meehan's *Irish Franciscan Monasteries*. Fifth Edition, p. 404.

\* According to the manuscript of Archdeacon John Lynch, the Doctorate of Theology was conferred on Dr. MacSweeney in Paris. Lynch—who was one of his contemporaries—states that after his return to Ireland, and before his appointment as Vicar Apostolic of Derry, Dr. MacSweeney officiated for some time as a parish priest in the Diocese of Elphin: "in Parrochia de Druimchach in Elfinensi Diocesi."—*De Praesulibus Hiberniae*.

do so orally, for having advanced me, however unworthy, at the instance of the Archbishop of Armagh (Hugh Mc Cawell), to the apostolic vicariate of Derry. Secondly, as it has pleased you to appoint me to occupy the place lately vacated by the death of the same illustrious archprelate, I venture, although far away from the suffragan bishops, and the vicars apostolic and general, to offer a few suggestions touching the successor of the deceased, which you will find in the accompanying schedule. I humbly beseech your Lordship that in the same considerations which a year ago influenced you in preferring Hugh Mc Cawell, may have weight with you now. Deign to consider what will be most conducive to the propagation of the Faith, the peace and well-being of Ulster, and the salvation of souls. I venture also to impress on you, that these externs who ambition the archbishopric, will not accept minor dignities in the same province, harassed as it is by incessant wars, and perils constantly eventuating. Hence, in my opinion, they do not deserve sweets—supreme dignities, who refuse to taste bitters—inferior dignities. Meanwhile, we commit the whole matter to Divine Providence, and the discretion of your Lordship, whom, etc., etc.

Your Lordship's most humble servant,

EUGENIUS SUINAEUS,

*Vicar Apostolic of Derry, Prothonotary.*

PARIS, 17th December, 1626.

Dr. MacSweeney's consecration took place in the early part of the year 1630—owing to the difficulties of the times it was not possible to have it sooner—the consecrating Prelate being the Most Rev. Thomas Fleming, Archbishop of Dublin (1625-1655), assisted by Bishop Thomas Dease of Meath (1622-1652) and Bishop John Cullinan\* of Raphoe (1625-1661).

\* For his family history see *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, pp. 77-121.



Towards the end of 1630 Bishop MacSweeney petitioned the Holy See for the restitution of certain tithes accruing from the monasteries of Ceanannus (Kells) and Fore, in Meath Diocese. He describes the See of Kilmore as the poorest in the Province of Armagh. In pre-Reformation times a considerable number of benefices in Kilmore belonged to the Abbeys of Ceanannus and Fore. According to the report of Sir John Davies in 1607 fourteen parsonages in County Cavan belonged to the Abbey of Fore, while eight belonged to Ceanannus. The question of the rights of these Abbeys to claim these tithes was for several centuries the cause of much contention. Primate O'Reilly, who was thoroughly acquainted with the facts of the case, gave his support to Bishop MacSweeney's petition. The Primate, in a letter, dated December 2nd, 1630, presented the case to the Roman authorities.\* He explained that most of the church lands in Kilmore had been sequestrated, while the episcopal revenues did not exceed six hundred French florins yearly, of which sum one hundred was paid to the Prior of Fore.

Kilmore was then in a very impoverished condition and Bishop MacSweeney experienced much difficulty in maintaining ecclesiastical administration owing to the hostility of the Planters and the risks entailed in performing his episcopal visitations. In 1634 he presented to the Holy See a *Relatio* of his diocese. The document, which is in Latin, is substantially as follows† :

MOST HOLY FATHER,

After kissing your sacred feet and returning undying thanks to Your Holiness for having appointed me to the exalted position of episcopal dignity in the Diocese of Kilmore, in the Province of Armagh, I, Eoghan Swiney (*Eugenius Suinaeus*), Bishop of

\* *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. i, p. 171.

† *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. v, p. 82.

Kilmore, and most humble servant of Your Holiness, acknowledge that in this the fourth year since my consecration I am bound to visit the Threshold of the Apostles and to render to Your Holiness an account of my entire pastoral office.

But on account of the dangers by sea and land during the present calamitous times and the distance of the places\* I am unable to discharge this duty in person as is clear to all who possess the least knowledge of the present state of this kingdom. Neither have I a member of my Chapter, nor a dignitary, nor a priest from amongst my clergy, who, by reason of the aforesaid difficulties—not to speak of the lack of money—could discharge the above mentioned duty in my place. I therefore nominate and appoint the most prudent Lord Edmund Dowyer† as my special representative. He is a priest of known and approved life and a Doctor of Theology; he is residing at present in the City [i.e., Rome] and discharging there a public office on behalf of our kingdom, and I appoint him to explain the legitimate causes which hinder me from making my Visitation. I myself most humbly transmit to Your Holiness the following few details by way of a summary report.

After the confirmation of my election I was consecrated as soon as possible—though not without great difficulty—by the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Thomas, Archbishop of Dublin, assisted by the Most Reverend Thomas of Meath, and John, Bishop of Raphoe. I sent to Your Holiness, without

\* Even under favourable circumstances the journey from Ireland to Rome was, in those times, a formidable undertaking.

† Dr. Edmund O'Dwyer, who in 1632 was selected as Procurator in Rome for the Irish Bishops owing to the difficulties of performing their visits *ad limina*. The privilege of performing their visits by Procurator was granted to the Irish Bishops by the Holy See in 1625. Dr. O'Dwyer, who had a most adventurous life (he was captured in 1642 by Moorish pirates and sold as a slave in Africa, but was ransomed) was appointed Bishop of Limerick in 1646 and died in exile in Belgium in 1654. See *The Diocese of Limerick in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (pp. 441-461), by Canon Begley. Dublin—Browne and Nolan, Ltd. 1927.



delay, signed with my seal, the formulas of my oath of fidelity and my oath to the Catholic Faith.

After my consecration I resided continually in my diocese, laboured sedulously and diligently, applied myself to these things which pertained to the state of my Church, to the discipline and reformation of the clergy and laity and to the salvation of the souls committed to my care. For I performed not only those duties belonging to the episcopal office, but even those belonging to the sacerdotal and pastoral office, as often as occasion offered. I confirmed innumerable multitudes both in my own and the neighbouring dioceses (always with the consent of the Ordinaries), ordained many priests, reconciled sixty heretics, or thereabouts, to the Catholic Church and frequently arranged for missions for reconciling sinners throughout my diocese; not alone through others but personally I preached the word of God to the people, as often as my health or the pressure of business permitted. I made Visitation of my diocese annually, and twice a year as often as deemed needful. I used assemble my clergy and in those assemblies drew up many salutary statutes for the reformation both of clergy and laity. I have suffered various persecutions and molestations, both from certain contumacious clerics and from laymen, so much so, that, at times I have been compelled not alone to go into hiding but even to withdraw from my diocese, from which, however, I have never been absent except for reasons of piety, or through necessity. Frequently summoned and cited by my persecutors to appear before secular tribunals I have always refused, in order to defend, so far as possible, ecclesiastical immunity. As a result of this I am now in evident danger for having treated such summonses with contempt. I may incur being exiled by the edict of secular judges. In addition to the foregoing I should have much more to relate to Your Holiness and the Apostolic See but for the danger of interception which, even in the case of these, I greatly

fear. I consider, however, that these are sufficient—till better times arrive—to show my obedience to Your Holiness.

Praying the great and good God to preserve Your Holiness for very many years for the general welfare of the entire Church and our afflicted kingdom.

Your Holiness'

Most humble servant,

EUGENIUS EPUS KILLMOREN.

This *Relatio* is dated from his place of refuge—in *Loco refugii nostri*—March 2nd, 1634.

By letter of the same date Bishop MacSweeney informed the Holy See of the many persecutions to which he was being subjected in Kilmore and of the many enemies who were plotting against him. He requested to be translated to the Diocese of Derry, of which he had been Vicar Apostolic—"tum quod Dioecesis illa proxima est loco Nativitatis meae";\* but his request was not granted. The Diocese of Derry, where Bishop MacSweeney had many friends, at this period seems to have maintained ecclesiastical administration chiefly due to the fact that many of the new Settlers were Catholic.† The proposed translation of the Bishop of Kilmore to the See of Derry is discussed in a letter from Primate O'Reilly to the Holy See, dated May 13th, 1635.‡ The acknowledgment of the letter, signed by Cardinal Antonius Barberinus, is dated August 2nd of the same year. The Primate, aware of the capabilities of Dr. MacSweeney, seems to have influenced him in remaining in Kilmore. In the Primate, who lived in the same neighbourhood, he had a wise guide and capable adviser.

In 1636 Dr. MacSweeney, who proved himself to be possessed of great administrative zeal, presented to

\* *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. i, p. 192.

† *Cí. Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. v, pp. 1-6.

‡ *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. i, pp. 209 and 210.



Rome another *Relatio* of the diocese. In this document, preserved in the Roman Archives, the diocese is described as containing 40 parishes, with 28 parish priests having care of souls. There was no cathedral city, and in Cavan, which was the chief town, there was formerly a Franciscan monastery, but now only a few Friars, living in private houses, remained. The Chapter of the diocese had died out, and the only dignitaries remaining were the Dean and Archdeacon. The text of the *Relatio* is as follows\* :

Dioecesis Kilmorensis continet Parrochias 40 ; Parochos animarum curam exercentes 28 : in ea nulla est Civitas, oppidum autem est unicum de Cavan, ubi extabat Conventus Ord. S. Franc., dum Catholica viguit Religio, nunc nonnulli dicti ordinis patres in privatis aedibus commorantur.

Villa in qua sita est Eccla. Cathedralis habitatores habet Anglos et assertores hæreticae pravitatis, simul cum ipso Pseudo-Epo. : per universam quoque Dioecesis Angli mixtim, Scotique hæretici cum Catholicis nativis vivunt.

Territorium ex magna parte silvis ac montibus obsitum ex parte fertile et amoenum.

Cathedralis Eccla. olim completum habuit Capitulum verum quia Emolumenta nulla sperari possunt duo tantum de Capitulo extant presbiteri Dioecesani, Decanus et Archidiaconus.

In 1639 Dr. MacSweeney wrote to the Sacred Congregation proposing various queries concerning ecclesiastical administration, rules of fasting, and sundry other matters.† His letters to Rome reveal Dr. MacSweeney as a great administrator as well as a profound theologian.

In the correspondence of Dr. William Bedell, Protestant Bishop of Kilmore (1629-1642), will be found many references to Bishop MacSweeney. From

\* *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 208.

† *Op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 241.

these notices we are afforded some interesting sidelights on contemporary men and manners. Writing to Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, on April 1st, 1630, Dr. Bedell states that :

The Primate himself [Dr. Hugh O'Reilly] lives in my parish [Kilmore] ; the bishop [Dr. MacSweeney] in another part of my diocese further off. Every parish hath its priest, and some two or three apiece.\*

In a letter to Dr. Ward, Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, dated October 6th, 1629, Dr. Bedell discusses the condition of Kilmore :

I am come hither [he writes] into a country fertile enough and pleasant, but where Popery hath possessed not only the ancient inhabitants, but also our English which planted here at the first, almost universally : and our late plantations are yet rawe, the churches ruined. My Cathedrall Church is such another as Horningersht† was, but without Steeple, Bell or Font. You may imagine the rest—the Popish Bishop of this diocese is lately chosen Primate, and dwells within a mile or two of me. I am in deliberation to write to him, and offer some intercourse.‡

Writing to Archbishop Ussher on September 18th, 1630, he further states that :

There are, besides the titular Primate and bishop, of priests in the Diocess of Kilmore and Ardagh 66, of ministers and curates but 32.§

Bishop MacSweeney attended the Synod of the Ulster bishops, held at Ceanannus (Kells), County Meath, in March, 1642, and was an uncompromising supporter of the policy of Rinuccini. It is mentioned in a

\* Burnett's *Life of Bedell*, Second Edition, 1736, p. 35.

† Great Horningsworth, or Horringer, in Suffolk, of which Bedell had been rector.

‡ *Two Biographies of Bedell*, Edited by E. S. Shuckburgh, p. 300.

§ Burnett, *Op. cit.*, p. 46.



contemporary record relating to Lurgan parish that the bishop passed on horseback through the town of Virginia, then a small village, on his way to and from Ceanannus. He assisted at the famous Synod of Jamestown, County Leitrim, in August, 1650, and appended his signature to the historic declaration drawn up on that occasion. For a few years after the Revolution of 1641 the Catholics were, once more, in possession of the churches, and Bishop MacSweeney performed Visitations throughout every part of the diocese, reconciled many heretics, and reorganised ecclesiastical administration. But the Cromwellian régime—surpassing in atrocity even the barbarities of Tamerlane the Tartar—finally deprived the people of their churches and dispersed the clergy.

During the Cromwellian usurpation Bishop MacSweeney suffered much. Now old and decrepit he was forced constantly to change his place of residence.\* He was present at the Synod of Loch Uachtair on July 29th, 1651, and signed its decrees. An examination of the records of the period shows that Bishop MacSweeney was the only bishop remaining in Ireland from 1654 until October, 1659, and again from the end of 1661 until November, 1662. There is abundant evidence for this statement, which is clear from an examination of the records of the Irish Episcopate. For instance, in a list of the Irish bishops forwarded to Rome in 1656 it is stated that :

Ill. D. Eugenius Swiny, Epus. Kilmorensis : in Hibernia solus ex Episcopus habitat, de ejus morte dubitatur.†

\* To avoid prolixity I refrain from quoting the bigoted and offensive comments of Rev. Alexander Clogie (Bedell's son-in-law) on the aged and infirm prelate, otherwise I would be constrained to controvert him. Suffice it to say that Clogie's allegations, in his *Speculum Episcoporum*, dealing with Bedell's career, are unworthy of consideration.

† *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. i, p. 417.

The list makes it quite clear that the other Irish bishops were in exile on the Continent. The severity of the Cromwellian régime had swept away almost the entire Irish Episcopate.

During the earlier years of the Cromwellian usurpation Bishop MacSweeney was obliged to seek refuge in the parish of Rossinver, Barony of Rossclogher, a mountainous district in the extremity of north Leitrim also known as Dartry, the territory of the MacClancys. Archdeacon Lynch, in his *De Praesulibus Hiberniae*, refers to the bishop's place of refuge during this troubled period as in "Baronia de Rosilochair sive Dartria MacGlanchy."

In the year 1649 there were four archbishops and twenty-three bishops in Ireland. During a portion of Cromwell's bloodthirsty régime there remained only Bishop MacSweeney, "who was unable to seek safety by flight, in consequence of age and infirmity."\*

The *Brevis Relatio* of Dr. William Burgatt, agent for the Irish clergy in Rome (and afterwards archbishop of Cashel), presented to the Sacred Congregation in 1667, states that :

In the year 1649, there were in Ireland twenty-seven bishops, four of whom were metropolitans. In each cathedral there were dignitaries and canons ; each parish had its pastors ; . . . But when Cromwell, with exceeding great cruelty, persecuted the clergy, all were scattered. More than three hundred were put to death by the sword or on the scaffold, amongst whom were three bishops ; more than a thousand were sent into exile, and amongst these all the surviving bishops, with only one exception, the Bishop of Kilmore, etc.†

\* Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. ii, p. 104 ; Renehan, *Collections*, p. 54.

† *Persecutions of the Irish Catholics*, by Card. Moran, p. 275.



It was stated in a report presented to Propaganda, in July, 1669, that :

The Bishop of Ardagh, after his return from exile, consecrated two hundred priests for various dioceses in Ireland, as at that time there was no other bishop resident in that kingdom save the infirm Bishop of Kilmore.\*

The following extract from Renehan furnishes additional evidence :

But how reversed was the scene in 1654 when Dr. [Edmund] O'Reilly was consecrated! . . . But one bishop remained, and he was old, decrepit, and bedridden.†

This refers to Dr. Edmund O'Reilly, who was promoted to the Primatial See of Armagh on April 16th, 1657, and consecrated in Brussels in the same year. The date 1654 given by Renehan is therefore incorrect. After a chequered career he died at Saumur, France, in 1669.‡

The Catholic clergy were ordered under penalty of treason to leave Ireland not later than twenty days after January 16th, 1653. The priests and bishops who managed to escape death or exile remained hidden in the woods or on the lonely mountain sides. *E loco refugii nostri* (i.e., "from our hiding place") was the address usually given in their letters. Bishop MacSweeney was now obliged to retire to some of the more secluded parts of the diocese, and for several years lived in an humble cottage on the slopes of the mountain of Sliabh-an-Iaraind, on the borders of Cavan and Leitrim. Among the *Carte Papers* in the Bodleian

\* Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, vol. i, p. 293.

† *Collections*, p. 54.

‡ Vide *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii.; Stuart-Coleman's *Armagh*, pp. 234-242; Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, vol. i, p. 226.

Library, Oxford, there is a Deposition, dated July 21st, 1663, which states, *inter alia*, that :

Doctor Owin Mac Swine the papish titular bishop of Killmore [lives] on the mountain of Slewnerin.\*

At that date he had long been decrepit, weighed down with years and infirmity, and quite incapable of discharging any episcopal duties. On the almost inaccessible mountain slopes of Sliabh-an-Iaraind he waited, in vain, through the weary years, for the persecutions to pass away and the era of religious freedom to dawn.

Towards the close of the year 1660 the notorious Ormond and his henchman the factious and unscrupulous Peter Walsh—both of whom were vile and venomous apostates—attempted to sow the seeds of schism among Irish Catholics. The bishops were "requested" to sign a declaration of loyalty to the English King—Charles II—who had just been restored to the English throne. Remembering that the Irish regiments on the Continent had suffered much for his sake and when in exile had defended his cause against the Puritans, such a declaration was not, perhaps, quite incompatible with nationality and religion. But the actual declaration drawn up by Walsh and Ormond was most offensive to the Holy See and derogatory to Catholic principles. This infamous declaration is usually known as the Valesian Formulary, or the Remonstrance.†

The bishops rejected the Remonstrance and this aroused the anger of Ormond and Walsh. Walsh got busy and assisted by other agents of the English Court brought several accusations against the Primate,

\* Burke, *Irish Priests in the Penal Times, 1660-1760*, p. 2.

† Peter Walsh wrote a *History of the Remonstrance*, now a very rare work, giving the texts of all the documents.



Edmund O'Reilly,\* who was represented as a sower of disaffection among the people and exciting them to disloyalty against the king. The Primate was summoned to Rome to answer these charges, and before his departure a letter signed by the leading Irish ecclesiastics was forwarded to the Holy See refuting the base and slanderous statements regarding the Primate. Among those whose signatures are appended to this letter, which is dated December 13th, 1660, are Eugenius, Kilmorensis Episcopus; Fr. Antonius Govan, O.S.F., Guardianus de Cavan; Thomas Brady, Abbas Monasterii B.M. de Kells, Canonorum Regularium et Archidiaconus, Kilmorensis; Donatus Geargan, Decanus Kilmorensis.†

As Bishop MacSweeney was now wholly incapacitated by old age and suffering, and quite unable to attend to the spiritual needs of the diocese, he was given, a few years later, an assistant in the person of Dr. Thomas Fitzsimons, to whom was assigned the administration of the diocese. Dr. Fitzsimons was appointed Vicar-General by Primate Edmund O'Reilly on June 25th, 1666. His government of the diocese was not satisfactory to all and gave rise to much friction; as a result,

\* Edmund O'Reilly was born in Dublin in 1606, and was a kinsman of Primate Hugh. He was ordained in 1629 and continued his studies at Louvain. Returning to Dublin he was appointed Vicar-General of that Diocese in 1642, but was arrested in 1653 and transported to the Continent. Appointed to the Primatial See, he was consecrated at Brussels in 1657 and in the following year attempted to return to Ireland, but was arrested on the journey, when passing through London, and sent back to France. In October, 1659, heavily disguised, he succeeded in reaching Ireland and remained in the country for about two years, but in 1661, owing to the hostility of Ormond and Walsh, he was obliged to leave the country and to defend himself in Rome. Returning to Ireland in June, 1666, he remained hidden in Dublin for less than a month, when he was discovered, arrested, and again transported to the Continent. He never returned, and died March 8, 1669, at the Royal College of Saumur, France, where he was buried in the church of the B.V.M.

† The text of the Letter will be found among the Rinuccini Memoirs; it is reprinted in Dean Monahan's *Records Relating to the Dioceses of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise*, p. 32. Fathers Govan (Gowan), Brady, and Geargan (Garrigan) have already been mentioned in connection with the Synod of Loch Uachtair in 1651.

the Provincial Council of Armagh, on May 25th, 1669,\* after due consideration, deposed Dr. Fitzsimons. On June 22nd of the same year Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath, writing to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, informs him that :

The Bishop of Kilmore, being continually infirm in body, and sometimes, too, in mind, is not able to repress the dissensions which have arisen in his diocese, the only remedy would be to give him a coadjutor.†

In the letter Bishop Plunket recommends the appointment of Rev. Robert Plunket, P.P., Kilbride, as coadjutor.

Bishop Plunket was deputed to make further investigations, but before his arrival in Kilmore Bishop MacSweeney has passed away. After a long and strenuous episcopate of forty-one years he died on October 18th, 1669. At his own request, and with the permission of the Protestant Bishop, Dr. Maxwell, he was buried in the old Cathedral of Kilmore. This was then possible owing to the fact that Lord Deputy Ormond had, in 1669, left the country, and his successor, Lord Berkeley, refused to continue his predecessor's policy of persecution. The result was a period of temporary toleration, which continued for a few years.

No trace of any monument to mark the grave of Bishop MacSweeney has survived in the old cathedral, but there is a tradition that he was buried somewhere near the east end.

\* There is a reference in Lynch's *De Praesulibus Hiberniae* to the meeting of a Provincial Council at *Baunbuidhe*—Bawnboy—during Pentecost, 1669. It may be inferred that this was the meeting which decided the case of Dr. Fitzsimons.

† Moran, *Memoir of the Ven. Oliver Plunket*, 2nd edition, p. 3.



## THE OXBURGH CHALICE

A chalice belonging to the seventeenth century is now preserved in Templeport parish. It is dated 1665 and carries the following inscription around the base, in contracted Latin :

*Orate pro aīna Heivardi Oxburgh et Clare Oxburgh  
alias Coghlan qui me fieri fecerunt ano din 1665.*

which may be translated :

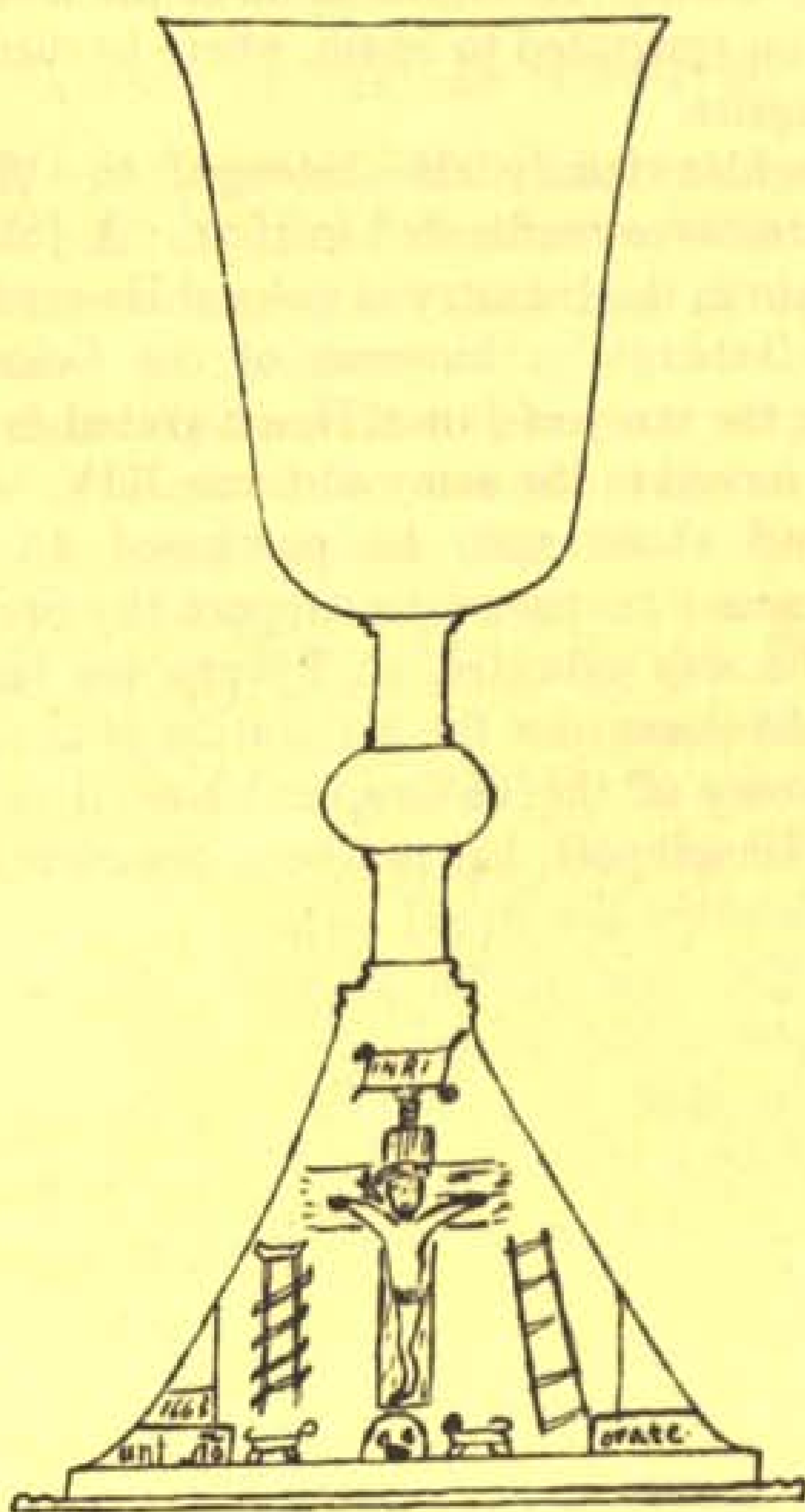
Pray for the souls of Heward Oxburgh and Clare Oxburgh, alias Coghlan, who got this made in the year 1665.

The chalice is about 8 inches in height, with cup about 3 inches in diameter, and displays skilled workmanship.\* The figure of Our Saviour on the Cross is shown, also two ladders, one at either side. At the base are three figures, two resembling animals, and third—the central one—appears to be a bird with a figure "4" partly over it. The symbolism of these figures is not quite clear, and awaits further examination.

The Oxburgh family belonged to Offaly, where, in 1641, a Heward Oxburgh possessed an estate at Bovin, in the barony of Ballybritt. In 1687 Colonel Heward Oxburgh, most probably a son of the former, was Sheriff of Offaly—then known as King's County—which he represented in the Parliament of 1689. This Colonel Oxburgh was, no doubt, the donor of the chalice. At that time the family was possessed of wealth and influence and supported the cause of James II. Several officers of the family fought at Derry, Aughrim and the Boyne. The Oxburgh estates were confiscated in 1691, in which year the Attainders name Heward, Henry, John,

\* I am indebted to the Rev. P. Brady, C.C., Bawnboy, now of Ballinamore, for the accompanying sketch of the chalice.

Richard, James and Heward junior, Oxburgh, all of Bovin.\* Heward was evidently a family name. Regarding the estate of Colonel Oxburgh, a claim was presented by "*Clare Oxburgh, as his widow,*" to Chichester



THE OXBURGH CHALICE

House for a small jointure, and by Henry Oxburgh for a remainder. This entry establishes the identities of the donors of the chalice. According to Story, the Williamite historian, a Lieutenant-Colonel Oxburgh

\* D'Alton, *King James's Irish Army List*, p. 851.



joined the Williamites after the Battle of Aughrim, but it is more likely that the Colonel Oxburgh who was killed at Aughrim, on July 12th, 1691, was identical with Colonel Heward. According to D'Alton, Henry, son of the Colonel, recovered some of the Bovin estates, but later on emigrated to Spain, where he died Governor of Carthagená.

The Coghlan family also belonged to Offaly, where their estates were confiscated in 1691. A John Coghlan was Captain in the Infantry of Colonel Heward Oxburgh.

Henry Oxburgh, a kinsman of the Colonel and a Captain in the army of James II, emigrated to France in 1696 and served in the army of Louis XIV. Returning to England about 1700 he purchased an estate in Lancashire and continued to support the Stuart cause. In 1716 he was executed at Tyburn for his share in the 1715 movement for the restoration of the Jacobites.

The history of the chalice, and how it reached the parish of Templeport, has not been discovered.

## CHAPTER XX

## VACANCY OF THE SEE (1669-1728)

FROM 1669 until 1728 the bishopric was vacant, and the diocese was in charge of vicars or administrators. The other Ulster dioceses were in similar circumstances; the prolonged persecutions and the Plantations had very severely hampered ecclesiastical organisation. Except in Armagh there was no regular episcopal succession for long periods together.\* Raphoe was ruled by vicars from 1661 to 1725. Dromore, for the greater part of the period 1667 to 1731, had no bishop. Except for a brief interval of four years Clogher was ruled by vicars from 1687 to 1727. So also was Down and Connor from 1675 to 1715. For the long interval of a century and a quarter Derry was without a bishop. This unfortunate state of affairs was only too well known to the Roman authorities, but it was found to be quite impossible to fill the vacant Sees, as no bishop, even in disguise, could hope to reside anywhere in the province of Ulster. "There were particular periods," writes Burke (*op. cit.*), "when the laws were, so to say, in full blast; when the whole executive bent itself to the work, and the Catholic Church was driven as if, beneath the surface. Sometimes it was a threatened descent of the Jacobites, sometimes an unaccountable paroxysm of anti-Catholic fury. Thus, in 1708, 1711-13, 1719, 1731, and 1743, in response to appeals from government, general war was levied on the 'common enemy'—as the Catholics were styled by Parliament and Lords Lieutenant."

\* *Vide* Maziere Brady, *The Irish Reformation* (1867), p. 69. Burke, *Op. cit.* p. 267.



In 1704 there were only two bishops remaining in Ireland. One of these, Dr. Edward Comerford, Archbishop of Cashel, was an invalid, and the other, Dr. Patrick Donnelly, Bishop of Dromore, heavily disguised was making a gallant struggle to survive among the mountains of his native Ulster. Richard Maginn, Vicar-General of Dromore, and John Verdon, Vicar-General of Armagh, were refugees in Paris, living on a pension which they had been granted by the Pope. Those who were unlucky enough to be captured were imprisoned in Newgate or the Black Dog, the dark and dismal dungeons of the day, where prisoners were starved or beaten to death.

The career and adventures of Dr. Donnelly would be incredible were they not historical facts. Disguised in the garb of a piper he managed to survive for a few years, a difficult task in the Ulster of his day. Dr. Donnelly was a native of the district of Cookstown, County Tyrone, where he was born about the year 1649. He was ordained in 1673 at Dundalk by Primate Plunket and lived at Corrimallagh, on the slopes of Sliabh Gullion, County Armagh. He was registered in 1704 as parish priest of Newry—the part of it which lies in County Armagh.\* In 1697 he was appointed to the Bishopric of Dromore, but owing to the absence of bishops was unable to receive episcopal consecration. A similar example may be quoted. Dr. Ambrose Madden, appointed to the See of Killala in 1695, was not consecrated until 1714, and then by only one bishop, as two assistants could not be had.

Travelling in the disguise of an itinerant musician, Dr. Donnelly ministered to his flock in the Counties of Tyrone, Armagh and Down. The origin of his adoption of the piper's garb as an effective disguise was as follows. In the course of his travels he happened to meet with an itinerant harper named Fiachra MacBrady, from Stradone, in Laragh parish, County Cavan, who visited

fairs and gatherings in Cavan, Louth, Monaghan, Tyrone and Armagh, where, displaying his musical talents, he contrived to eke out a livelihood. In reality MacBrady, well-known as the "Bard of Stradone," was a schoolmaster, who, to evade the penalties of the law and the unwelcome attentions of the vile brood of government spies then swarming over Ulster, donned the garb of a harper and played from town to town. He was a poet of much merit, and some of his compositions have been preserved.\* Wandering hedge schoolmasters of his type were then to be found throughout the country and taught mathematics and the classics, and most of them, in addition to their own native Gaelic, were versed in Greek and Latin. Some of them knew English also.

Bishop Donnelly shared with MacBrady the talent for music and recognised how a similar disguise in piper's garb could be turned to good account. The bishop adopted the disguise of the wandering schoolmaster and, dressed in old clothes and carrying a fiddle (and sometimes the bagpipes) under his arm, played through the towns and villages and baffled for years the army of spies and priest-hunters who were on his track. In the winter months he resided in his home, a mud-wall cabin, on the unfrequented slopes of Sliabh Gullion. Many anecdotes relating to his disguises, adventures and hairbreadth escapes, are still related by the people of Armagh and Tyrone. On one occasion the spies were purposely misled by a false rumour that on Christmas Eve the bishop would celebrate Mass at a place indicated near Moira Castle. But away on the slopes of Sliabh Gullion, according to prearrangement, the bishop and his flock had assembled for Mass. In the early hours

\* "Διπλὴς ῥιάτρα τοῦ Ὀράδαϊς" and "Σεατρὴν ῥιάτρα τοῦ Ὀράδαϊς" are published by ἐν τῷ Ὁ Μουσικῶν in CÉAD DE CEOLTAIB ŪLAÓ," ll. 30-35. According to O'Reilly (*Irish Writers*) Fiachra was "a witty schoolmaster of Stradone, Co. Cavan, and a tolerably good poet," and wrote some of his poems in the year 1712.



of Christmas morning, having heard Mass, the people dispersed and the bishop, looking the part of a famished and forlorn piper, went on his way. Resting by the roadside and thoroughly exhausted, he fell fast asleep. A party of soldiers returning from the fruitless vigil at Moira Castle discovered the old tattered "piper" asleep in the shelter of a small wood. They aroused him, called for music, and danced merrily. No doubt they were well pleased with his performance, for they made a collection for him and, furthermore, presented him with a welcome Christmas gift—an overcoat. Little could they have imagined that the piper was the bishop for whom they were searching!

Early in 1706 the spies got very active. In September the Lords Justices were assured that a "popish bishop, his name is Patrick Donnelly," was living in the mountains above Newry.\* On the 14th of the same month he was arrested "at the foot of Slievegullin mountain" and lodged in Dundalk prison. In May, 1707, he was tried in Dublin but no evidence for his episcopal status could be produced, although strenuous efforts were made to procure a conviction. He was found "not guilty" of being a bishop but the authorities showed no desire to release him.

In a list of the Irish Bishops furnished to Propaganda in 1707 there is the following entry concerning the imprisonment of Dr. Donnelly:

Ep. Dromorensis, Patritius Donnelly qui haereticorum injuria ab aliquot mensibus tenetur in stricto carcere in Hibernia.†

The unique circumstances of the consecration of Bishop Thady O'Rourke, for the See of Killala, at the hands of Bishop Donnelly in a prison cell in Dublin on August 24th, 1707, have already been described.

\* Burke, *Op. cit.*, p. 269.

† *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii., p. 395.

Writing from Paris, on December 5th, 1708, to Cardinal Gaulterio, the exiled Bishop of Waterford, Dr. Richard Pierce, refers to the arrest of Dr. Donnelly :

Toute Royaume d'Irlande est a present sans eveques ; il n'ya que deux dont l'un est en prison et l'autre fort vieux et hors d'etat de rendre aucun service.

The other bishop here referred to was Archbishop Comerford, of Cashel, who was living at Thurles but unable to perform any duties. In 1707, when Bishop Donnelly was in prison, the Primate, Dr. Dominic Maguire, died in Paris, and the Ulster hierarchy came to an end. The Roman authorities then decided that the See of Clogher, where there was a large Catholic population, and was fairly central in Ulster, might be filled, and Dr. Hugh MacMahon was appointed in 1707 and reached Ireland in the following year. In 1713 he was appointed to the Primacy and for many years travelled in disguise.\*

For some years after his release Dr. Donnelly continued his ministrations and his piper's disguise served him to the end. He died in 1716, and under cover of night the people, at great risk, conveyed his body to his native Tyrone, where he was interred with his ancestors in the cemetery of Desertcreat, near Cookstown.

It may be recalled that Bishop Donnelly was the original of the "Bard of Armagh." It was from Fiachra MacBrady, the "Bard of Stradone," that he adopted the plan for his novel but effective disguise. In after years the bishop became popularly known as the "Bard of Armagh," but out of respect for his dignity, and to maintain that disguise which had served him so faithfully and well, the name of the Cavan

\* For his reports on the condition of the Ulster Dioceses see *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii, pp. 470-488.



poet and musician, in a slightly altered form, was substituted. The well-known song *The Bold Phelim Brady, the Bard of Armagh*, has always retained its popularity in Ulster, and its notes can never fail to recall the history of those dark days in Ulster when Dr. Donnelly, the only remaining Ulster bishop, emerged from his place of refuge on the slopes of Sliabh Gullion to minister to his scattered and persecuted people.

A brief account of the Vicars and Administrators of Kilmore during this unhappy period will best illustrate the history of the diocese during the vacancy of the See when the Roman authorities found that the appointment of a bishop was impracticable.

A week after the death of Bishop MacSweeney Dr. Patrick Plunket, on October 25th, 1669, convened the clergy of Kilmore and declared Dr. Thomas Fitzsimons, Vicar-General. The Primate (Dr. Plunket) arrived in Ireland on March 7th, 1670, and a few days later confirmed Dr. Fitzsimons as Archdeacon and Vicar-General.

Dr. Fitzsimons was a native of Meath.\* For fifteen years he had been Professor of Theology at Louvain and bore the reputation of being "learned, unostentatious, and prudent."† In a letter of March 16th, 1672, the Primate refers to him as "a learned and exemplary man, a good theologian and canonist."‡ At the Synod of Clones, August 23rd, 1670, Dr. Fitzsimons, who was in attendance, is described as "Archdeacon and Vicar-General of Kilmore," and was appointed Secretary to the Synod.§

We have already seen that Dr. Fitzsimons had been Vicar-General and administrator of Kilmore from 1666 until 1669, when he was deposed by the Provincial Council of Armagh; but the decision of the Council was over-

\* Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. iii., p. 646.

† Cardinal Moran, *Memoir of the Ven. Oliver Plunket*, 2nd Edition, p. 235.

‡ Moran, *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

§ Moran, *Op. cit.*, p. 144.

ruled. The Primate, in whose estimation Dr. Fitzsimons stood high, wrote on December 30th, 1670, to Dr. Brennan, then agent for the Irish clergy in Rome :

Mr. Thomas Fitzsymons deports himself so well in this province, that I know no one more deserving than he is.\*

The Congregation of Propaganda, on September 16th, 1672, nominated Dr. Fitzsimons as Vicar-Apostolic of Kilmore, but the matter was postponed.

The controversy between the Franciscans and Dominicans concerning the ownership of the Friary of Gaula, on the southern shore of Upper Loch Erne, was re-opened in 1660, when the Franciscans occupied the derelict Friary, which had been abandoned by the Dominicans at an earlier period. The question was referred to the Holy See and, in 1671, the Primate was deputed to act as adjudicator. The consultors associated with him were Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath ; Dr. Oliver Dease, V.G., Meath ; and Dr. Fitzsimons, V.G., Kilmore. The investigations took place in the Friary of Lisgool, and the assessors decided in favour of the Dominicans.† On October 11th, 1671, the Primate promulgated his decision at Drogheda, and the Dominicans were declared entitled to quest for alms in the Dioceses of Clogher, Armagh, Down and Dromore. The controversy was, however, not finally closed until 1678, when the Holy See confirmed the Primate's decision.

On March 6th, 1675, the Primate presented to Rome the following *Relatio* of Kilmore :

The Diocese of Kilmore is 50 miles in length, and 20 in breadth ; there are in it about twenty-six parish priests, and two houses of Franciscans. All the Catholics, with the exception of two, are only

\* Moran, *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

† *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 129.



tenants. The Vicar-General is Thomas Symons, a very learned and eloquent man. He was professor of theology in Belgium.\*

For about five years Dr. Fitzsimons continued to labour zealously in Kilmore and was highly esteemed by the Primate, who invariably confirmed his judgments in ecclesiastical matters. Between the years 1672 and 1675 the administration of Dr. Fitzsimons failed to give general satisfaction and some friction ensued. Some worthy parish priests who had been deposed by Dr. Fitzsimons appealed from his decision to the Primate, who immediately invited Dr. Fitzsimons to account for his actions. An investigation was held and as Dr. Fitzsimons failed to give a satisfactory account of his administration he was accordingly deposed on May 12th, 1675.†

The surprising change in the manner of Dr. Fitzsimons is sufficiently explained in the correspondence of the Primate, corroborated in the testimony of Archbishop Brennan of Cashel. In the early part of 1675 he had been seized with violent attacks of dysentery, which continued without interruption for more than two months. This severe and protracted illness had seriously impaired his mental faculties and reduced him to a state of imbecility. In this pitiable condition of mind and body it was obvious that his administration could hardly have proved satisfactorily, and he was accordingly relieved of his duties. This disease was then prevalent on the Continent, where he seems to have contracted it.

The Primate, on December 2nd, 1676, writes to the Internunzio and explains the case :

I have received a letter [he writes] from your Excellency, of the 6th ult., about the affair of Thomas Fitzsymons, who was deposed by me about fourteen

\* Cardinal Moran, *Memoir*, p. 171.

† Cardinal Moran, *Memoir*, p. 237.

months ago. . . . About two years ago he had an attack of sickness, and since that he has never been sane of mind. He deposed three parish priests, without even citing them to appear; and when they appealed to me, though I decided in their favour, yet he refused to obey.\*

But the case presented another sinister aspect. Some evil-designing men, full of animosity against the Primate, taking advantage of the deranged mental condition of Dr. Fitzsimons, were utilising him as a convenient and pliable weapon to attack the Primate. For instance, it was alleged that he (the Primate) had called in the civil magistrates to punish some of the clergy of Kilmore. But the Primate, in a letter to Rome, dated December 20th, 1676, effectively disposes of these baseless accusations and proves that, on the contrary, it was Dr. Fitzsimons himself who had recourse to Sir Charles Hamilton, and to John Maxwell, Sheriff of Cavan. But these Protestant officials, to their credit be it said, ignored the appeals of Dr. Fitzsimons, and forwarded all the correspondence to the Primate.

In 1677 Dr. John Brenan, Archbishop of Cashel (1677-1693), received instructions from the Holy See to examine this whole controversy, which he did, and furnished his report to Rome on August 5th of the same year. The report, which is a lengthy one, reviews the case in great detail, and explains how the illness of Dr. Fitzsimons had rendered him quite incapable of discharging his duties. The text of the report from Dr. Brenan's letters in the archives of Propaganda, for which we are indebted to the researches of the late Cardinal Moran is, in part, as follows:—

This week the commission has come to hand to report on the controversy between Rev. (Thomas) FitzSymons and the Archbishop of Armagh, and

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 237.



through my desire to serve your Excellency I do not wish to delay giving my present information on the matter, whilst deferring further information till a later date, when, after careful investigation, I may be able to make certain what, at present, I cannot report with certainty.

The controversy with FitzSymons commenced two years ago, on the occasion of his contumacy in regard to a decree of the Archbishop of Armagh. As he persisted in his contumacy the Archbishop deposed him from his office. After that FitzSymons clamoured irreverently against the Archbishop and stirred up many of the clergy and laity against him, and it was even supposed by many persons that FitzSymons was the author of a letter with various accusations presented to the Royal Council in Dublin against the Archbishop of Armagh, but of that I cannot speak with certainty. . . .

As regards the accusation that the Archbishop of Armagh occasions scandal to the Catholics by treating too familiarly with the Protestant ministers, during my time here, I have never heard a word of any such scandal. If by Protestant ministers is meant the Protestant clergy, he is familiar with only one of them, an official of the pseudo-archbishop of Armagh, and this familiarity is of great advantage, because when many Catholic cases of trial from the province of Armagh are brought to his court, especially in matrimonial questions, he, without interfering himself, refers them to the Catholic Archbishop. I have never heard of his familiarity with any other members of the Protestant clergy. If by Protestant ministers is meant members of the Supreme Council or other royal officials, he is familiar with several of them. This is very advantageous to him in the administration of his diocese, for when clergy and laity bring accusations against the Metropolitan, officials, through personal knowledge of the Archbishop, reject both accusations and accusers, without troubling him in any way, and it is probable that were it not for this familiarity he would now be outside the kingdom, like

the Archbishops of Dublin and Tuam, through malignity of such informers. . . .

In my opinion the present Archbishop of Armagh has more assiduously devoted himself to the administration of that province than any of his predecessors for many years, and I say this without the intention of lessening their merit in any way. It is a fact, however, that he is pursued by envy on account of his influence with the Viceroy and other members of the Government, and he is assailed by the tongues and pens of others on account of his dispute with the Archbishop of Dublin [Dr. Talbot] and his controversies with the Regulars. . . .

This is what occurs to me in the present matter, and should I get further information I shall communicate it, and I declare that in what I have written I have not been influenced by friendship but solely by desire of attesting the truth of facts in so far as I could learn them from trustworthy persons.\*

Before this report had been fully considered in Rome, and judgment given, Dr. Fitzsimons was, once again, proposed as Vicar-Apostolic. In the meanwhile the position was fully examined and on February 1st, 1678, Propaganda refused the nomination of Dr. Fitzsimons and handed over the administration of Kilmore to Dr. Patrick Tyrrell, O.F.M., Bishop of Clogher. The disagreeable controversy here ended. The eccentric administration of Dr. Fitzsimons was due not less to his severe physical and mental infirmities than to the wily schemes of government agents, with the aid of a few vindictive apostates, who took advantage of his incapacity to create dissensions and to drag the Irish Church into schism, a policy which had already been fostered by the Duke of Ormond and his henchman, the notorious Peter Walsh. Soon afterwards Dr. Fitzsimons retired to Belgium, where he died at Brussels in 1680.

\* Canon Power, *A Bishop of the Penal Times, Letters and Reports of John Brennan*, p. 54.



In 1675, on the deposition of Dr. Fitzsimons, the Primate appointed the Rev. Dr. Bernard Geaghan as Vicar-General, with Rev. Bernard Brady as his assistant. In a letter to the Internunzio, dated December 2nd, 1676, the Primate states :

The Vicar whom I appointed to succeed him [Dr. Fitzsimons], and who still continues, is Bernard Geaghan, who is 60 years of age, a man of holy life, and who was at other times Vicar-General. During the past spring, however, as he was rather infirm, I appointed as his assistant, Father Bernard Brady, who is 38 years of age, and has been a rural vicar for 12 years. He is a man of sound judgment ; and as the Diocese of Kilmore is 58 miles in length, the good old Geaghan was not able to discharge all the duty.

For a few years after 1669 the persecutions of the clergy appear to have ceased, due in a great measure to the policy of Lord Berkeley. But with the coming of Essex, in 1672, the fires of persecution were rekindled anew, and in 1678 the so-called " Popish Plot " was invented as a pretext for renewing the persecution in all its fury. The state of the Church, especially in the province of Ulster, was now wretched in the extreme, and the diocesan revenues were very small.

Dr. Patrick Tyrrell administered the Diocese of Kilmore from 1678 to 1689, when he was translated to Meath.\* He was a native of Fertullagh, County Westmeath, and is described as " a man renowned, even on the Continent, for his knowledge of ecclesiastical jurisprudence."† At the Synod of Ardpatrik, County Louth, in August, 1678, he signed the Acts as " Bishop of Clogher and Administrator of Kilmore." At a later Synod, held in Cavan, on June 7th, 1687, he is referred to as " Bishop of Clogher, Vicar-Apostolic, Administrator

\* Vide Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. ii, pp. 140-151.

† Moran, *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

of Kilmore.\* Dr. Tyrrell was not, at any time, Bishop of Kilmore; he was Apostolic Administrator of the diocese. He suffered much and for many years was forced to travel in disguise. Both Kilmore and Clogher were in an impoverished condition and the revenues gave a barely tolerable sustenance to Dr. Tyrrell. The Primate, in a letter written in 1673, refers to the poverty of the Irish dioceses; the annual revenue of Kilmore was only £35. On account of the poverty of both Sees Dr. Tyrrell petitioned the Sacred Congregation in 1677 to have the administration of Kilmore annexed to Clogher; the request was, on the recommendation of the Primate, immediately granted. During the years when he performed his episcopal functions he lived in hiding in the glens of Cavan and Monaghan. From the official documents and reports of the period we learn of the extraordinary efforts that were made to capture him, but without avail.†

There were then only two bishops in Ulster, the Primate and Dr. Tyrrell. From the *Carte Manuscripts*, and other sources, we learn of the schemes prepared for their apprehensions. Lord Deputy Ormond, writing to Sir Hans Hamilton, on October 28th, 1679, declares that :

It would be an extraordinary service to the king and of great advantage to me that Oliver Plunket,

\* Renehan, *Collections*, p. 160. The Statutes for the Diocese of Kilmore, which were decreed at the Synod of Cavan, comprise a detailed scheme of diocesan reorganisation. Space does not permit the insertion here of the text of the decrees of this Synod—which was an important event in the history of the diocese—but the following extract concerning the keeping of parochial registers, shows that even in those difficult times Dr. Tyrrell insisted that such records be kept :

Sub poena suspensionis ad libitum Ordinarii infligendae teneantur Parochi tres libros, vel unum bipartitum, habere, ut inscribant nomina Baptizandorum, eorum parentum et patrinarum, diem, annum, et locum Baptismi, item Confirmatorum et Defunctorum, necnon numerum familiarum aliarumque personarum in suis respective parochiis degentium.—*Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii., p. 109.

† Burke, *Irish Priests in the Penal Times, 1660-1760*, chap. ii.



the titular Primate, and Tyrrell, the titular Bishop of Clogher, might be apprehended; and therefore it is that I recommend it to your utmost care and diligence presuming that no man can be more like to effect it than yourself; and the better to enable you I give you liberty to engage me for any reasonable reward to any that shall discover them or any of them to you, so as they may be taken or any one of them. The thing is of more than ordinary importance, and therefore let me once more recommend it to your best industry.\*

In his reply, dated November 1st, 1679, Sir Hans Hamilton states that he would do his utmost to carry out Ormond's instructions, adding:

I have laid out also for Tyrrell who, if in this country [County Armagh] or Cavan, will also be found. But his absconding places I know not so well as the others.

Primate Plunket was arrested in Dublin on December 6th, 1679, and in the July of 1681 was executed in Tyburn. Dr. Tyrrell contrived successfully to evade his pursuers. Towards the end of 1680 one of Ormond's spies suggested that Dr. Tyrrell be offered a "safe conduct" and protection for a month if he came to Dublin and betray the so-called "Popish Plot." But the bishop was only too well aware of the value of such promises and he preferred to remain in hiding in the glens of Cavan and Monaghan.

The Vicar-General of Kilmore under Dr. Tyrrell was Dr. Edmund O'Reilly, P.P., Kildrumfertan, who did not escape the vigilance of the authorities, who eagerly sought his apprehension. That he was not so successful as the bishop in evading the priest-hunters is evident from the fact that in 1681 he was a prisoner in Cavan jail. It would appear that Dr. Tyrrell had contrived

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

to maintain a correspondence with Dr. O'Reilly while the latter was in prison and that the prison authorities had intercepted some of the letters. However, Dr. O'Reilly seems to have succeeded in having letters conveyed out surreptitiously, which fact did not escape the suspicion of the prison officials. The following curious letter from the Council to Humphrey Perrott, dated at Cavan, June 28th, 1681, reveals the anxiety of the authorities to glean information regarding Dr. Tyrrell :

It is thought fitt at this Board that the letters directed to Edmund Rely, prisoner in the Gaole of Cavan, from Patrick Tyrrell be returned to you and that you examine Rely whether he doth know the said Tyrrell and of what calling or profession he is and if a clergyman whether he bee a Bishopp and of what place he bears his title and whether the titular Bishop of Clogher be called Tyrrell. You are likewise to examine the said Rely concerning the great pacquett of letters said to be conveyed out of the Gaole.\*

We have no record of the results of the inquiry, but no doubt the quest was fruitless and Dr. Tyrrell managed to retain his liberty. The Council seem to have been singularly misinformed, otherwise they would have immediately identified the "Patrick Tyrrell" of the correspondence. In his letters Dr. Tyrrell adopted various *aliases*—*Scurlog*, and later *Stapleton*—which proved veritable enigmas to his pursuers.† On this occasion he seems to have abandoned his disguise. The missing letters suspected of having been smuggled out of the prison would have, as the authorities well knew, revealed the identity as well as the place of refuge of Dr. Tyrrell.

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 80.

† Cardinal Moran's *Memoir of the Ven. Oliver Plunket*, p. 310.



How long Dr. Edmund O'Reilly remained in Cavan prison we are not informed, but his death took place on August 6th, 1688, and he rests in the churchyard of Kildrumfertan, where a massive horizontal slab marks his grave.

Dr. Tyrrell was translated to the Bishopric of Meath on January 21st, 1689 (he had been preconised on December 20th, 1688), and Dr. Bernard Brady, Dean of Kilmore, was confirmed as Vicar-General. Dr. Brady, who was P.P. of Laragh, was born about the year 1638 and was a very distinguished man. We have already seen that in the spring of 1676 he was appointed as assistant to the Rev. Bernard Geaghan by Primate Plunket, who describes him as "a man of sound judgment." He laboured throughout the severest period of the Penal Code, and for over thirty years watched over the spiritual interests of the diocese. He was ordained in 1666 by Bishop Patrick Plunket of Ardagh and was appointed to the parish of Laragh, where he resided in the townland of Lisatawan. In the Primate's letter of December 2, 1676, Dr. Brady's age is given as 38; in 1704 he was aged 66, which is the exact age recorded in the *Registry* of that year. He held office at other times before 1676 as the Primate's letter states; this was evidently during the closing years of Bishop MacSweeney's episcopate. Dr. Bernard Brady died in May, 1710, at the age of 72 and rests with his ancestors in the churchyard of Laragh; his successor as Vicar-General was Rev. James Brady, LL.D.\*

Some years earlier, a Kilmore priest, Rev. Dr. Michael Smith, had made application to Rome to have himself appointed as Vicar-Apostolic of Kilmore. The Propaganda, on August 7th, 1704, considered Father Smith's request, which was based on his statement

\* *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii, p. 481; an account of the state of the Diocese of Kilmore, dated 1714, presented by Dr. Hugh MacMahon of Clogher to the Sacred Congregation and preserved in the Archives of Propaganda, Rome.

the the diocese had been "ten (*sic*) years without a Vicar Apostolic." In the meanwhile Propaganda had procured reliable information from Ireland and refused Father Smith's request on the ground that Kilmore was sufficiently provided under Dr. Bernard Brady.\*

In the old churchyard of Lavey is a large horizontal slab displaying a chalice and missal and bearing the following inscription :

HERE LYETH THE BODY OF  
FATHER MICHAEL SMITH DO-  
CTOR SORBONNE WHO DIED  
JUNE THE 3. 1723 AGED 63  
YEARS.†

Father Smith was a very distinguished man and earned high academic honours on the Continent where he appears to have spent the greater part of his life. He was a native of the district of Lavey and was buried there with his relatives.

Dr. Hugh MacMahon, Bishop of Clogher, was appointed Administrator of Kilmore on August 22nd, 1711, and continued to act as such until translated to the Primacy of Armagh on August 6th, 1714. This great ecclesiastic was born in Clogher Diocese in 1660, and after studying on the Continent was ordained there. He was Canon of Cassel, in Flanders, and was appointed to his native Diocese of Clogher on March 15th, 1707. In that year the hierarchy of Ulster, with the imprisonment of Bishop Patrick Donnelly of Dromore, had *de facto* come to an end. In September the Primate, Dr. Maguire, died in Paris and it was decided that County Monaghan, being central in Ulster, with a large Catholic population, would be a fairly safe centre in which to place a bishop. Bishop

\* Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, vol. i, p. 284.

† Near the foot of the slab is a later addition, which reads :—  
" Repaired by Thos. Smith, Pottle."



MacMahon was consecrated abroad and after much difficulty reached Ireland. Having changed his name and adopted various disguises he managed for three years to perform his episcopal functions in Kilmore and Clogher. Writing from Cassel, in Flanders, to the Congregation of Propaganda on May 10th, 1714, he signs himself Bishop of Clogher and Administrator of Kilmore. Arrested in London on his way to Cassel in 1712 he tells us how he providentially escaped from prison and arrived in Cassel in September of the same year. In Cassel, which is in the Diocese of Ypres, his uncle was Provost of St. Peter's Church. A month later Dr. MacMahon returned to Ireland, and the authorities made elaborate preparations for his capture. Spies were now on his trail, and the official records of the period contain many letters and inquiries regarding him. The following letter may be taken as a sample: it is dated from Dublin Castle, October 25th, 1712, to Captain William Barton, a Justice of the Peace, living in Thomastown, near Dundalk:

SIR—The Lords Justices and Council having received an Information that the titular popish Primate MacMahon is lately come into this kingdom from Flanders and now resides at the house of Cullogh Duff MacMahon near Carrickmacross their Excellencies and Lordships have commanded me to acquaint you therewith and to desire you will immediately take such numbers of persons as you shall think necessary and proper for that service and cause the said Primate to be apprehended and committed to Gaole and his papers to be sealed upp and sent to the Council Board and that you will give their Excellencies and Lordships an account of your proceedings therein.

I am, Sir, Your most humble Servant,

J. DAWSON.\*

\*Burke, *Op. cit.*, p. 273.

To this Captain Barton replied on October 30th, saying that he duly raided the house of MacMahon, "secretly by moonlight," but discovered nothing of an incriminating nature. It is worth noting that this Cullogh Duff MacMahon was the Primate's father, and lived at Bellatrain, near Carrickmacross, where the bishop usually resided. Cullogh Duff appears to have lived to a hearty old age, as his Will, which was preserved in the Public Record Office, Dublin, was dated June 14th, 1723.

The priest-hunters now directed all their energies towards the bishop's capture. J. Dawson, in a letter from Dublin Castle, dated November 8th, 1712, and addressed to the Justices of the Peace for Louth and Monaghan, exhorts them to give their "best assistance" to a notorious scoundrel who was proving himself an adept at priest-hunting in Ulster and who, according to his own sworn statement, only required assistance to accomplish the arrest of the bishop. The priest-hunters were specially marked out for the maddened vengeance of the people, and woe betide any member of that vile brood who fell into the hands of the sturdy peasantry of Ulster.

Towards the end of 1713 Dr. MacMahon was nominated for the Primacy, and this only multiplied his dangers. But his disguises were very effective and the priest-hunters were only too well aware of the risks attending their operations in Cavan and Monaghan. In 1720 armed forces from Dublin searched for him all over the archdiocese, so he had to fly to the western seaboard of Ulster.

Primate MacMahon held the Administration of Kilmore from 1711 until 1728. After 1714, when he was translated to the Primacy of Armagh, Kilmore was placed in charge of a Vicar-General—Dr. Michael O'Reilly. From 1731 until 1737 Primate MacMahon administered the Diocese of Dromore. He died in Dublin on August 2nd, 1737, and was buried, in



accordance with his own wishes, in St. Peter's Church, Drogheda.

The Primate was a man of superior literary ability; his best known work is the *Jus Primatiale Armacanum* which establishes permanently the right of the Archbishops of Armagh to take precedence over those of Dublin. This classic work is a monument to his genius. His *Will*, dated May 1st, 1735, was preserved in the Public Record Office.\*

Dr. Michael O'Reilly, Vicar-General of Kilmore under the Administratorship of Primate MacMahon, was himself afterwards Archbishop of Armagh, and his administrative abilities and intellectual accomplishments in the dismal years of the early eighteenth century did credit to the county of his birth. For nearly twenty years he was in charge of the diocese, and his period of rule coincided with the time when the Penal Code was in full blast in Ireland. He was born in County Cavan and studied in Rome, apparently in the College of Propaganda, where, according to Renehan, a correspondence between himself and Primate MacMahon is preserved in the Library of the College.† Of his early years in Cavan we have only very scanty records, but sufficient to indicate what trials he must have endured. In 1709 an Act was passed requiring the priests to subscribe to the Oath of Abjuration,‡ failing which they were ordered to leave the country. From 1710 until the middle of the century they had to live in secret on the mountains or in unfrequented places, and to assume various disguises when travelling about. Hence our diocesan records for this period are very meagre. It is obvious that it was very unsafe

\* *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, p. 149.

† *Collections on Irish Church History* by Very Rev. L. F. Renehan, D.D., Edited by Rev. Daniel MacCarthy, pp. 100-103. This volume was published in 1861, but the portion up to page 138 was prepared and put to press by the Rev. Dr. Kelly, just before his death, in 1858.

‡ For the text of this infamous document see Burke, *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

for a priest to keep a parochial record, even if such was feasible ; the possession of such a document would be highly incriminating and in case of arrest would be only furnishing his enemies with first-hand evidence. But we have abundant evidence that the Penal Laws were rigorously enforced in Kilmore. An enumeration of the Mass-rocks and Mass-glens throughout the diocese would furnish a convincing testimony to the terrors of the Penal times.

During the dread reign of Queen Anne, when the paroxysm of anti-Catholic fanaticism swept over the land, Dr. Michael O'Reilly arrived in Ireland and was appointed P.P. of Cavan and V.G. of Kilmore. His character and accomplishments are thus detailed by Renehan (*Op. cit.*) :

Michael O'Reilly . . . was descended from the ancient and powerful family of that name in Cavan, in which county he also was born. He was one of those magnanimous priests, who after qualifying themselves for the ministry in foreign colleges, returned during the fury of Queen Anne's persecution, to resuscitate the Faith in Ireland, or at least to preserve it from total extinction. Superior talents, and industrious application to study, had earned for him an accumulation of academic honours during his course of philosophy and divinity ; and before his departure [from Rome] he had graduated as Doctor of Theology, and of both Canon and Civil Law. His native Diocese, Kilmore, was . . . without a bishop when Dr. O'Reilly returned home. The learning and humility of the young doctor, his prudence, united with untiring zeal and an heroic disregard of personal danger, soon attracted general attention, and he was appointed parish priest of Cavan, and Vicar-General of the vacant diocese, by the neighbouring bishop [i.e., Dr. Hugh MacMahon] who was charged with its guardianship. The Primate of that day, Dr. Hugh MacMahon, honoured him with his especial



confidence and intimacy ; to his judgment his Grace submitted his famous *Jus Primatiale Armacanum* and so highly did he appreciate his approval, that he took care to prefix it to the work in print. The terms in which the approbation is conveyed shew that the Primate's esteem was not misplaced, nor undervalued. The testimonial, although brief, sufficiently displays the strong and well-stored mind, the classic taste for Latin composition, and the affectionate respect and admiration of its author for the venerable archbishop.

Needless to say, Dr. O'Reilly travelled in disguise from Rome and I can find no record of the precise date of his appointment as P.P. and V.G. But by inference from Renehan's statement it is obvious that the appointment took place about the year 1713, when Dr. MacMahon was transferred to the Primacy of Armagh. From this time until the end of 1730 the Diocese of Kilmore remained under the sole administration of Dr. O'Reilly. He succeeded in counteracting the pernicious effects of the prolonged persecutions and in spite of the vile crew of spies and informers who relentlessly pursued him he continued his ministrations in every part of his extensive diocese.

In Dr. Hugh MacMahon's great work *Jus Primatiale Armacanum*, already referred to, will be found the letter mentioned by Renehan. It is signed *Michael Reily, Juris utriusq. Doctor, et Vs. Gs. Ks.* ; these are abbreviations for *Juris utriusque Doctor, et Vicarius Generalis Kilmorensis*. The date is not appended to this letter, but from its position in the text, as well as from other considerations, it would appear to have been written in 1725. Two other letters on the preceding page are dated December 24th, 1724, and December 30th, 1724. The former is signed "B.—s C.—s," and the latter "Th.—s A.—s," ; these are abbreviations for *Bernardus* (MacMahon) *Clogheriensis* and *Thomas Ardachadensis*.

Dr. O'Reilly enjoyed the esteem and friendship of the Primate, who valued his worth. After the restoration of the Bishopric of Kilmore, the Primate in 1730 appointed Dr. O'Reilly to be P.P. Drogheda and V.G. Armagh, where he remained until 1739. That he was the Primate's trusted friend is evident from the former's *Will*, dated May 1st, 1735, already mentioned.

The subsequent career of this great Kilmore priest may be briefly described. He was appointed Bishop of Derry by Brief of April 24th, 1739, and in 1740 was one of the assisting bishops at the consecration of Francis Stuart, Bishop of Down and Connor. The Diocese of Derry had suffered greatly from persecution; the Catholic landed proprietors had been expelled and Scottish and English Planters had usurped their lands. The spirit of persecution was so active that from the year 1601, when Bishop Raymond O'Gallagher was slain by the English, until the appointment of Dr. O'Reilly, the See of Derry was vacant. Under such difficult circumstances the new bishop reorganised ecclesiastical discipline, and set about the establishment of schools. No Catholic place of worship would then be tolerated in the Diocese of Derry, if we except the few hovels occasionally used, and Dr. O'Reilly arranged for fixed places of assembly for Mass on Sundays. The wretched state of that Diocese may be realised from the following Report, dated 1731, issued by the then Protestant Bishop of the diocese:

There are in ye Diocese of Derry only nine Mass-houses, Mass being said in most places sub dio, or under some sort of shed, built up occasionally to shelter ye priest from ye weather.

Four of ye said Mass-houses were built since ye 1st of King George ye 1st [i.e., 1714]; ye rest before, and all mean inconsiderable buildings.\*

\* *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, p. 17.



Such was the plight of the diocese to which Dr. O'Reilly was appointed in 1739. The people were in ignorance, and he immediately set about the preparation of two Catechisms, one in Irish and the other in English. These Catechisms display profound scholarship and became very popular, passing through numerous editions. According to Renehan (*Op. cit.*) Dr. O'Reilly :

Published two excellent Catechisms, one in English for the use of the newly converted colonists, the other in Irish, the language at that time generally spoken in his diocese. So solid accurate and well adapted to the wants of the people was the instruction conveyed in these little abridgments of the Christian doctrine, that they were immediately introduced into the other dioceses of the province, and although several other Catechisms have since been published, yet even to this day, O'Reilly's retain the greatest share of circulation at least in Ulster.

Dr. Derry, Bishop of Dromore from 1801 to 1819, states :

He [Bishop O'Reilly] published two Catechisms, one in Irish, the other in English ; and though there have been many others written and printed since that period, his work (particularly in Ulster) has the ascendant.\*

It is the best testimony to the excellence of these Catechisms that although nearly two centuries have passed away since they were compiled yet they have never been superseded. The *Teagasg Criostuidhe*, edited by William Williams, of Dungarvan, County Waterford, and published by the Keating Society in 1863, is based on Dr. O'Reilly's work. A revision of the original work was rendered necessary as, owing to its having passed through many editions in the hands of printers

\* Stuart's *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh*. New Edition, 1900 : Revised by Rev. Ambrose Coleman, O.P., S.T.L.

unacquainted with the Irish language, the later issues were filled with so many topographical errors that the little volume was rendered almost valueless. The revised edition still retains its well-deserved popularity.

Primate Hugh MacMahon, to whom I have already referred, died in 1737, and was succeeded in the Primacy of Armagh by his nephew, Dr. Bernard MacMahon, Bishop of Clogher, who ruled until his death on May 27th, 1747, at the age of 67. On the death of the latter his brother, Dr. Ross MacMahon, who had also been Bishop of Clogher, succeeded to the Primacy, which he held for only a year, dying October 29th, 1748, aged 49.\* Pope Benedict XIV then promoted Bishop O'Reilly to the Primatial See by Brief dated January 23rd, 1749. After his elevation to the Primacy Dr. O'Reilly resided in the parish of Termonfechin, near Drogheda, where he died in 1758 and was buried in the Chord cemetery, outside St. Laurence's Gate, Drogheda. It is to be regretted that no inscription marks the last resting-place of this illustrious and venerable Kilmore ecclesiastic.

\* The two brothers, Archbishops Bernard and Ross, are interred in the graveyard of Edergole, Parish of Ematris, Co. Monaghan, where a lengthy Latin inscription commemorates them; the inscription concludes: "Ambo pares virtute, pares et honoribus ambo."



## CHAPTER XXI

## THE KILMORE CLERGY LIST OF 1704

IN accordance with Statute 2, Anne, c. 7, all parish priests "now in Ireland shall at the next quarter sessions of the peace to be held in the several counties next after 24th June, 1704, return their names and places of abode to the respective clerks of the peace in the counties where the said popish priests reside, with their age, the parish of which he pretends to be popish priest, the time and place of their first receiving popish orders and from whom they received the same and shall then enter into recognisance with two sureties each in the sum of £50 that such popish priest shall be of peaceable behaviour and not remove out of such county into any other part of the kingdom."

This Registration Act was later on improved and Statute 8, Anne, c. 3, declared that no parish priest should maintain a curate or assistant. Dire penalties were enacted against Regulars who dared remain in the country after July 20th, 1704. Only parish priests were registered and the object of the government was to ensure that according as the parish priests died their parishes would remain vacant, as no successors would be recognised by law. It was obvious that the Act was directed not so much against the existing clergy as their successors. That nearly all the clergy in Ireland registered themselves is most probable, and the lists are now of great historical value.\*

\* *A List of the Names of the Popish Parish Priests throughout the Several Counties in the Kingdom of Ireland, etc.* Dublin—1705, Printed by Andrew Crook. As this pamphlet is now very rare and generally inaccessible I have abstracted the data for the several parishes and arranged the materials in a more readable form, with

The names of the parish priests registered at Cavan on July 10th, 1704, with the parishes to which they were attached, places of residence, sureties, and other details, are as follows:

*Parish of Dromlane.*—Rev. Andrew Magaghan, aged 90, ordained in 1651 at Lisbon, Portugal, by Francis South, Major of Lisbon, lived at Diretenny. Sureties—James Magrath of Deryvackney, and Patrick Magaghan of Crossdoney.

*Parish of Dromlane.\**—Rev. Edmund Magaghan, aged 52, ordained in 1677 in Co. Louth by Primate Plunket, lived at Tirliffin. Sureties—Loghlin Smith of Omard, and Patrick Magaghan of Crossdoney.

*Parish of Denn.*—Rev. Patrick Brady, aged 66, ordained June 4th, 1661, at Bellacumer, King's County, by Dr. Anthony Geoghegan, Bishop of Meath, lived at Cornegrew and had as sureties Connor Reilly† of Dromkilly, and Joseph Tate of Bannaghoe.

*Parish of Lavey.*—Rev. Hugh Brady, aged 58, and then living in the townland of Leiter. He was ordained in 1695 in County Cork by Johannes Baptista,‡ Bishop of Cork, and had as sureties John Graham of Moynhall and Daniel Reilly of Comeseer.

*Parish of Larragh.*—Rev. Bryan Brady, aged 66; ordained in 1666 in Dublin by Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Ardagh, and lived at Lisstavin. His sureties were William Tate of Aghagalcher and George Cottnam (Cottingham) of Stradone. [Dr. Bryan Brady was a

explanatory notes within brackets, thus [ ]. There have been a few reprints of the 1705 list—e.g. in the *Irish Catholic Directory* of 1838—but these have not been quite free from errors. Some of the archaic spellings would suggest that the names, especially those of places, were entered phonetically. Except in a few cases, where there are obvious misprints in the original list, I retain the orthography unchanged.

\* Upper and Lower Drumlane, then classified as distinct parishes.

† Spelled "Riley" in the list—as pronounced.

‡ Dr. John Baptist Sleyne was Bishop of Cork from 1693 until his death in exile at Lisbon in 1712.



very distinguished man. a close personal friend of Primate Plunket, and Vicar-General of Kilmore until his death in May, 1710.]

*Parish of Castletara.*—Rev. John Brady, aged 54, ordained in Dublin in 1666 by Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Ardagh; lived in Corcloghan, and had as sureties George Humphrey of Knockfadd and Thomas Humphrey of Lisneshannon.

*Parish of Kildrumfertan.*—Rev. Terence Smith, aged 58; ordained in 1671 at Ardpatrik, Co. Louth, by Primate Plunket, and lived at Blenlargo.\* His sureties were Connor Reilly of Dromkilly and Cahir Reilly of Aghawee.

*Parish of Cavan.*—Rev. Hugh Brady, aged 53, living at Drumboe; ordained in 1673 at Dundalk by Primate Plunket and had as sureties Richard Graham of Latt and Thomas Brady of Dradies.

*Parish of Kilmore.*—Rev. Philip Tully, aged 50, and living at Blencup; ordained in 1676 at Ardpatrik, County Louth, by Primate Plunket, and had as sureties John Mac Cabe of Knockakist and James Lynch of Drenan. [In the *Jus Primatiale Armacanum* of Primate Hugh MacMahon will be found the sworn declaration of Rev. Philip Tully that in a certain ecclesiastical case which he was conducting he did not appeal to the See of Dublin against the decision of the Primatial See of Armagh. One of the witnesses to this declaration was Rev. Walter Dease, P.P., Castlecorr and Kilbride.

Father Tully was one of the most zealous and energetic priests of his time, and thus aroused in an especial manner the hostility and vengeance of the authorities. In 1713, or 1714, he had occasion to denounce the perverse practices introduced by some of the Settlers into Kilmore Parish and these arrogant bigots made a

\* Largin. The 1609 Plantation map has "Bleanlaraga." The *Cavan Townland List*, a rare work to which I have already referred, compiled shortly after the year 1700 has "Blenlargin."

determined attempt to have him arrested and his sureties sued. The Quarter Sessions' Grand Jury forwarded a petition to the Lord Lieutenant asking that legal proceedings be taken. But the members of the Cavan Grand Jury, many of whom had become sureties for the priests, showed no inclination to enforce the Penal Laws, and the documents referring to Father Tully's case appear to have been ignored in the Government offices in Dublin; at any rate, a prolonged search by the present writer through the legal documents of the period in the Record Office did not reveal any indication of any action having been taken.

In the Index to Kilmore Wills, of which, unfortunately, only a fragment has survived the fires of 1922, in the Public Record Office, Dublin, is mention of the Will of "Philip Tully, Priest, of Pottlibane," who was, without doubt, identical with the P.P. of Kilmore. The Will, of which I regret that I neglected taking a copy when the opportunity afforded, was dated 1728—most probably the year of Father Tully's death].

*Parish of Annah.*—Rev. Conner Reilly, aged 50, living at Killduffe; ordained in County Cavan in 1678 by Primate Plunket. Sureties—Connor Reilly of Dromkilly and Edmond Brady of Dromliffe.

*Parish of Drung.*—Rev. Patrick Brady, aged 50, living at Drung; ordained in 1683 in County Galway by Dr. Thady Keogh,\* Bishop of Clonfert. Sureties—Christopher Harman of Kilmacnoran, and Philip Reilly of Larragh.

*Parish of Killyserdin.*—Rev. Bryan Reilly,† aged 65, living at Cornenernew; ordained in 1671 at Rossmagh, County Louth, by Primate Plunket, and had as sureties John Reilly of Corloghan and Owen Reilly of Moher.

*Parish of Knockbride.*—Rev. Daniel Reilly, aged 65, living at Aghura; ordained in 1663 at Bellacumer,

\* He ruled the Diocese of Clonfert from 1671 to 1687.

† Died July 31, 1722, and was buried at Kildrumsherdan.



King's County, by Dr. Anthony Geoghegan, Bishop of Meath, and had as sureties David Dunbar of Corranery and John Hamilton of Glanstragh.

*Parish of Dromgone* (Drumgoon).—Rev. John Garraghan, aged 50, living at Killetee; ordained at Cork in 1695 by Dr. Johannes Baptista, Bishop of Cork, and had as sureties Connor Reilly of Dromkilly and Philip Reilly of Larragh.

*Parish of Moybolge and Kilmainhamwood*.—Rev. John Gargan, aged 55, living at Greaghnadaragh. He was ordained in Dublin in 1677 by Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath, and had as sureties James Smith of Knockbridge and Owen Doherty of Corweelish.

*Parish of Killan*.—Rev. Thomas Clery, aged 63, and living in Curkish. He was ordained in Dublin, in 1677, by Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath, and had as sureties Connor Reilly of Drumkilly and John Reilly of Corcloghan.

*Parishes of Lurgan and Castleraghan*.—Rev. Edmund Smith, aged 57, ordained in 1671 at Ardpatrik,\* County Louth, by Primate Plunket, and living at Gallanamraher. His sureties were Patrick Magaghan of Crossdoney and Ambrose Burrows of Feugh.

*Parish of Monterconaght*.—Rev. Matthew Sheerin, aged 48, living at Corneshesker. He was ordained in 1685, at Prean, County Meath, by Dr. Patrick Tyrrell, Bishop of Clogher, and had as sureties Nicholas Plunket of Lurganboy and John Reilly of Claddagh.

*Parish of Mullagh*.—Rev. Murtagh Gargan, aged 68, and living at Syharne. He was ordained in 1661 at

\* The townland of Ardpatrik, the residence of the Primate and one of his hiding places, is in the Parish of Louth, about half a mile south-east of the little town of Louth. The Primate's house is still standing, although in a dilapidated condition; also the venerable oak tree whose spreading branches so often sheltered him during the frequent raids and searches to which his humble residence was subjected. Some traces of the church in which he celebrated Mass, and presumably where he performed ordinations, are shown on the hill of Ardpatrik.

Bellacumer, King's County, by Dr. Anthony Geoghegan, Bishop of Meath, and had as sureties William Tate of Aghagalgher and Connor Reilly of Dromkilly.

[Father Gargan died in, or before, 1711, as appears from the *Administration* of his goods, which was preserved in the Public Record Office, Dublin. In the document, dated 1711, he was described as "Murtagh Gargan, late of Sighard, Parish of Mullagh, County Cavan. (Catholic) Priest." The document has since perished, but I had noted the heading and date].

*Parish of Killinkere.*—Rev. Hugh Clery, aged 66, living in the townland of Dromanespeg. He was ordained in 1670 at Rossmackogliew, County Louth, by Primate Plunket, and had as sureties Philip Reilly of Larragh, and John Mac Fadden of Carnelinshy.

*Parish of Drumlomon and Ballymachugh* [Ardagh Diocese].—Rev. Connor Reilly, aged 57, and living at Cormodyduffe. He was ordained in 1671 at Dundalk, by Primate Plunket, and had as sureties Connor Reilly of Dromkilly, and Cahir Reilly of Aghawee.

*Parish of Castlecorr and Kilbride* [Meath Diocese].—Rev. Walter Dease, aged 40, and living at Farenconell. He was ordained at Kilkenny in 1692 by Dr. James Wheelan (Phelan), Bishop of Ossory, and had as sureties Thomas Dease of Pollereagh, and Oliver Nugent of Farenconell.

*Parish of Killynagh.*—Rev. Patrick Sheridan, aged 52; ordained in 1681, in Co. Galway, by Dr. Thady Keogh, Bishop of Clonfert, and living at Killynagh. His sureties were Richard Sheridan of Gartbratten and Owen Sheridan of Inch.

*Parish of Ballintample.*—Rev. Hugh Reilly, aged 32, and living at Garrymore; ordained in 1698, in Co. Galway, by Dr. Mauricius Donnellan,\* Bishop of Clonfert, and his sureties were William Cross of Dromonum and John Foster of Dromlyon.

\* Dr. Murtagh Donnellan died in 1706 aged 75.



[This Father Hugh Reilly was no doubt identical with the "Hugh Reilly, Roman Priest, late of Lisnanaugh, in the Parish of Ballintemple," whose letters of *Administration*, dated October 4th, 1741, were preserved among the Cavan Wills, entered in the Kilmore *Will and Grant Book*, II, 6-44, 1693-1727 *et seq.*, in the Public Record Office, Dublin. These records are now lost. In the same collection was the Will of "Owen Farrelly, Priest, in Bryan Reillys of Drumaleis." I can gather no further details concerning this Father Farrelly, but he was probably a curate. On the occasion of my examination of these documents I only noted the main headings, intending to copy them later on—but the opportunity never came, and their further examination must await the Greek Kalends.]

*Parish of Ballintample.\** Rev. James Reilly, aged 40, and living in the townland of Dromboluske. He was ordained in 1687 at Callan, County Kilkenny, by Bishop James Phelan, of Ossory, and had as sureties Daniel Reilly of Callenagh and John Reilly of Partan.

*Parish of Killyshandra.* Rev. John Smith, aged 42,† and living at Corrane; ordained in Dublin, in 1676, by Bishop Patrick Plunket of Meath, he had as sureties James Veitch of Gartenardoris and James Smith of Lackan.

*Parish of Templeport.*—Rev. Edmund Degany, aged 52, ordained in 1685, at Dundalk, by Primate Plunket, and living at Templeport. He had as sureties Andrew Johnston of Tobeylyon and Loghlin Smith of Omard.

*Parish of Killdallon and Tomregan.*—Rev. Patrick Brady, aged 64, and living at Killdallon. He was ordained in 1667, in County Leitrim, by Bishop Eoghan MacSwiney of Kilmore, and had as sureties John Feris of Makin and Dunkan MacMullan of Clontigircancy.

[In the 1704 list the date of his ordination is entered

\* The present Parish of Ballintemple then consisted of two distinct Parishes, since united.

† Assuming the date of his ordination to be correct there is an obvious error in the statement of his age: probably it should read "52."

as 1676, but there is an error here, as Bishop MacSwiney died in 1669. I suggest 1667 to be most probably the correct date, as at that period Bishop MacSwiney was living in hiding in the mountain fastnesses of Sliabh an Iaraind, on the Cavan-Leitrim border.]

*Parish of Lawey* \* [Lavey].—Rev. Owen Dowd, aged 61, and living at Lattagloghan; ordained on April 10th, 1672, at Dundalk, by Primate Plunket, and had as sureties Terence Dowd of Lattagloghan and David Dowd of Ead.

*No Parish*.—Rev. Philip Fay, aged 50, and living at Maghery.† He was ordained in 1698, in County Galway, by Dr. Mauricius Donnellan, Bishop of Clonfert, and his sureties were Patrick Brady of Ballyhayes and George Humphry of Knockfaddin.

[The Returns for the Counties of Leitrim and Fermanagh furnish the lists for the remaining parishes.]

*Parish of Oughtragh*.—Rev. Laurence Doyne, aged 46, and living at Onshenagh; ordained in 1694, at Cork, by Dr. John Shleane, Bishop of Cork, and his sureties were Thady Roddy of Crossfield and William Gowan of Mullaghbrack.

*Parish of Carrickallen*.—Rev. Philip Reilly, aged 32, and living at Earne; ordained at Cork, in 1697, by Dr. John Shleane, Bishop of Cork, and having as sureties Phelim Mac Hugh of Gortvakan and James Currin of Dromerkeer.

*Parish of Carrickallen*.—Rev. M. Reilly (Infirm), aged 52, and living at Corglasse. He was ordained at Louth, in 1674, by Primate Plunket, and his sureties were Conn O'Roirk of Mullanfadden and Thady Roddy of Crossfield.

*Parish of Dromleast* [Drumlease].—Rev. Patrick Currin, aged 51; ordained, in 1683, at Carrigin by Dr. Thady

\* Upper and Lower Lavey, then separate parochial units; hence the recurrence of the name in the list.

† Magherintemple, a townland in Drung Parish on the Cavan Monaghan border; it was in early times a distinct parish.



Keogh, Bishop of Clonfert, and living at Conoghill. His sureties were Thady Roddy of Crossfield and John Mac Keon of Curnamuckalagh.

*Parish of Rossinver.*—Rev. Laughlin MacGloune, aged 61, and living at Mullanfaddy; ordained, in 1667, in Dublin, by Dr. Patrick Plunket, Bishop of Meath, and had as sureties Conn O'Donnell of Mullanfada and William Mac Gowan of Mullaghbrack.

*Parish of Rossinver.\**—Rev. Patrick Connolly, aged 44; ordained, in 1683, at Carrigin, by Dr. Thady Keogh, Bishop of Clonfert, and living at Cloonshenaugh. His sureties were Michael Shanly of Dromod and John Crasson of Lorga.

*Parish of Clonelare* [Cloonclare].† Rev. Conner McLoughlin, aged 43, and living at Laikanaugh; ordained, in 1685, at Athboy, County Meath, by Bishop Tyrrell of Meath. His sureties were Charles Reynolds of Cavan and Con O'Roirk of Mullanfaddan.

*Parish of Killasnett.*—Rev. Molas Mihin [Molaise Meehan], aged 44, and living at Shash. He was ordained in 1683, at Carrigin, by Bishop Thady Keogh of Clonfert, and had as sureties William McGowan of Mullaghbrack and Phelim Mc Hugh of Gortvakne.

*Parish of Enismyrae* [Innismagrath].—Rev. Myles Parlane, aged 35, and living at Greaghnaslive. He was ordained, in 1695, at Cork, by Bishop Shleane (Sleyne), and had as sureties Samuel Akins of Carrick and John McKeon of Cornemuckellagh.

*Parish of Dromrealy* [Drumreilly].—Rev. Thomas Brady, aged 50, and living at Gortquose. He was ordained, in 1680, at Ballinea, by Dr. Mark Forrestal, O.S.A., Bishop of Kildare, and had as sureties Phelim Roirk of Dromore and Charles Roirk of Arderry.

\* The ancient Parish of Rossinver was very extensive, and was subdivided into two Parishes; it is now represented by the Parishes of Kinlough, Ballaghmeehan, and Glenade.

† Manorhamilton.

[The list gives 1690 as the year of Father Brady's ordination, but Dr. Forrestal—not "Forrestor" as in the list—was dead before that year. I suggest that 1690 is a misprint for 1680, in which year Dr. Forrestal performed many ordinations. Beset with spies Dr. Forrestal was obliged to live in hiding in a hut in a lonely wood. He ruled the Diocese of Kildare from 1676 until his death in 1683. Arrested in February, 1681, he spent the greater part of two years in prison in Dublin. Released about the close of 1682 he sought shelter in the Archdiocese of Cashel, where he died on February 7th, 1683\*].

*Parish of Kinawley.*—Rev. Thomas O'Drom, aged 46, and living at Caldragh. He was ordained on June 7th, 1683, at Cregan, by Bishop Thady Keogh of Clonfert. No sureties entered.

*Parish of Killesher.*—Rev. Owen Mc Hugh, aged 50, and living at Killesher. He was ordained in Rome in March, 1682, by Pope Innocent XI. No sureties entered.

Under the Act of 1704 one thousand and eighty-nine priests were registered for the entire country. Although no Regulars were to be tolerated many of them remained acting as parish priests owing to the scarcity of the secular clergy. It is certain that many others evaded the law and remained in the country in disguise. A Parliamentary Return of 1698 gives the number of Seculars in the district of Cavan as 30 and of Regulars 8, "whereof 1 Dean and Vicar Generall."† At the Assizes for County Cavan, in 1703, a Franciscan Friar, Philip Brady, was continued under a rule of transportation.‡ In the following year, by order dated August 10th, 1704, this Philip Brady, together with two other Friars, was

\* This appears from a letter of the Archbishop of Cashel, Dr. John Brennan, dated February 8, 1683. *Vide*, Canon Power, *A Bishop of the Penal Times, Letters and Reports of John Brennan*, p. 74.

† Burke, *Irish Priests in the Penal Times*, p. 127.

‡ *Op. cit.*, p. 161.



to be removed to Dublin "under a strong guard." But the fastnesses of Cavan and Leitrim continued to be sure places of refuge for the hunted Regulars.

Whatever temporary respite was afforded the secular clergy by the Act of 1704 was soon to be proved illusory. The main object of the Act, the gradual dying out of the clergy, was too slow in achievement, and the fanatical Government of Queen Anne now resolved to strike a more formidable blow at the Irish priests. An Act was passed—8 Anne, c. 3.—directing that all registered priests should, before March 25th, 1710, subscribe to the Oath of Abjuration, in default of which dire penalties were to be imposed. The passage of this Act created consternation throughout Catholic Europe; several Catholic kings and princes intervened and asked the Duke of Marlborough to have it repealed, but without avail. The refusal of the priests to subscribe to this infamous declaration was the signal for a renewal in all its fury of the Penal Code. At a general quarter sessions, held at Cavan, on April 26th, 1715, it was presented that the several registered priests in the county had failed to appear and take the Oath of Abjuration. The Grand Jury's Presentment continued as follows:—

Now for as much as the said severall Registered priests have neglected to come in to take the Oath of Abjuration notwithstanding summons and warrants have been so often granted against them and they or any of them refusing to appear and who shuns (*sic*) being apprehended by the said warrants. And for so much as by the tenour of their said Baile bonds or Recognizances their said severall Bailes cannot be obliged to bring in the severall priests as they became baile for unless due summons or legal proceedings offer from the Government or Council whereby to require the said severall baile persons to bring in the severall registered priests and to issue such orders as will oblige the said priests to

appeare either at the next Assizes or next General Sessions of the Peace to be held for the said County. And in case they should not appeare that due method might be used to estreate the severall Recognizances against the several Baile aforesaid. And humbly request that this presentment may be laid before the Government and Council.\*

This was signed by *Tho. Bayly cum Sociis* and examined by Ja. Magrath, D.Cl.P. The Recognizances referred to had been already taken before Charles Mortimer (of Mullagh), Sheriff of the County, on April 16th, 1708. Then follows the names of the priests, parishes for which they were registered, and names of sureties (two of £50 each):

*Dromlone* [Drumlane].—Rev. Edmond Magaghan. Sureties: Hugh Parker of Ardane and Patrick Clery of Rogerii.

*Dromgoone*.—Rev. Hugh Brady. Sureties: William Small of Cavan and Denis Brady of Cavan.

*Kelmore* [Kilmore].—Rev. Philip Tully. Sureties: Samuel Dyos [Dyas] of Cavan, and Roger Smith of Cavan.

*Dring* [Drung].—Rev. Patrick Brady. Sureties: Johes Dunnigan of Cavan and Denis Brady of Corvoggin.

*Annagh*.—Rev. Connor Reilly. Sureties: Thomas Naully of Cavan and Terence Reilly of Kilduff.

*Killeserdinen* [Killdrumsheridan]. Rev. Bryan Reilly. Sureties: Edward Lernan [Kiernan?] of Cavan and Johes Donegan of Cavan.

*Knockbride*.—Rev. Daniel Reilly. Sureties: Connor Reilly of Dromkilly and Phill. Reilly of Rallaghan.

*Moybolge*.—Rev. John Garrigan. Sureties: Chas. MacFadden of Quilkagh and Patrick MacCabe of Lislea.

*Killen* [Killann]. Rev. Thomas Clery. Sureties: Chas. MacFadden of Quilkagh and Edmd. Clery of Curkis.

\* Burke, *Op. cit.*, p. 285.



*Monterconaght*.—Rev. Mathew Shereene. Sureties: Cornelius Donnellan of Virginia, and Garret FitzSimons of Corneduff.

*Kelbride* [Kilbride and Castlecorr in Meath Diocese]. Rev. Walter Dace [Dease]. Sureties: Connor Reilly of Dromkelly [Drumkilly] and Oliver Newgent of Farrenconnell.

*Killyanagh*.—Rev. Patrick Sheridan. Sureties: Alex. Johnson of Kellyshandra and Gerald Masterson of the same place.

*Lavey*.—Rev. John Smyth. Sureties: Roger Smith of Cavan and James Smyth of Dromhulla.

[He was most probably identical with the Rev. John Smith, who was P.P. of Killeshandra on the 1704 list. Father Hugh Brady, P.P., of Lavey, in 1704, would seem to have been transferred to Drumgoon before 1715.]

*Templeport*.—Rev. Edmund Degany. Sureties: Loughlin Smith of Omard and Thomas Reynolds of Cornagunlen.

*Lavey*.—Rev. Owen Doad [Dowd]. Sureties: John Williamson of Cavan and Thomas Harrison of the same place.

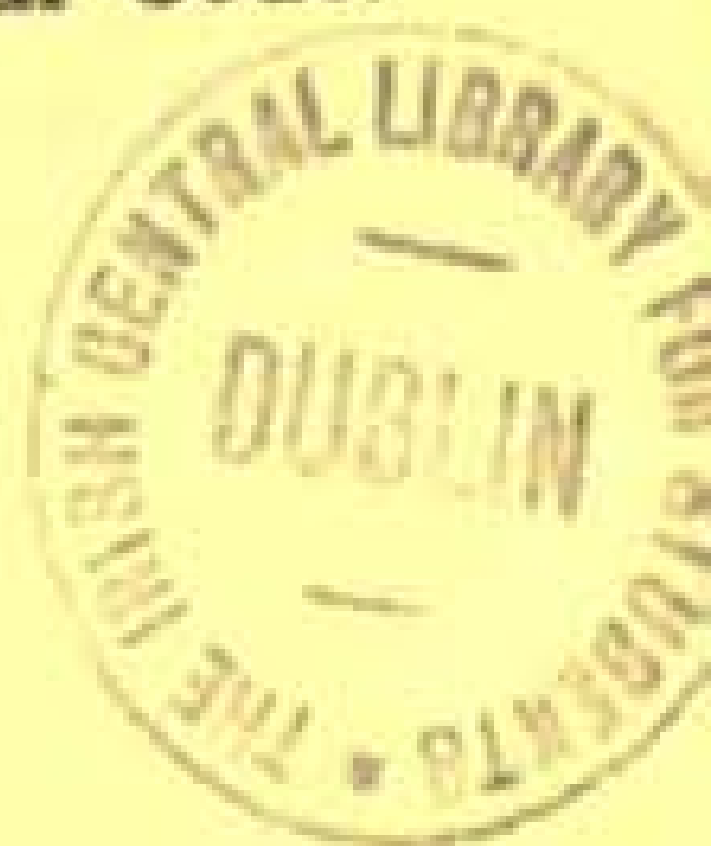
*Kilishandra*.—Rev. Hugh Drum. Sureties: James Reilly of Dugirry and Edmund Moris of Ned.

[Father Drum was evidently Father John Smith's successor].

In this 1715 list only sixteen parish priests are accounted for, a number which falls far short of the 1704 registration return. Some of those on the earlier list were dead before 1715, and there is no reason to assume that all the Cavan priests entered into the recognizances demanded in 1708. They had by then fully realised the futility of registration as a means of evading the law by partial compliance with it. They were only being drawn more securely into the meshes of the legal net and we may reasonably assume that

many of them preferred to remain in security and peace as long as possible.

A glance over the 1704 list reveals the fact that some of the principal Protestant landowners of Cavan, the Humphreys, Harmans, Hamiltons, Burrows, and others, had become sureties for the priests in their districts, and since these large and influential landowners were also members of the Grand Jury, a body which at the time wielded great power and was the chief instrument of the Government in enforcing the law, it followed that the Penal Laws were at least partly nullified in County Cavan. It will be observed that in the 1715 list there is no mention of the priests for whom either George Humphrey, or Ambrose Burrows had gone security. There would have been little use in any Government official requesting the Grand Jury, of which these were prominent members, to escheat the bail bonds. So these were diplomatically omitted and only the lesser bail bonds were called upon to render an account. The Grand Jury, of which no Catholic could be a member, was a most exclusive body and a most potent instrument of oppression, whose grinding tyranny has only left a heritage of hate ; but the kindly actions of the Protestant members, whose names figure on the registration list, were long remembered by a grateful people. Nor did they give any encouragement to the vile brood of priest-hunters then swarming everywhere. Government spies reported occasionally to the Grand Jury and that august body duly reported to Dublin Castle ; but the matter usually finished there. The Catholic people had no protection against the spies and informers of the period, but in Cavan and elsewhere a swift and terrible retribution awaited the priest-hunter who fell into the hands of an outraged people. Hence the priests in this part of Ireland were at least partially immune from the terrors of the Penal Code. But their lot was far from being a happy one.





In the County Leitrim section of the diocese the precarious position of the registered priests on their refusal to take the Oath of Abjuration may be observed from the Report of the Special Sessions of the Peace, held for County Leitrim, at Carrick Drumrusk,\* on July 27th, 1714 :—

Whereas the Grand Jury then and there impanelled and sworn present that . . . Connor McLoughlin a popish priest registered for the parish of Cloonclare has since removed himself to the parish of Oughteragh and that Phillip Reyley a registered popish priest for the parish of Carrigallen and that Thomas Brady a registered popish priest for the parish of Drumreilly . . . and that Owen O'Rorke, alias Donell, alias Robin the Juggler, a Franciscan Fryer in the parish of Oughteragh and Drumreilly . . . and that Cormac Shanley a Franciscan Fryer in the parish of Oughteragh . . . all of which said priests and fryers doe frequently say mass and exercise their priestly functions not having taken the Oath of Abjuration but act in public defiance and contempt of the laws of this kingdom.†

The Oath of Abjuration was intended for schoolmasters and clergy alike. The same report refers, *inter alios*, to one Richard Flanagan, "a papist [who] keeps school in the parish of Drumreilly," but who had not taken the Oath. The Grand Jury thereupon ordered that all who had refused the Oath be apprehended and "dealt with according to law."

In the northern counties the authorities were making elaborate preparations for the apprehension of the priests. Writing from Enniskillen, on June 23rd, 1714, Mervyn Archdale furnishes a list of the several priests in County Fermanagh, "contrary to law." The reports from the parishes of Kinawley and Killesher are of interest here,

\* Carrick-on-Shannon.

† Burke, *Op. cit.*, p. 443

as they mention some of the Kilmore priests of the 1704 list:—

Doctor Mc Kue priest of Killasher, registered but not taken the oaths. Hugh Mc Hue, a frier, curate and assistant to Doctor McKue aforesaid in Killaster parish not registered nor taken the oaths. John Drum priest in Kinaulty, registered but not taken the oaths.—Shenan [Christian named omitted] a frier in the said parish not registered nor taken the oaths. Roger Mc Guire a fugitive priest not registered in said parish.\*

This document shows that contrary to the law, Father Owen McHugh had an assistant, and we may conclude that despite the penal statute there were curates, chiefly friars, in most of the other parishes throughout the diocese. The parish priest of Kinawley, Father Thomas Drum (in this document his Christian name is John), had two assistants. The number of friars who were in the diocese in 1704 must have been very considerable, but it is now impossible to ascertain the exact number. From 1710 until the middle of the century the Penal Laws were rigorously enforced and the clergy, secular and regular alike, had to live in hiding. Our diocesan records for this period are very scanty and we only get occasional glimpses of the priests in the State correspondence of the time. Very few details of the subsequent history of the majority of the priests of the 1704 list can now be determined. Most of them died in obscurity, in their secret abodes, and without leaving any records of their closing years. Investigation of the monumental inscriptions in the older cemeteries of the diocese is now the only source of information regarding the dates of their deaths. In a few cases, where systematic investigations have been pursued, valuable historical data have been obtained. Further research in this line will enhance our

\* Burke, *Op. cit.*, p. 279.



knowledge of a period which so far has not received sufficient historical attention. How many of the clergy were banished abroad it would be difficult if not impossible now to discover—in 1699 there were 383 Irish priests in exile in Paris alone\*—as also the number who contrived to return. Eating the bread of exile they passed out of history “to find,” as the Annalist records it, “their graves in strange places and unhereditary churches.”

\* Moran's *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii, pp. 347 *et seq.*

## CHAPTER XXII

BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY

MICHAEL MACDONAGH, O.P. ; LAURENCE RICHARDSON,  
O.P. ; ANDREW CAMPBELL, DENIS MAGUIRE, O.F.M. ;  
CHARLES O'REILLY.

MICHAEL MACDONAGH, O.P. (1728-1746)

IN 1728, after a vacancy of nearly sixty years, the See of Kilmore had once more a bishop appointed to rule over it. After due consideration the Holy See appointed Dr. Michael MacDonagh, a Dominican, who was consecrated at Rome by Pope Benedict XIII (himself a Dominican) on December 12th, 1728.

Dr. MacDonagh was a native of the district of Coleraine, County Derry, where he was born in 1699. At an early age he joined the Dominicans in St. Mary's Convent, Coleraine, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1723. He was a cousin of Dr. Patrick Brullaghan, Chaplain to the Sardinian Ambassador in London, 1730-1751, and afterwards Bishop of Derry, 1751 to 1752.

At the early age of 29 Dr. MacDonagh received consecration and soon afterwards entered on his arduous task. For some time after his consecration he remained in Rome where he was one of the Pope's Domestic Prelates, and was also, for a time, Confessor to the famous "Pretender," Charles Edward Stuart who was then receiving his education in Rome. Dr. MacDonagh was recognised in Rome as a brilliant theologian and one



of the leading lights among the Irish Dominicans in the convent of San Clemente. He was a close personal friend of Pope Benedict XIII, who was a generous patron of San Clemente and who, recognising the abilities of Dr. MacDonagh, chose him for the difficult task of the reorganisation of Kilmore Diocese. The Convent of San Clemente\* was granted to the Irish Dominicans by Pope Innocent X (1644-1655) and for a century afterwards it provided many bishops to Irish Sees. It still remains a centre for the Irish Province. In the courtyard of this venerable Basilica, through the centuries of persecution, walked many Irish Dominicans preparing for the priesthood and determining their plans for returning to Ireland. Among the contemporaries of Dr. MacDonagh in San Clemente were Dr. John Brett, Professor of Philosophy, afterwards Bishop of Killala, whence he was translated to Elphin, and Thomas Burke who later on became Bishop of Ossory and wrote his monumental *Hibernia Dominicana*, completed in 1757 and printed in 1762.

In 1730 his friend and patron, Pope Benedict XIII, passed away, and at the close of the same year travelling in disguise Bishop MacDonagh returned from Rome and after a perilous journey contrived to reach his diocese which was then in charge of Dr. Michael O'Reilly, Vicar-General. For nine years amid the most incredible difficulties and privations the bishop laboured incessantly for his flock and endeavoured to mitigate the sufferings of his people. That his disguises were effective is evident from his successful evasion of the many spies and informers who were ever on his track.

\* The Irish visitor to Rome will observe much that is of great archaeological interest in the church and convent of San Clemente. Recent excavations have revealed that the Basilica, which was built and endowed by Constantine, occupies a very ancient site; the House of Clement, a square room, is underneath the present structure. These investigations of the substructures of the Basilica have been made possible through the princely generosity of His Eminence Cardinal O'Connell, who is Cardinal Titular of San Clemente.

It is not surprising that we should possess so few diocesan records of his episcopate. Systematic records were an impossibility in the troubled years during which he lived, a fugitive without a home in his diocese.

From a contemporary record we learn that on April 16th, 1731, Pope Clement XII granted him faculties, for five years, to dispense, absolve, etc., within the limits of his diocese; also faculties for three years, to dispense in the Second Degree of Consanguinity.

When not on visitation of his diocese Dr. MacDonagh resided mostly with his Dominican brethren in the Convent of Channel Row (now North Brunswick Street), Dublin. This was then the usual place of residence of the other Irish Dominican bishops of the period as it was found that it was much easier to escape detection in the crowded city than in country places where the arrival of a stranger aroused suspicion and endangered his safety.

On November 16th, 1735, power of dispensation was granted by Pope Clement XII to Dr. MacDonagh for three years regarding the Second Grade of Consanguinity, and on February 9th, 1736, he was granted confirmation, for five years, of Faculties previously granted to him. In 1736 he assisted in Channel Row Convent at the consecration of Dr. Colman O'Shaughnessy, Bishop of Ossory (1736-1748). The consecrating prelate was Dr. Linegar, Archbishop of Dublin, and Dr. Stephen MacEgan, Bishop of Meath, also assisted.

On June 6th, 1739, Dr. MacDonagh and Father John Fottrell, Provincial of the Irish Dominicans, were arrested as spies at Toomebridge, near the junction of Antrim and Derry, while on a visitation of the Irish Dominican houses. A great collection of papers which they carried was also seized, and revealed the identities of the travellers. These documents relating principally to the affairs of the Dominican Order in Ireland have recently been made available in the Public Record



Office, Belfast. The collection is known as the *Fottrell Papers* \* and is a valuable contribution to the Irish ecclesiastical history of the 18th century, especially that of the Dominican Order.

Immediately after their arrest and identification as prominent ecclesiastics the captives were brought to Spring Hill, in the parish of Moneymore, for examination, and here their parcel of documents remained, evidently undisturbed, until 1925 when a transcript was made for the Public Record Office, Belfast. Both ecclesiastics were imprisoned but Dr. MacDonagh contrived to escape from his captivity whereupon a reward of £200 was offered for his capture. He successfully evaded his pursuers and towards the end of 1739, or early in 1740, managed to leave the country and travelling in disguise sailed for the Continent. Continuing his journey to Rome he arrived in the Convent of San Clemente, where he remained for some time to recuperate after his imprisonment and the effects of his experiences. When he arrived in Rome he presented a *Relatio* of his diocese, in which document he announced that notwithstanding the rigours of the Penal Code he was determined that he would soon return to his diocese and continue to labour for his flock.†

In 1741 Dr. MacDonagh returned to Ireland and resumed his labours in Kilmore. Spies were soon on his track, so he travelled in disguise and under an assumed name—"Mr. Clarke." From contemporary documents we find that in 1744 he was residing under that name in Dublin in the Convent of Channel Row.

In a Report, dated March 21st, 1744, the High Sheriff of Cavan, Samuel Moore, supplied the Executive Council with the following information, which he had obtained, presumably from his spies, regarding the Cavan priests :—

\* *Louth Arch. Journal*, vol. vii, No. 2, 1930.

† Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, vol. i, p. 285.

The Popish Bishop of Killmore, known by the name of Clarke, lives in Dublin. The Popish Deane of Killmore, John Reilly, parish priest of Croseclogh [Crosserlough], he lives at Drumkilly. The Vicar-Generall, Hugh Duggan, parish priest of Killmore, lives at Drumheel; Duggan, a frier [friar] lives with his brother the Vicar-Generall; Daniel Reilly, a frier, lives in the parish of Denn and lands of Knockekilly; John McKernan, a frier, lives mostly in the parish of Castlerahen [but] has no certain place of abode; John Reilly, a frier, lives in the parish of Kelan [Killann] [but] he has no certain place of abode; Miles Reilly, a frier, lives mostly in the parish of Ballymacu.†

Evidently the authorities had fairly reliable information concerning the affairs of the diocese. At least in East Cavan the High Sheriff seems to have been well informed; but details for West Cavan were lacking. Most probably the High Sheriff was not very enthusiastic in utilising the resources of the law for persecuting purposes; he merely made a report, and a brief one at that, and the matter seems to have proceeded no further. But the bishop even under his assumed name did not escape detection.

In County Leitrim the authorities seem to have been better informed. The High Sheriff of that county, Arthur Ellis, was evidently in possession of all the secrets of the bishop's *aliases*, showing that the spy system was thoroughly effective. In his Report, dated March 26th, 1744, Ellis refers, *inter alios*, to:—

Michael MacDonagh otherwise Clark, of Abbey street in the Citty of Dublin Titular Pope [sic] of the Diocese of Kilmore.

Owen McPharlon otherwise Bartley of Munterkenny [Innismagrath or Drumkeeran] Titular Deane of the Diocese of Kilmore.

† Burke, *Irish Priests in the Penal Times*, p. 291.



James Martin near Treport [Templeport] reputed Popish Vicar-Generall of the Diocese of Kilmore.

Daniel McTeir, Generally residing in the parish of Carrigallen.\*

In a return of the priests of Sligo, dated March 9th, 1744, we find: "Michael MacDonogh, Bishop of Kellmore, and one Ryly his Vicar-General."† This return, which is not confined to those living within the borders of County Sligo, includes the names of Primate MacMahon and many of the bishops of the time. Evidently Dr. MacDonagh's *alias* was an open secret in 1744.

But the bishop appears to have been travelling under his assumed name many years earlier, and his arrest at Toomebridge seems to have led up to the discovery of his identity under this title. In the *Fottrell Papers* (loc. cit.) is a "Letter from G. Btt (Brett) to *Michael Clarke*, at Mr. Thomas Hall's, Mercht., Dublin, via Lima and London," dated January 5th, 1739, from Livorno, Italy. The document is endorsed: "This Michael Clarke is *Michael MacDonogh, Titular Bp. of Kilmore*, who was taken with Fottrell at Toome . . ." The letter states, *inter alia*, that Patrick MacDonagh (evidently a relative of the bishop), Guardian of St. Isidore's, had been accidentally asphyxiated in his room by the fumes of a coal fire.

A Convent for Dominicans appears to have been established in Cavan by Dr. MacDonagh. At a Provincial Chapter of the Order held in Dublin in 1738, Rev. James Watson, who had been for seven years in Ponte (Drogheda), was appointed Preacher-General of the Convent of Cavan, "hitherto without a Preacher-General."‡ An undated document of the same period

\* Burke, *Op. cit.* p. 444.

† Burke, *Op. cit.*, p. 437. The V.-G. referred to was evidently Rev. Dr. John O'Reilly, P.P., whose name appears later on in the 1750 list.

‡ *Fottrell Papers*, loc. cit.

among the *Fottrell Papers* has the following list of *fili* belonging to Cavan Convent, "founded by O'Reilly"\*—Richard Nugent, Patrick Sheridan, Thomas Fitzsimon, Patrick Becan, and Dominick Keernan. The following list of names of the Cavan Dominicans in 1756, which is given by Burke,† is practically identical with the earlier one—Rev. Thomas Fitzsimons, Prior, aged 42; Rev. Patrick Beacon, aged 49; Rev. Dominick MacKiernan, aged 48; Rev. Patrick Sheridan, aged 40. From about 1739 until, at least, 1756, these Dominican Fathers were attached to the Convent of Cavan. But the convent cannot have been more than a private house where the Fathers lived in secrecy. It must have been dissolved shortly after 1756; at any rate no further references to it have been discovered. Rev. Thomas Fitzsimons, who was Prior in 1756, may have been identical with the priest of the same name who was P.P. of Drumlane in 1750. It seems likely that Rev. Patrick Sheridan, Professor of Sacred Theology, who was P.P. of Oughteragh in 1750 was identical with the Cavan Dominican of the same name.

The Dominicans appear to have been chosen by Dr. MacDonagh to assist him in the spiritual reorganisation of the diocese and the checking of the many abuses which had crept in. Qwing to the persecutions the bishop experienced the greatest difficulty in performing his visitations. During his absence the ecclesiastical administration of the diocese devolved on the Vicars-General—Rev. John O'Reilly, P.P., J.U.D. (see 1750 list); Rev. Hugh Duggan, P.P., Kilmore, and Rev. James Martin, P.P., Templeport.

\* Evidently based on Dominican tradition—see Burke's *Hibernia Dominicana*. But, as I have already shown, the foundation was Franciscan. Dr. Thomas Burke (or De Burgo as he is sometimes called) was the Bishop (Dominican) of Ossory from 1759 to 1776. His voluminous work preserves a vast collection of Irish Dominican history.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 288



A tract full of masterful irony and scathing sarcasm, in the handwriting of Dr. MacDonagh, is to be found among the *Fottrell Papers*. The satire is evidently directed against some contemporary controversialists belonging to the Established Church who had been parading alleged "converts" to Protestantism. The unsubstantial gains of these conversions for Protestantism is wittingly portrayed, and proves the bishop's controversial skill. He refers, for instance, to the pervert whose hand slipped when he was going to read the Lord's Prayer in the pulpit of St. Anne's Protestant Church, Dublin, and made the Sign of the Cross instead! In a further lapse of absent-mindedness the same individual wound up the service with asking the clerk to bring him the Holy Water! Such incidents, and they were many, were sufficient to reveal the sham and insincerity of such "conversions."

Dr. Colman O'Shaughnessy, of Ossory, writing to Dr. MacDonagh on October 11th, 1739, requests his advice on ecclesiastical matters. Evidently the Bishop of Ossory was unaware that Dr. MacDonagh had already been arrested four months earlier. The letter must have been seized by the bishop's captors as it is to be found among the *Fottrell Papers*.

In 1746 the persecutions became so fierce that Dr. MacDonagh decided to leave the country until the storm would have blown over. His health was poor, having broken down under the strain of sixteen years arduous labour in Kilmore during the worst period of the Penal Code. Finding himself unable to discharge his episcopal duties any longer he made his Will on September 12th, 1746, and fled to Lisbon, Portugal, where he took refuge in the famous Irish Dominican Convent. From his Will it is evident that he intended returning to Ireland and desired to be buried in Irish soil. But the circumstances of the time decreed otherwise. A few months after arriving in Lisbon he

died on November 26th, 1746, and was buried there in the church of the Irish Dominicans.\* Thus at the age of 48 he passed away an exile broken down with hardship and imprisonment and persecution. The trials which he endured in his visitations can only be faintly gleaned from the scanty records of his episcopate.

Dr. MacDonagh is the only Bishop of Kilmore who, at least since early times, was buried in foreign soil. Over his tomb was raised a splendid monument carrying the following inscription:—

Hic jacet  
 Illustrissimus ac Reverendissimus Dominus  
 Fr. Michael MacDonogh, Hibernus  
 Episcopus Kilmorensis, Solio Pontificio Assistens  
 E Sacra Praedicatorum Familia Assumptus  
 Vir Prudentia, Fidei Zelo, ac Religionis Amore  
 Praeclarus  
 Post varias Haereticorum Persecutiones  
 Diuturna Infirmitate Consumptus  
 Obijt Ulyssipone 6 Kal. Decembris Anno 1746  
 Aetatis 48.

The following is a copy of Dr. MacDonagh's last will and testament which was preserved among the Prerogative Wills in the Public Record Office, Dublin.†

In the name of God. Amen.

I, Michael MacDonogh of Channelrow in Dublin being sick and weake of body; but in my perfect senses, thanks to God; do institute and appoint this as my last will and testament.

1<sup>o</sup> I bequeath my soul unto God who gave it: earnestly begging all those who see this or any other instrument of mine to implore his mercy for me: and my body to the earth to be inter'd in the

\* *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 421.

† *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, p. 182.



church of Munterconachty\* after the humble manner particularly & separatly from this will recommended to my executors hereafter to be mentioned.

2°. I leave and bequeath to my dear father [blank] MacDonogh three pounds sterling: & to my dear mother three pounds sterg.: ite. to my five sisters five shillings each: ite. to my two brothers five shillings each.

3°. I leave and bequeath all and everything in my room in Channell-row to the use of the Ladys† of said Channell-row at Mrss. Mary Daly's discretion and distribution: except my books wch I order to be valued, & dispos'd of according to the separate direction given to my executors for that purpose.

4°. I leave and bequeath the Pontificals now at Cavan to my successor in Kilmore; ite. my books, a suit of vestiments and a 2 year old filly to Mr. Patrick Masterson‡ of Cavan with the injunction led on him in my separate direction.

5°. I leave and bequeath to Dr. Brett§ my mitre, gloves, sandalia, and stockings now in my room.

6°. I leave and bequeath my cane to Dr. Killkelly.||

7°. I leave my bodily apparel to Mrss. Mary Daylie's¶ disposal.

8°. I leave and bequeath my 2 saddles, portmantua, boots, etc., to Mrss. Mary Daylie's disposal, ite. my whip and spurs to the same use.

\* It is not quite clear whether this place is to be identified with the present *Munterconnacht*, a Parish on the south-west of Loch Ramor in East Breiffne, or *Muintir-Cionait*—now the Parish of Innismagrath, or Drumkeeran, on the west of Loch Allen in West Breiffne. But, in my opinion, the latter place is the more likely. I cannot discover whether the Bishop had any connection with the Parish of Munterconnacht, but he was a close personal friend of Father Owen Bartley, P.P., of Innismagrath, and appears to have resided in that district when on Visitation.

† This refers to the Dominican nuns of Channel Row Convent.

‡ Rev. Patrick Masterson was P.P. of Cavan and for many years V.-G. of Kilmore.

§ Dr. John Brett, Bishop (Dominican) of Killala and subsequently of Elphin; he died in 1756.

|| Bishop (Dominican) of Kilmacduagh; died May 29, 1783.

¶ Mrs. Mary Daly—one of the nuns attached to Channel Row Convent; she was Prioress from 1747 to 1750.

9°. I order that if after my lawfull debts are paid (wch ought & is my first charge) if anything remains, it shall be distributed to the poorest objects as my executors will judge.

Lastly, I institute and appoint Mes. Dr. Egan\* of Channel-row, Eugene Bartly† & Patrick Masterson, executors of this my last will and testament. In witness whereof I sign my name this 12th day of Septr. 1746.

B. MICH : MACDONOGH [Seal.]

Patrick Masterson one of the executors named in the within will was sworn to his belief in the truth of the said will and to the due execution thereof and so forth this 28th day of March, 1748.

Before us,

PHIL. TISDALL.

Endorsement on back :—" For Mrss. Mary Daly to be kept unopen'd till Dr. Mac Donogh's return : or necessity in my presence.

PATT. MASTERSON."

Another endorsement on back :—" The original last will and testament of Michael McDonogh late of the city of Dublin deceased 1748."

In connection with Catholic Episcopal Wills belonging to the early part of the eighteenth century the testator's episcopal rank is rarely mentioned. Hence there is seldom



any reference whatever to the true ecclesiastical status of the testators. Dr. MacDonagh's Will is no exception to the general rule and neither the bishop himself nor any of the parish priests mentioned have any descriptive titles to indicate their ecclesiastical ranks. We have it on the authority of two high English legal luminaries of the day—Lord Chancellor Bowes and Chief Justice Robinson—that: "The law does not suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic." It is not surprising, therefore, that bishops should have omitted to specify their episcopal rank on legal documents.

The Convent of Channel Row had been founded in 1717 for Dominican nuns and was, for many years afterwards, the refuge of the Irish Dominican bishops when driven from their Sees by persecution. An account of the history of this Convent will be found in the *Annals of the Dominican Convent of St. Mary's Cabra; with some account of its origin—1647–1912* (Dublin, 1912).

#### LAURENCE RICHARDSON, O.P. (1747–1753)

Dr. Laurence Richardson, O.P., succeeded to the bishopric by Brief, dated February 6th, 1747. His consecration took place on May 1st of the same year\* in the chapel of the Dominican Convent, Dublin, the consecrating prelate being the Most Rev. Dr. Linegar, Archbishop of Dublin, assisted by Dr. Stephen Egan, Bishop of Meath, and Dr. James O'Gallagher, Bishop of ~~Raphoe~~. *Kildare (in 1747)*.

This eminent prelate was a native of the district of Dublin where he was born about the year 1701. At an early age he joined the Dominicans in Dublin and was sent to the Continent to pursue his studies. He

\* The date of the Bishop's consecration is erroneously entered as "1737" by Burke (*Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 511) and also by Brady (*Episcopal Succession*, vol. i, p. 285).

studied in the Dominican College of Holy Cross, Louvain, where he was Lector of Arts and Regent of Studies. For four years after his ordination he was Professor of Theology and Philosophy at the General House of Studies (Dominican) in Louvain, and for some time also taught Theology in the monastery of the Premonstratensian Canons at St. Truyen in Belgium.

Dr. Richardson was a very studious and learned man and his fame as a theologian was recognised on the Continent where his work won high honours. In 1729 he returned to Dublin and began his work in the old Dominican Chapel in Bridge Street which had been erected in 1719.\* There were eight Dominicans living in Dublin in 1732, as we learn from a contemporary list, but all were not living in one house owing to the difficulties of the times. In the Acts of the Provincial Chapter of the Irish Dominican Province, held in the Convent of St. Saviour, Dublin, on April 18th, 1730, we find that Laurence Richardson was Diffinitor for Leinster.† In the Declarations of the Chapter Colman O'Shaughnessy, Ex. Provincial, was elected Diffinitor General for the next Chapter General with Laurence Richardson as his *Socius*. At the same Chapter Dr. Richardson was postulated to Mastership.

At a later Provincial Chapter, held in Dublin on March 4th, 1734, Dr. Richardson was one of the Masters, *titulo scholae*, for Leinster. Like his friend, Dr. MacEgan of Meath, he had a great reputation as a preacher and entered with zeal into the work of propagating the devotion of the Holy Rosary about which he published, in 1736, a small volume entitled *An Essay on the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. He employed his leisure

\* An illustration of this chapel, from a contemporary sketch, will be found in the *Catholic Emancipation Centenary Record* (Dublin—June, 1929).

† *The Fottrell Papers*, loc. cit.

‡ Cf. *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 550. I am indebted to Rev. Ambrose Coleman, O.P., S.T.L., who has kindly supplied me with some valuable details relating to the history of the Dominicans in Dublin.



hours in writing devotional works of which there was a great dearth at the time. In 1746 he published, in English and Latin, *The Manner of Hearing Mass with Prayers before Confession and Communion; and the Examination of Conscience*. Two years later (Dublin, 1748) he issued an *Appendix* containing an account of the design, conditions, rules, indulgences, and privileges, belonging to the Confraternity, or Sodality, of the Holy Name against the profane vice of cursing and swearing. This *Appendix* was also published in English and Latin.

During the centuries of persecution, when public worship was prohibited and the priests scattered, it was inevitable that many abuses should have crept in. The correction of those abuses, specially prevalent in Ulster owing to the successive Plantations, was one of the most pressing problems which confronted the Church in Ireland in the eighteenth century.

Dr. Richardson proved himself a good and zealous bishop and for six years worked energetically in every part of his diocese. Owing to the strict enforcement of the Penal Laws he was obliged to live mostly with his Dominican brethren in Dublin, but contrived to visit periodically every parish in his diocese and perform his episcopal functions. On those hazardous journeys through Cavan and Leitrim, where tyranny and arrogance then reigned supreme, he always travelled in disguise and obtained food and lodgings in the homes of the peasantry.

In 1749, shortly after his appointment to the bishopric, Dr. Richardson issued a *Letter to the Roman Catholic Clergy of the Diocese of Kilmore*, urging them to establish the Confraternity, or Sodality, of the Holy Name "against the profane vice of cursing and swearing." From his letters and pamphlets it is evident that he took a deep interest in this Confraternity: he persistently urged the clergy to have it established in

every parish as a bulwark against the manifold evils of the time.

In his *Relatio*, submitted to the Holy See and dated from Dublin, June 9th, 1750, he emphasises the dire poverty to which the priests and people of Kilmore were reduced. This interesting document, in Latin, is preserved in the Archives of the Congregation of the Council, Rome, and is substantially as follows:—\*

Laurence, by the grace of God and favour of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Kilmore, wishes to give effect to his oath taken on the day of his consecration—May 1st, 1747—to render every four years an account of his Church. With his entire clergy he casts himself at the feet of Our Most Holy Lord and Father and reveals as follows the state of his diocese:

1. This diocese extends over sixty miles in length; it is very narrow, contains thirty-six parishes and has the following dioceses contiguous to it:—Meath, Clogher, Ardagh, Raphoe, and Elphin.

2. The Catholics living in the more remote parts are generally very poor and none of them own even a little land, as the non-Catholics hold the entire countryside. Moreover, all the Catholics are compelled to live in low and wretched dwellings (*in humilibus et miseris domunculis*), as are also the parish priests. Hence no bishop has had a permanent residence there within living memory. Even the visitor or traveller finds it difficult to obtain a suitable place for a night's rest or refreshment.

3. In this diocese no school has been established by non-Catholics for the teaching of the principles of the Lutheran or Calvinistic religion to the sons and daughters of Catholics. Such schools have been established in other dioceses, but here Providence hitherto disposes in our favour. It even seems that the non-Catholics did not deem it worth the expense to establish such schools here, for, notwithstanding

\* *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. v, pp. 132-134.



the length of the diocese, there are few inhabitants throughout the broad tracts of land broken by lakes and barren hills (*latos terrae tractus immistosque lacus et steriles colles incolae*). So true is this that one may travel many miles at times without meeting a human habitation.

4. In this diocese, generally, the people are instructed every Sunday in each parish according to the norma of the Roman Catechism. This the late bishop ordered, and had it strictly enforced by means of repeated orders and admonitions.

5. The Council of Trent as regards Matrimony has been here received and observed according to its strict tenor, as is clear from diocesan statutes for sixty years and more. These the late bishop fully explained and strictly enforced.

6. Through the commands and zeal of the same late bishop there seems to have been wholly abolished for upwards of a couple of years, the impious practice (*impia et ethnica consuetudo*) of providing alcoholic drink, as for a feast, at funerals. Formerly, this practice flourished in certain parts of this diocese and from it resulted profanations, inebriety, poverty, and very often death.

7. An ancient custom of this diocese is preserved, viz., in each Deanery, in so far as it can be conveniently arranged, the clergy assemble monthly and discuss by means of Conferences theological questions and cases occurring in the different parishes. Over these Conferences the bishop himself presided last year in the months of May, June, July and September; special difficulties are wont to be solved.

8. Through the exertions of the same late bishop there has been established throughout the entire diocese the Confraternity of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, against blasphemy, perjury, and unlawful oaths. This Confraternity has been established by virtue of Letters Apostolic, and the execrable practice of profane oaths has been thereby greatly diminished, whilst through Indulgences attached to this same

Confraternity the devotion of the faithful has visibly increased.

9. The bishop together with his whole diocese and church professes entire obedience and love towards their Most Holy Father, and towards all his Constitutions, Decrees and Mandates. They pray for his temporal and eternal welfare and, prostrate, implore his Paternal Benediction.

This 9th day of June, 1750.

LAURENTIUS, *Episcopus Kilmoriensis*.

Towards the end of the same year, on October 4th, 1750, Dr. Richardson, writing from Dublin, forwarded to the Holy See a list of the Kilmore pastors which I reproduce. As some of the forms of the names are imperfect and not always immediately intelligible I give the modern forms in brackets.

Ioannes Reilly, I.U.D.\* Teol. et Vicar-Gener., Kilmoriensis.

Antonius Smith, Pastor de Larrah, Vicarius.

Hugo Brady, Pastor de Killsendeny [Killdrumsherdan].

I. Brady, Presbr. Kilmoren.

P. Gaffney, Pastor Drumreliensis [Drumreilly].

Thomas FitzSimons, Pastor de Drumlane.

Petrus Masterson, Pastor de Cavan.

Ioannes Drummond,† Pastor de Kihalunsi [Killann].

Ioannes Maguire, Pastor de Killassar [Killesher].

Carolus Thady,‡ Pastor de Killdallan.

*Recte  
— R: H<sup>c</sup> T<sup>e</sup>*

\* i.e. *Juris utriusque Doctor*.

† A latinised form of Ó Droma, or Drum—probably a relative of Rev. Francis Drummond, Guardian of the Franciscan Convent of Lisgool, Co. Fermanagh, in 1776, 1781, and again in 1785. *Vide* Canon MacKenna's *Friaries of Lisgool and Guala on Loch Erne*.

‡ *Recte* Thally, i.e. Ó Taichlís, or Tully. Ó Taichlís is the usual form in Fermanagh and Monaghan, while Ó Maoltuile is generally heard in Breiffne. In Breiffne, however, the name is sometimes anglicised *Flood*, a literal translation of the name (Tuile, a flood).

Maelcainnigh Ó Taichligh, Abbot of Devenish, died in 1049. The family seat was in the Barony of Lurg, Co. Fermanagh.

In 1790 Rev. Patrick Thally was Guardian of Lisgool. Rev. Paul



Rogerus Maguire, Pastor de Kinnally [Kinawley].  
 Petrus Brody [*recte* Brady], Pastor de Carrigallen.  
 Vincentius Mac Lean, Pastor de Outeragh  
 [Oughteragh].

Iacobus Martinus, doctor Sorbonicus, Pastor de  
 Fimperl. [Templeport] et Vics. [Vicar General].

Ioannes Prouty, Pastor de Killishandra.

Paulus Thaly, Pastor de Castleterra.

Patritius Sheridan, S. Theologiae Professor et  
 Pastor de Oughteraghy.

Daniel Reilly, Pastor de Anna.

Bernardus Cahill,\* Pastor de Killmore.

Daniel O Muldune, Pastor de Balinrample [Ballin-  
 temple].

Terentius Brady, Pastor de Drung.

Michael Smith, Pastor de Lavy.

Franciscus Sheridan, Pastor de Denn.

Ioannes Reilly, Doctor U.I. Parochus de Crosserlogh

Carolus Clancy, Pastor de Rosnive (Rossinver) and  
 Kilasnal [Killasnet] Vices gerens Vicarii-Generalis in  
 Decanatu de Rosniver.

Molatus Myhan,† Pastor de Rossenver.

Thomas Magauran, I.U.D. et Pastor de Killinagh.

Philippus Magauran, Pastor de Glan et Ballanagh-  
 leragh.

Carolus Mac Griskin, Pastor de Cluniclar [Cloon-  
 clare].

Ioannes Mac Parlan, Parochus de Enishmeagh  
 [Innismagrath].

Carolus Mac Hugh, Pastor de Killarga, Dromhore  
 [Dromahaire, i.e., Drumlease], etc.

Thally, the pastor of Castletara given in the above list, died in or about 1763 in which year Father James O'Reilly succeeded to the pastoral charge. Father O'Reilly's parochial records, commencing in 1763 and continuing till 1771, are in my possession. The name "Thally" occurs frequently among the entries. Here as elsewhere many names are written down phonetically.

\* A monument erected by him to the memory of his parents is in the old cemetery of Moybolge.

† I presume that he was identical with Rev. Molas Mihin (Meehan), who was P.P. of Killasnett in 1704, and then aged 44. In 1750 he would have reached the age of 90.

Ioannes Flynn, Pastor de Clunloger [Cloonlougher].  
 Edmundus Gargan,\* Pastor de Mullagh.  
 Bernardus Smith,† Pastor de Killincare.  
 Ioannes Smith,‡ Pastor de Lurgan.  
 Dyonisius Brady, Pastor de Mayboly et Kilmainham  
 [Moybolge and Kilmainhamwood].  
 Patricius Mac Cabe,§ Pastor de Knockbride.

This list shows that even in the darkest years of the eighteenth century the diocese had its full complement of pastors. The names of the curates and regulars were not furnished by Dr. Richardson but it may be inferred that, especially in larger parishes, there were curates. A few parishes are absent from the list, and the omissions may be ascribed to vacancies existing at the time. The union of Munterconnacht and Castlerahan, for instance, does not apparently find a place. It might be suggested that perhaps these parishes were administered by the P.P. of Lurgan as in 1704, but a monumental inscription in the old cemetery of Castlerahan records the death of a P.P. of Castlerahan, Rev. John Reilly, on January 20th, 1751, at the age of 54. By inference from the above list he seems to have been identical with the Vicar-General, Rev. John Reilly, *Juris utriusque Doctor*, whose name is placed first but with no particular parish assigned. I take it that he had pastoral charge of Munterconnacht and Castlerahan. On his death his namesake, who was pastor of Crosserlough and also a distinguished man, was Vicar-General for some years.

During the remaining years of his life Dr. Richardson suffered greatly from ill-health and resided with his brethren in Dublin. It was easier to escape detection

\* He died about 1760 or 1761.

† His *Will*, dated 1761, was preserved in the Public Record Office, Dublin; he died towards the end of 1763 or early in 1764.

‡ Died September 2, 1754, and rests in the cemetery of Lurgan.

§ A massive horizontal slab erected by this Father MacCabe in memory of his parents is in the cemetery of Kildrumsherdan, near Cootehill. It displays the MacCabe Coat of Arms neatly sculptured.



in a crowded city than in country districts, where every stranger became an object of suspicion. Dr. Richardson's health had never been robust, and the privations and hardships endured on visitation may be inferred from his *Relatio* of 1750. After a prolonged illness he passed away on January 29th, 1753, in the Dominican Convent of Channel Row, at the age of 52. He was interred, alongside Dr. Mac Egan and many other great Dominicans, in the historic cemetery of St. James's, in James's Street, Dublin. No trace of his tomb can now be discovered in that once much frequented sanctuary. His tomb, together with those of many other distinguished prelates, was ruthlessly swept away early in the last century, when the space was being cleared for the erection of the present Protestant edifice which occupies the ancient Catholic site. It is recorded that all the monuments which were within thirty feet of the walls of the present building were torn up and buried beneath the gravel walk round the church grounds.\* Thus disappeared the inscription which marked the grave of our great Dominican bishop.

Dr. Richardson's Will, dated November 30th, 1752, was preserved among the Prerogative Wills in the Public Record Office, Dublin.†

#### *Will of Dr. Laurence Richardson.*

In the name of Almighty God. Amen.

I, Laurence Richardson of the City of Dublin, gent.,‡ being, I thank God, sound of mind but not of body, do make this my last will and testament to prevent any injustice or disturbance in my little affairs after my decease. Imprim. I bequeath my soul to God through Whose infinite mercy and Precious Blood I hope for salvation: and my body

\* Vide Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. ii, p. 162.

† *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, p. 184. I have made a few slight alterations in the orthography.

‡ Observe that the testator's episcopal rank is not revealed.

to the earth to be buried in the most private manner at twelve o'clock at night\* and with as little Expence as possible. I order all my true debts to be first payed, a list of which I have for that purpose communicated to Mr. Laurence Ford who will take the trouble to discharge this trust as I hope and believe. I bequeath to Richard Reddy, Esq., four score pounds. I bequeath to my executors herein after named sixty pounds to be employed in putting six young persons apprentices to such business as they may live by†—four of the County Cavan to be pitched upon by Mr. Patrick Masterson of Cavan, Mr. Anthony Smith‡ of Larah, & Mr. John Mc Cormick§ of Bailyborough ; & two of the County Leitrim to be pitched upon by Mr. Charles Clancy|| of Dartree & Mr. James Martin of Templeport. I order all my effects of what kind soever to be sold by auction for the payment of debts & legacys except my grey mare & dun [i.e. brown] horse which I bequeath to Mr. Pat. Masterson of Cavan, [and] the suit of cloathe I now wear, viz., the blue coat & black waistcoat & Breeches with my shoes, stockings & [one word illegible] shirts which I bequeath to my servant Arthur Rogers along with five pounds. I desire my executors may entrust Mr. Laurence Ford with whatever part of my effects is not here specially bequeathed that he may dispose

\* It is obvious that such a precaution was absolutely necessary at this period of anti-Catholic fanaticism. Catholic burials were not forbidden in the cemetery of St. James's; in fact from the taxes imposed on Catholic burials the Protestant Rector of St. James's was able to secure an annual revenue of £600. There were then no Catholic burial grounds, and for centuries the sacred precincts of St. James's was a popular place of interment. After the opening of the Glasnevin cemetery for Catholic burials, through the exertions of Daniel O'Connell, the cemetery of St. James's was seldom used for Catholic interments.

† This was clearly intended for the education of students for the priesthood; such provision was, of course, then highly illegal, hence the carefully guarded wording of this section of the Will.

‡ Rev. Anthony Smith, P.P., of Laragh and V.G., of Kilmore, who died in 1769. He usually celebrated Mass beside the ruined Mill of Knockatador.

§ Rev. John MacCormick who was then P.P. of Killann.

|| Rev. Charles Clancy, P.P. of Dartree, now usually called Rossinver Co. Leitrim.



thereof according to my directions. I constitute Anthony Ryan of the City of Dublin, gentleman & Professor of Midwifery & Mrs Mary O'Brien of this House\* my executors. In witness whereof I have put my hand & seal this 30th day of November, 1752.

LAURENCE RICHARDSON. [Seal]

Item. I bequeath to Mrs. Mary O'Brien twelve pounds & to Mr. Anthony Ryan ten pounds. To Mr. Laurence Ford my gold watch, chain & seals. Jan. 28, 1753.

LAURENCE RICHARDSON.

Endorsed :—" The original Last Will & Testament of Laurence Richardson, late of the city of Dublin, gent. deceased 1753."

#### ANDREW CAMPBELL (1753-1769)

Dr. Andrew Campbell succeeded to the Bishopric by Brief of Pope Benedict XIV, dated April 3rd, 1753. He belonged to a well-known and highly respected Catholic family of Claristown, beside Dunany, Co. Louth, where the future Bishop of Kilmore was born in the year 1711. He was the son of Richard Campbell and Mary Hullen, and grandson of Patrick Campbell and Catherine Walsh. From the inscriptions on the monuments of the Campbells in the ancient cemetery of Port, near Dunany, the antiquity and importance of this family may be inferred. The bishop's father was the owner of very considerable property in that district of County Louth.

Of the early years of Dr. Campbell's life we have few details. His early education was received in the paternal home at Claristown, where local tradition relates that later on he was sent to Rome, where he studied for the priesthood and displayed exceptional abilities. Ordained in Rome about 1736 he returned

|| The Dominican Convent, Channel-Row.

to Ireland and laboured for a few years as curate in Drogheda. In 1739, when Dr. Michael O'Reilly, who had been P.P. of Drogheda, was promoted to the Bishopric of Derry, the Parish of Drogheda was placed in the charge of Dr. Campbell and here he worked until after his elevation to the bishopric. In 1743 he was appointed to the Chapter and his profession of Faith, made on that occasion, is preserved in St. Clement's, in Rome. The Drogheda parochial Register about 1752 contains several entries, where he is mentioned as sponsor to baptisms.\*

The following interesting tradition regarding the appointment of Dr. Campbell to the bishopric survives in County Louth. It appears that after the death of Bishop Richardson the clergy of the diocese submitted to the Primate, Dr. Michael O'Reilly, who was then living at Termonfechin, near Drogheda, the names of two priests who were considered eligible for the bishopric. Dr. O'Reilly himself added to the list the name of Father Campbell, who had charge of his own mensal parish, of Drogheda, and in accordance with the usual custom the three names were submitted to Rome, where they were considered by the ecclesiastical authorities.

After due consideration it was decided that the three names on the list fulfilled the necessary conditions, and all were deemed worthy of episcopal rank. At that time the Stuart Kings exercised the privilege of nomination to the Irish bishoprics and in the records of the eighteenth century we find several instances in which the privilege was exercised. The list was, therefore, presented to James III (James Francis Edward Stuart, better known as the "Old Pretender"), who was requested to make the selection. It is probable that James III was not personally acquainted with

\* For some of these details I am indebted to the Rev. L. Murray, E.I., Dundalk, and the late Mr. Joseph Dolan, M.A., M.R.I.A., Ardee.



any of the priests whose names were submitted ; to him they were mere names. But reading over the list he observed the name " Campbell," and he could not easily forget that the Campbells of Scotland had figured among the most valiant defenders of the Jacobite cause in that country ; thereupon he named the P.P. of Drogheda to the Bishopric of Kilmore.\*

Notwithstanding the strong Highland flavour of his name, which is said to have appealed so strongly to James III, Dr. Campbell belonged to an old Irish family which was long established in Ulster. The Gaelic form of the name is *Mac Caimhail*, which occurs under various local forms, e.g., Mac Caul or Mac Cawel, Mac Caulfield, Campbell, etc. A worthy scion of the Clan *Mac Caimhail* was Dr. Hugh Mac Caghwell, born at Saul, Co. Down, about 1571, and appointed Archbishop of Armagh early in 1626, dying at Rome in September of the same year.

Without questioning the probability of the truth of the tradition of the Stuart nomination of Bishop Campbell—and no doubt the story seems to be substantially correct—yet we must not ignore the part taken by Primate O'Reilly in presenting the names of the candidates to the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome. It must be remembered that Primate O'Reilly was a native of Kilmore Diocese, over which he had ruled as Vicar-General. Having the interests of his native diocese so much at heart we may understand his anxiety to have a strong and fearless bishop take up the reins of episcopal government at a time when the

\* The rumour or story of his Stuart nomination must have been current in Kilmore very soon after his appointment, for it is stated, traditionally, that the appointment was at first unpopular with some of the clergy of the Diocese. It is obvious that the people would resent the interference of the Stuarts, or any other civil authorities, in ecclesiastical affairs. Very soon, however, the Bishop proved his worthiness and became extremely popular with priests and people. This tradition of the unpopularity of his appointment appears to me to support the tradition of his Stuart nomination.

Penal Laws had seriously hampered ecclesiastical administration. Knowing that the P.P. of his mensal parish of Drogheda was eminently qualified to undertake this onerous and difficult task it is reasonable to surmise that the Primate should have indicated his preference to the Roman authorities ; and the weighty influence of the Primate would certainly have determined the choice. The Stuart privilege of nomination would have been a mere formality to confirm the choice of the ecclesiastical authorities, who were guided by the Primate's wise direction. No doubt it was a pleasure to James III to be requested to assent to the elevation to the bishopric of one whose name was redolent of the Jacobite struggles—the vanishing hopes of a lost cause. But that the nomination was wholly fortuitous can hardly be maintained.

The episcopate of Bishop Campbell was a perilous one and for sixteen years, amid great hardships, he performed his Visitations of the diocese, always travelling in disguise. After his appointment to Kilmore, in 1753, he was transferred from Drogheda to his native Parish of Dunany and Port (Togher) over which he continued as pastor until his death. The reason for this transfer was that the Diocese of Kilmore was then too poor to support him, and as he owned in his own right a considerable share of family property in his native parish he was able to live on the proceeds of his own farm. Another very good reason for his leaving Drogheda for a more secluded part of County Louth was to escape the vigilance of the authorities, who were unlikely to tolerate a Catholic dignitary living in their midst. The Primate, who was then living at Termonfechin, was Dr. Campbell's closest friend and adviser.

Owing to the many difficulties of visitation it was decided that it would be sufficient for Dr. Campbell to visit his diocese for three months every year. He laboured most zealously for his flock and visited every



part of his extensive diocese regularly. During his absence from his Parish of Dunany and Port he placed Father John MacLennon, O.P., in charge of same. At this time Dr. Campbell was assisted in the administration of his parish by Dominicans—Father MacLennon\* who lived at Barmeath and Father Stephen Carney who lived at Dysart—and a Franciscan, Father John Harlin, who lived at Clonmore.

On visitation of his diocese Dr. Campbell travelled in the disguise of a Highland piper. He was an expert performer on the bag-pipes and he utilised his accomplishments to enable him to travel through the diocese—then swarming with bigots and fanatics. The spirit of intolerance was then rampant in Cavan, where all the Catholic landowners had been dispossessed and where the Cromwellian and Williamite Planters ruled with a rod of iron over the broken remnants of a sorely tried but intensely Catholic people. There were no churches in the diocese in those days, and Mass was celebrated in the open air. Under such circumstances episcopal visitation was a hazardous task.

The art of disguise was of necessity then highly developed, and Dr. Campbell's ruse was not original. I have already referred to Bishop Donnelly of Dromore, who, disguised as a piper and sometimes as a harper, set out from his hiding-place on the slopes of Sliabh Gullion, County Armagh, to visit his diocese: the popular song, *The Bard of Armagh*, centres around him. But, as I have shown, he got the idea from Fiachra MacBrady, "The Bard of Stradone," which in later years suggested the pseudonym for Bishop Donnelly. No doubt many ecclesiastics of whom we have no record adopted similar disguises at a time when the Church in Ireland was still in the catacombs of the penal times.

\* At the east end of the ruined church of Port is an upright stone marking the grave of the Rev. John MacLennon, O.P., who died in 1769, aged 77. Further details concerning him will be found in the *Fottrell Papers* (loc. cit.).

In Kilmore Bishop Campbell has always been remembered as the "Piper Bishop," and many interesting traditions of his musical feats and adventures are remembered by the people. Starting from his home in the Parish of Dunany and Port, in the early part of the summer of each year, he travelled on foot, and dressed in the ornate costume of a Highland piper, carried his pipes under his arm. Reaching Ardee he spent the night at the house of his close friend, Rev. Philip Levins, P.P., and then proceeded to the Parish of Enniskeen (Kingscourt) where he stayed with Rev. Thomas O'Reilly, P.P. From Enniskeen he passed on through Killann and by easy stages reached the western extremity of his diocese on the shores of Donegal Bay. Following a different route he returned via Ardee after completing a circuit of the diocese. For sixteen years he performed this great annual journey *on foot*, travelling from the Irish Sea to the Atlantic Ocean and back again, playing the pipes and administering Confirmation.

Religious assemblies were, of course, strictly forbidden by law, but the fairs and markets afforded the bishop an opportunity of administering Confirmation. The identity of the "Piper" was known to the Catholics, who awaited his annual visitations. The children who were to receive Confirmation were assembled wearing some distinctive sign and advanced in turn to shake hands with, or sometimes give a coin to, the "Piper," who thereupon administered the Sacrament to each. At that period the fairs and markets were places of popular assembly, attended by large numbers of itinerant musicians, and such occasions provided excellent meeting places for the younger people, without any suspicions being aroused as to the real objects of their assembly. In this surreptitious manner, while playing his pipes at those gatherings, the bishop was enabled to administer Confirmation. His disguise was effective and he passed from town to town without molestation.



Tradition remembers how on one occasion, when performing a visitation of Lurgan parish and passing through the town of Virginia, in his Glengarry cap and his plaid of many colours, a rowdy party of English soldiers hailed the "Piper," commandeered him, and brought him to the local inn, where their comrades were roystering. For some hours he regaled them with a feast of choice Scottish reels, which highly pleased them. At last he managed to disengage himself from his uncongenial surroundings and continued his journey unrecognised. So pleased were the soldiers with his musical selections that they made a collection for him and presented him with the proceeds.

We have no authentic portrait of the bishop as he appeared in piper's garb. An oil painting in St. Patrick's College, Cavan, represents him doing his visitations in this costume; but the likeness lays no claim to authenticity. The painting is the work of a Mr. Harman, a gentleman artist, who for years was the guest of Bishop Conaty, and was done about sixty years ago.

Dr. Campbell was one of the seven bishops who assembled in the Castle of Trimlestown, near Trim, County Meath—the ancestral home of the great Catholic family of Barnwell\*—and drew up a joint Pastoral, dated September 5th, 1757, dealing with questions of diocesan administration and refuting some of the arrogant assertions of the bigots of the day. The prelates who assembled on that occasion were the Archbishop of Armagh and the Bishops of Meath, Kilmore, Kildare, Raphoe, Clogher and Derry. A tradition existed in the neighbourhood that they all

\* For many centuries the Barnwells were among the leading Anglo-Irish Catholic families of Meath. I have been informed that the late Theodore Roosevelt, who was President of the United States of America from 1901 till 1909, took pride in recalling that some of his ancestors were intermarried with the Barnwells and that he had Barnwell blood in his veins. My authority for this is Right Rev. Monsignor Richard Brady, Loretto Heights College, Colorado, U.S.A., who was personally acquainted with the President.

came to the meeting in Trimlestown Castle, clad in frieze, like farmers, in order to conceal their ecclesiastical dignity.\* The cowardly despots of the time pretended to see in every Catholic gathering the signal for a French invasion.

Amid his trials and difficulties the bishop seems to have been possessed of a keen sense of humour, and every year, on his return to his residence at Dunany, he used display the large collection of silver coins which were given to him by the Protestant landowners of Cavan and Leitrim, who evidently appreciated his accomplishments as a musician.

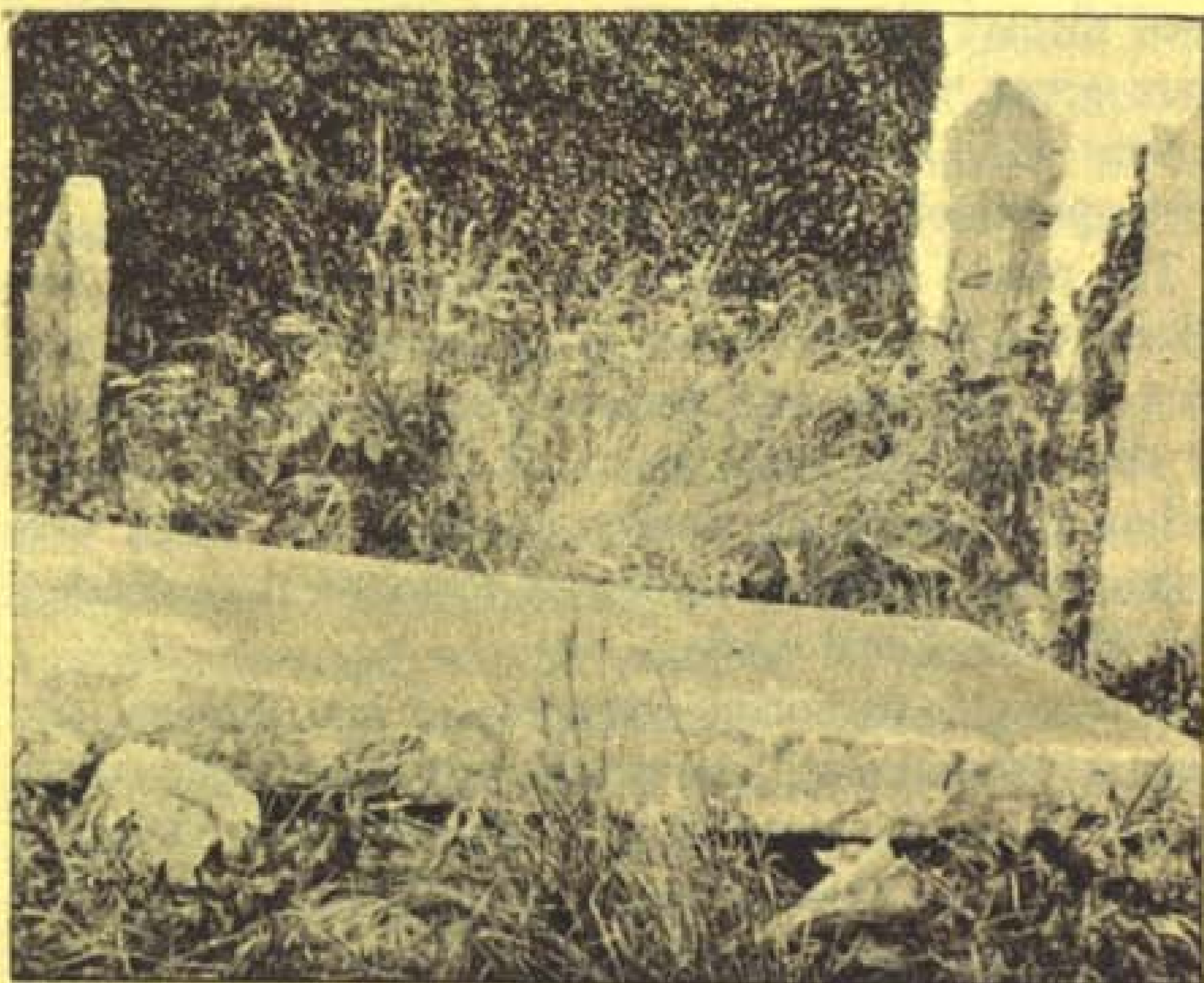
The music of his pipes was known throughout the Diocese of Kilmore, and in those days when the sound of a Catholic bell was unheard in the land, the skirl of the pipes was the signal of the approach of the bishop and the people flocked to meet him. Such were some of the subterfuges adopted to evade the relentless fury of the Penal Code.

In the old Parochial Registers of the diocese, and fortunately many of these precious documents have been preserved, we have ample evidence of the close attention which Bishop Campbell bestowed on his diocese despite the difficulties and restrictions which surrounded him on every side. The pages of these Registers are the sole remaining sources from which we can now glean some details of his diocesan activities. The old Register of Munterconnacht and Castlerahan, which commences with the year 1752, contains marriage dispensations granted by Bishop Campbell. Similarly the Registers of Lurgan and Killinkere, commencing in 1755 and 1766, respectively, record his annual visitations, and the several entries show his endeavours to combat the terrible evils which inevitably followed in the wake of the Ulster Plantations. Looking through the pages of these old records, now faded and sometimes barely

\* Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. ii, p. 165.



legible, one cannot fail to observe that even in those days the diocese was well organised and the Penal Code had failed to destroy, although it succeeded in hampering, ecclesiastical organisation. All over the diocese, wherever the Registers of the period have been preserved, the bishop's familiar signature—his initials—will be found on many a page. Evidently he insisted that parochial registers be kept with great care—a difficult



Photo]

[P. O'Connell]

TOMB OF BISHOP ANDREW CAMPBELL

task at a time when the priests had no fixed residence and when the seizure or discovery of such a register might have serious legal consequences.

The Vicar-General of Kilmore, under Bishop Campbell, was Rev. Anthony Smith, P.P., of Laragh (who died in 1769), and later on Rev. Patrick Masterson, P.P. Cavan. During the absence of the bishop the diocese was in charge of these priests. From entries in the Lurgan Register I find that the Rev. Dr. John O'Reilly, P.P., Crosserlough, was one of the Vicars-General in 1758 and 1759. For a few months after the death of

Bishop Campbell the diocese was administered by Father Masterson as Vicar-Capitular.

After ruling the diocese for sixteen years Dr. Campbell died in his ancestral home at Claristown, in the Parish of Dunany and Port, on December 1st, 1769, and was interred with his relatives in the old cemetery of Port. The Bishop's House, and beside it the Bishop's Well, is still pointed out by the people of the locality, who retain many traditions of the "Piper Bishop," whose skill as a musician proved such a valuable adjunct to his disguise. His Missal is still preserved in Kilmore Diocese, and his name, which I take to be his signature, is on the title page. His chalice, mitre and vestments are preserved in the possession of the Byrne family of Rossmakea, near Dundalk, whose ancestors were related to the bishop. A silver chalice which belonged to him is in the Cathedral, Cavan; it has this inscription:

*Orate pro Andrea Campbell episcopo Kilmorensi qui me fieri fecit A.D. 1761.*

The cemetery of Port is near the sea coast, beside Dunany, and a short distance from the main road leading from Clogher Head to Dunany Point. A massive horizontal slab, south-west of the ruined church, marks the bishop's tomb. The massive slab rests on small pillars and carries a lengthy inscription, which is much weatherworn and now barely legible. I deciphered this inscription with some difficulty in July, 1929. Reading from the *east* end of the slab, on which is displayed a mitre, the inscription is as follows:—

Here lieth the Body of the Revd. Doctor Andrew Campbell Bishop of Killmore who died Decemr. 1, 1769, aged 58 years.

Beginning at the *west* end of the slab is another inscription—a fairly lengthy one—which provides us



with some interesting biographical details of the bishop's relatives and genealogical tree: it runs as follows:

This stone and burial place  
belongeth to Richard Campbell and Family,  
and beneath lie the body of Thos. his  
grandfather, Patk. his father, Catherine  
Walsh his mother, also his wife Mary  
Hullen who died the 1st Nov. 1755  
aged 81 years also the above Richard  
who died June the 3rd, 1762 aged 72 years.

From this inscription we learn that the bishop's grandfather was Thomas Campbell, who must have lived in the early part of the seventeenth century. It also preserves the dates of the deaths of the bishop's parents. From the bishop's *Will*, dated September 30th, 1769, further particulars of the family are afforded. His mother, Mary Hullen, had been previously married to Patrick Lawless, who died soon afterwards, leaving a son, Patrick.

The children of Richard Campbell and Mary Hullen were Andrew—the bishop, Thomas of Draghanstown, and Margaret, who married John Magrane, and whose family, Andrew and Nicholas, are mentioned in the *Will*.

The above Patrick Lawless, son of Patrick Lawless and Mary Hullen, married a Margaret Campbell and had two daughters, Anne and Margaret, both of whom were, therefore, the bishop's nieces, being daughters of his half-brother. Anne married, on November 16th, 1773, Owen Byrne of Rossmakea,\* whose descendants still preserve the bishop's vestments.

The bishop's *Will* contains no reference to the episcopal dignity of the testator; he is discreetly entered

\* According to Burke's *Landed Gentry* (1862) this Owen Byrne was born in 1739 and married "Anne, daughter of Patrick Lawless, Esq., of Clarestown, and niece of Andrew Campbell, D.D., Bishop of Kilmore."

as "gentleman." But it is hardly likely that the authorities were quite unaware of his ecclesiastical status; in fact, in 1766, that is three years before his death, a spy reported to Dublin Castle that "Andrew Campbell, titular Bishop of Kilmore, resides in this parish of Dunany." However, his residence at such a long distance from his diocese was sufficient to divert suspicion from his exercising episcopal functions, and his effective disguise outwitted the tyrants and vile brood of priest-hunters, who were ever on the prowl.

*Will of Dr. Campbell.\**

In the name of God. Amen. I, Andrew Campbell of Claristown in the Parish of Dunany and County of Louth, gentleman, do make this my last will and Testament in manner and form following: First. I confirm and ratifie, in as much as in me lieth, my father's last will and Testament, that is to say: I order and bequeath to Patrick Lawless and Margaret Lawless, alias Campbell, his wife half the lands as ordered in my father's will. Item. I order and bequeath to Andrew Magrane, my nephew, the other half of the lands, corn, and chatles [i.e., chattels], as ordered in the said my ffather's will, on condition, however, that if said Andrew Magrane wo'd die without lawfull issue he shall not leave or bequeath anything whatsoever to his brother, Nicholas Magrane, as, in such a case, I order and bequeath said lands, corn, and chatles, to his mother, Margaret Magrane, alias Campbell, and her children, except the above mentioned Nicholas Magrane. Item. I order and bequeath to said Andrew Magrane fifty pounds sterling of my ffather's money besides the other Legacys above, and hereafter mentioned. Item. I order to Rose Hullin, my aunt, five pounds sterling in case she survives me. Item. I order five pounds

\* Formerly preserved among the Prerogative Wills in the Public Record Office, Dublin: *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, p. 185.



sterling to be distributed by Mr. Philip Levins\* of Atherdie amongst the poor and most indigent Roman Catholicks of the Parish of Dunany and Port. Item. It is my will that in case I would die possessed of more money got by my ffather's will and effects than is above mentioned and bequeathed, then, and in such a case, the same must be equally divided amongst Andrew Magrane my nephew, Ann Lawless, and Margaret Lawless, my nieces, and my sister Margaret Magrane alias Campbell and her children except her son Nicholas Magrane, whom I exclude from this and every other legacy ; and provided always that John Magrane her husband shall have no power to dispose of this or any other legacy I leave her or her children. Finally. It is my will that Ann and Margaret Lawless, my nieces, shall get the marriage portion, provided they are marryed till after my death, ordered to them in my ffather's will, besides their proportion of this last legacy. And I name and appoint the above mentioned Mr. Philip Levins of Atherdee, Patrick Lawless my half brother, and Andrew Magrane my nephew, executors of this my last will and Testament, in witness whereof I put my hand and seal this 30th day of September 1769 nine.

ANDREW CAMPBELL.†

Thomas Campbell of Draghanstown in the County of Louth, gentleman, came before us, and made oath, on the Holy Evangelists, that he was well acquainted with the character and manner of handwriting of Andrew Campbell, late of Claristown, in the County of Louth, gentleman, deceased, Deponent having often seen him write. And Deponent saith that the whole

\* Rev. Dr. Philip Levins, P.P., Ardee, who was a close friend of Bishop Campbell. Dr. Levins was Treasurer of the Chapter of Armagh in 1761, was still P.P. of Ardee in 1779, and is mentioned as Dean of Armagh in September, 1781 (Cf. *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. iii, p. 394).

† It is stated that the original document (destroyed in 1922) showed traces of a cross ✝ before the name ; but whether a cross was intended or not cannot now be decided.

of the within writing, being the last will and testament of the said Andrew Campbell, Deceased, Beginning 'In the name of God. Amen,' and ending 'This 30th day of September, 1769 nine' is all of the proper handwriting of the said Andrew Campbell deceased. And that the name 'Andrew Campble' (*sic*) signed at the foot of the said will is the proper handwriting of the said Andrew Campbell, deceased, as Deponent verily believes.

Sworn the 20th day of December, 1769.

Before us,

Thomas Campbell.

PHIL. TISDALL.

Philip Levins, one of the Executors named in the above will was sworn as well to his belief of the truth of the said will as to the due execution thereof the 20th day of December, 1769, Before us.

PHIL. TISDALL.

Will proved and probate as above, 23rd December, 1769.

*Endorsed* :—The original last will of Andrew Campbell, late of Claristown, in the County of Lowth, gentleman, deceased 1769.

#### DENIS MAGUIRE, O.F.M. (1770–1798)

Dr. Denis Maguire, O.F.M., succeeded. He was a native of the diocese and was born in the Parish of Killesher, County Fermanagh, in the year 1721. His family, descended from the chieftains of Fermanagh, had lost all their wealth in the Penal times and, like Dr. Campbell, he was obliged to support himself out of the proceeds of a small farm in his native parish.

At an early age he joined the Franciscans and studied for some years on the Continent. On February 10th, 1767, he was appointed Bishop of Dromore and ruled over that See for three years. On the death of Bishop



Campbell he was translated to Kilmore on March 20th, 1770. His name is frequently mentioned in the old parochial registers. For twenty-eight years he laboured zealously and lived to see the Penal laws fading away and the Catholic Church slowly emerging from the catacombs into which it had been driven through centuries of prolonged persecution. In 1770, when he came to the diocese, no church worthy of the name existed. Mass was then usually celebrated in the open air and every parish had its Mass Rock, where in early morning people assembled to hear Mass, while sentries were placed on the hill-tops to keep guard. Occasionally a hut erected on a hillside, or on the edge of some desolate moorland, served as a chapel, but the lords of the soil seldom tolerated such "Mass-houses" and were only too willing to have them levelled. The sites of those early mud wall chapels are pointed out in every parish in the diocese. Owing to the Plantations Kilmore was a centre of religious intolerance and the people have many traditions of the hatred which those humble "Mass-houses" aroused in the hearts of the local despots who usurped the lands of the Irish Catholics and were determined to allow no Catholic chapels to exist on the estates over which they held sway.

A well-known Protestant writer of the period, Henry Brooke,\* a native of East Cavan, in a letter to a friend,

\* Brooke was born about 1704 at Rantavan House, beside Mullagh, where his father was rector. In 1720 he entered Trinity College, and later on studied Law in London, where he was a close friend of Pope and Lyttleton. Returning to Ireland he was one of the founders, in 1763, of the *Freeman's Journal*, of which he was editor. He was a voluminous writer, a profound classical scholar, a leading authority on Italian literature, and an accomplished poet in Gaelic, English, Latin and Italian. Many operas, comedies, novels, political pamphlets, etc., appeared from his pen, and in 1762 he published his famous pamphlet, *The Trials of the Roman Catholics*, in which he makes an able appeal for the abolition of the Penal Laws. He was among the earliest Protestant supporters of the demand for Catholic Emancipation, and his influence was used with good effect. In 1774 he retired and returned to his native Parish of Mullagh and made his home in

describes the celebration of Mass in the open air, which he witnessed at the foot of Sliabh Rushen (or Russel), near Ballyconnell. The letter is undated but was written in the period 1760-1770. Brooke, who was one of the intellectual leaders of his time, deserves to be remembered on account of his efforts for the abolition of the Penal Code. The letter, which is published in a work, now rare, dealing with Brooke's life and writings, is as follows :—

Our chalices are wooden, it is true, but our priests are gold, and as to our chapels, I am sure I cannot describe them. Father Brady, our parish priest, preached in one last Sunday, that would have charmed you. The flock was waiting for the shepherd, who lives at a distance, and as I was passing by I joined it. The first thing that drew my attention was the lofty dome. A golden sun was nearly suspended from the centre, whilst his beams flowed in level lines, like so many streams from their fountain. The clouds sailed along till they lost themselves in each other ; the milky white was sometimes edged with blue, and the blue at last gradually yielded to gold ; I never witnessed such a soft succession of colours. You'll suppose that this glorious vault was supported by pillars of veiny marble, polished to the harmonious touch ; not one, nor yet hung round with pictures of female Saints and repentant Magdalens

the townland of Corfad, or Longfield, as he anglicised it, where he spent his remaining years. The site of his house may be seen on the banks of a small stream alongside the road leading from Mullagh to Virginia.

Brooke died in Dublin on October 10, 1783, and was interred in the old cemetery of Teampull Ceallaigh, at Mullagh, alongside the south-west wall of the church, now crumbling and ruinous, where his father preached, and where many members of his brilliant and generous family rest in unmarked and now forgotten graves. No inscribed monuments remain. Charlotte, daughter of Henry Brooke, born at Rantavan about 1740, inherited the literary genius of her father and was an accomplished writer. She collected Irish poems, which she published with excellent translations in her *Reliques of Irish Poetry*, a quarto volume which appeared in 1789. A malignant fever ended her career on March 29, 1793.



that exhausted the genius of ages ; yet this chapel, at the same time, was embellished with paintings that warmed your affections, instead of warming your passions. The Altar was a rough stone, raised out of an humble quarry, but the incense that rose from it ascended to the regions of uncreated light. Hills, dales, woods, and waters, joined in the song of praise.

What are the works of men's hands compared to the divine architect ? The proud monuments of madness, pride and folly, flourish for a few years, bow their heads, and scarcely " leave a wreck behind." Where is the temple of Mars, or the market-place of Augustus ? where is the house of Saturn, and the theatre of Marcellus ? Vanished for ever to the view ; but, the temple of the Living God, that is not made with hands, will flourish, unconscious of decay, through all eternity.

The situation of this chapel is beautiful ; it lies at the foot of Sliabh Russel ; and, if this verdant mountain is not as holy as Mount Sinai, nor as lofty as Herman, it is at least as pleasant as Tabor, and as fertile as Carmel.\*

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Penal Code was gradually relaxed, and during the period 1770-80 small mudwall chapels were in course of erection in every part of the diocese. These chapels were small unpretentious structures, but they served as parish churches for forty or fifty years afterwards, when many of the present handsome churches took their places. The Catholic Relief Act of 1781-82 was the first gleam of hope which encouraged the Catholics to emerge from their hiding-places and erect chapels. Bishop Maguire took an active part in the erection of suitable churches and thoroughly reorganised the

\* *Brookiana*, vol. i, p. 73 (London, 1804). The editor of that work, C. H. Wilson, subjoins : " Mr. Brady was a clergyman of the Church of Rome, who used to perform divine service in the open air," I have not identified the Father Brady here mentioned ; he was probably a Regular.

diocese. In 1792, feeling unequal to the strain of his episcopal duties, he was given a Coadjutor in the person of Rev. Charles O'Reilly, who was appointed as such with the title of Bishop of Fussala, *in partibus*, on May 17th, 1793.

Bishop Maguire died at Enniskillen on December 23rd, 1798, at the age of 77, and was buried, at his own request, in the old Abbey of Devenish (in Loch Erne), near the graves of his brothers, Bryan and James. His monument, a massive horizontal slab close to the south wall of the Great Church of St. Molaise, bears the following inscription :—

Erected in Memory of the  
late Most Rev. Doctor Dennis Maguire  
Catholic Bishop of Dromore  
Who was translated to Kilmore  
Who departed this life on the  
23rd day of December in the year of  
Our Lord 1798. Aged 77 years.  
During which period he lived  
a most exemplary life with  
indefatigable zeal and charity  
to mankind. He was indeed  
the Good Shepherd. A true  
and real follower of his Master  
and a most affectionate and  
sincere friend.

Here, in the ancient burial place of the Maguires, the Round Tower of Devenish stands a silent sentinel over the tombs of the bishop and his ancestors.

A magnificent silver chalice presented in 1739 by Sir Bryan Maguire to the Franciscan monastery of Lisgool, County Fermanagh, and which was afterwards the property of Bishop Maguire, is now in use in the parish church of Cloonclare (Manorhamilton). It carries



the following inscription in two consecutive lines on the convex surface of the base :—

*This chalice was given by Sir Bryan Maguire, Knight of the Noble Order of St. Louis, for the use of ye Convent of Lisgool, in ye County of Fermanagh, near Inniskilling. Anno Domini 1739. Pray for his intention.*

The chalice, which is plain silver, is nine and a half inches in height, six inches in diameter at the base and three and five-eighth inches in diameter at the top of the cup. The patena, which is six inches in diameter, is, like the chalice, stamped with the *fleur-de-lis*, and it has on the concave surface a well cut I.H.S. surmounted by a cross with an elliptical nimbus. On the convex surface of the base are displayed the Maguire Arms, with the motto, *Pro Deo et Patria*.

Sir Bryan Maguire, who presented the chalice to Lisgool, was the second son of Rory Maguire, who was son of Colonel Rory Maguire who figured prominently in the Insurrection of 1641. Rory Maguire, junior, succeeded his brother Hugh as the fifth Lord Maguire. He commanded a regiment in the service of King James II, was Lieutenant of Fermanagh in 1697 and 1698, and died at St. Germain, near Paris, in 1708. He had two sons, Alexander and Captain Bryan, the donor of the chalice. Another chalice, presented by the same Captain Bryan Maguire to one Peter Maguire—probably a Fermanagh priest on the Continent—was in the possession of the late Right Rev. Msgr. O'Laverty, the historian of Down and Connor. Around the outside of the silver cup is a scroll of flowers, and on the outside of the base, which is of copper, is the inscription :

*This cup was bestowed by Sir Bryan Maguire, baron, to Peter Maguire. Whoever uses it after his death is to say twelve intentions for him. 1751.*

Another Maguire chalice belonging to an earlier period was located by Canon MacKenna in the church

of Fernyhalgh, near Preston, in England.\* It is a small silver chalice displaying elaborate workmanship and the following inscription is around the base:—

*Dosus Maguire, rex Fermanae me fi : fe : MCCCCXXIX.*

"Dosus," *recte* "Conosus," is a Latin form of Cuconnacht, and the inscription may be translated: "Cuconnacht Maguire, King of Fermanagh, had me made: 1529." This Cuconnacht was chieftain of Fermanagh from 1527 until his death in 1537; "a charitable and humane man," the Annalists call him. According to Canon MacKenna the chalice was presented to the church of Fernyhalgh by a Miss Harrington, whose family had long been resident on the Continent. Evidently the chalice had been brought to the Continent by some exiled Fermanagh priest and there passed into the possession of the Harrington family.

The history of the chalice now in the church of Cloonclare may be briefly told. When the Franciscans left Lisgool the chalice passed into the hands of Bishop Maguire, and after his death it was carefully preserved by his relatives. In 1806, on the death of Philip Maguire of Enniskillen, brother of the bishop (and mentioned in the bishop's Will *infra*), it passed into the possession of Dr. Peter Maguire of Enniskillen, who was married to one of Philip's descendants. This Dr. Peter Maguire was a respected medical man, with historical tastes, and the chalice occupied an honoured place in his antiquarian collection. At his death in the early sixties of the last century he bequeathed the chalice to his relative, Rev. John Maguire, D.D., who

\* I am indebted to the late Very Rev. J. E. Canon MacKenna, P.P., M.R.I.A., of Dromore, Co. Tyrone, the learned compiler of the History of Devenish, for some notes on the Maguires. Canon MacKenna, who was a distinguished historian and the leading authority on everything pertaining to his native Diocese of Clogher, passed away suddenly on October 8, 1931.

(Ar Láimh Ueip Né 50 páib a anam.)



afterwards became P.P. of Manorhamilton, and in this way the Maguire chalice, as it is usually called, once more returned to Kilmore Diocese. Dr. Peter Maguire, who was for many years its custodian in Enniskillen, died at Bundoran and his body was brought to Devenish, where it rests in the Maguire mausoleum.

A portrait of Bishop Maguire is in St. Patrick's College, Cavan. An inscribed silver drinking goblet which belonged to him—evidently a presentation—is also kept there.

The bishop's Will, dated May 20th, 1798, affords much information regarding his relatives. It is signed "R. C. Bishop of Kilmore," indicating that the necessity in such documents for the suppression of his episcopal status no longer existed.

*Will of Dr. Denis Maguire.\**

In the Name of God. Amen.

Being perfectly sound in mind, and tolerably well in body, to guard against a surprise, death being certain and the hour unknown, I make this my last will and testament, and dispose of all my worldly substance in the following manner.

1. I order my body to be interred in Devenish along with those of my brothers Bryan and James; and I order that a decent tombstone, not a very expensive one, be placed over me, and that moderate expense be made at my funeral. No spirituous liquor. N. B.

2. I bequeath to my Nephew, Denis, Philip's son, one hundred pounds of the money deposited in Philip's hands; and I likewise leave him one half of the profit rent arising from Mr. James Caldwell's lease of the tenements in town and chapel-park. Note that I am joint leasee in said holding.

\* From Wills of the Diocese of Clogher in the Public Record Office. Dublin: *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, p. 187.

3. In case Philip's wife should survive him I leave her six pounds yearly during her natural life, of one hundred pounds in Mr. Jason Hassard's hands in perpetuity\* ; but if she dies before Philip, said six pounds to be the property of my niece Ann, during her life, and, after her death, to my niece Alice Quinlan, and after her demise to young Denis, my grand-nephew. I mean Alice's son.

4. I leave six pounds yearly, the interest of one hundred pounds in the hands of Mr. Jason Hassard in perpetuity to my brother John during his natural life ; and after his death to my niece Mary MacHugh, otherwise Maguire, for two years ; and after the expiration of the said term, said six pounds to be divided between Bryan Maguire, my nephew, and my grand-nephew, Andy's son ; I mean Andy's son, *John*.

5. Should my dear nephew Captain Denis come to the country soon after my demise, I leave him my horses, saddles, etc.

6. I leave all my books, Latin, French and English, in charge of my nephew, Denis, as it may happen that some of my relatives may get a call to the Church, I desire the Lives of the Saints by Alban Butler to be always preserved in the family.

Should Mr. Hassard choose at any period to return the two hundred pounds, I order said money to be equally divided amongst the Descendants male and female (I mean immediate Descendants) of my Brothers Bryan and Philip, excluding at the same time Bryan's two sons Hugh and Oliver, and Tery, Philip's son, from any dividend of said money. This is for the present my will ; And for the executors to it, I nominate and appoint my brother Philip and my nephew, Denis, his son. Written under my hand this 20th day of May, 1798.

DENIS MAGUIRE,

R. C. Bp. of Kilmore.

\* The Irish Banking System had not then been established and, in many places, private individuals conducted banks on a small scale.

For an account of this family see the late Dean Swanzy's *The Family of Hassard* (Dublin, 1903).



I order my three mohogany tables, six mohogany chairs and the large pier [?] glass, my property, to be sold by auction and the price given to the poor of the parish of Killasser [Killesher].

DENIS MAGUIRE.

1799, January 3rd, on which day Philip Maguire and Denis Maguire, Executors named in the foregoing will, made oath as well to his [*recte* their] belief of the truth thereof as also duly to execute the same.

Endorsed :—Will : Denis Maguire, R. C. Bp. of Kilmore, Dat. 20th May, 1798. Pro. 3rd Jan. 1799.

#### CHARLES O'REILLY (1798–1800)

Dr. Charles O'Reilly succeeded to plenary jurisdiction on December 23rd, 1798. He made Drumgoon his mensal parish and the site of his house, a few miles from Cootehill, is still pointed out.

Dr. O'Reilly was a native of the parish of Drumgoon, where he was born in or about the year 1750. His father, Owen O'Reilly, was a prosperous farmer there and his mother's name was Brady, from the adjoining parish of Kildrumsherdan.

The O'Reillys of Drumgoon, to which family he belonged, were a well known Breiffne family, which even in the Penal times held aloft the standard of a sturdy Catholicism and gave many priests to Kilmore. The main branch of the family resided in the townland of Crann; their tombs are in the graveyard of Kildrumsherdan. Owen O'Reilly was married, secondly, to Abigail Davis and their children are mentioned in the bishop's *Will*. From the same source we learn that the bishop had a brother named Farrell, and a sister Margaret (Mrs. Brady), the latter living at Carrigallen, County Leitrim.

Having received his education abroad he returned to Ireland and laboured for some years as curate in

his native parish of Drumgoon. In 1793 he was appointed Coadjutor to Dr. Maguire, and on the death of the latter succeeded to the bishopric. He made Drumgoon his *sedes episcopalis* and was the first Bishop of Kilmore since the early sixteenth century to have a settled home in the diocese.

Bishop O'Reilly's episcopate was a brief one, only a year and three months. He died at Cootehill on March 5th, 1800, and was buried, at his own request, with his relatives in the cemetery of Kildrumsherdan. A handsome raised tomb, covered with a massive slab, displaying the O'Reilly Coat of Arms and carrying a Latin inscription, marks his grave to the right of the path leading from the main entrance. The inscription (five lines) reads as follows:—

Hoc Monumentum Erectum fuit in memoriam Illustrissimi D.D. Caroli O'Reilly Episcopi Catholici Kilmorensis qui in Domino obdormivit Die quinto Martii 1800 Anno Aetatis Quinquagesimo. Requiescat in pace.

The following is the text of the bishop's *Will*, dated February 17th, 1800; it was preserved among the Kilmore Wills in the Public Record Office, Dublin.\*

In the name of God. Amen.

I, Charles Reilly, Roman Catholic Bishop of Kilmore, now residing in Cootehill in the parish of Drumgoon & County of Cavan, being weak in body but of sound memory & judgment, do make this my last will & testament, hereby revoking & annulling any will or testament that I might have made at any other time.

1. I order my body to be decently interr'd in the churchyard of the parish of Kilsherdenny in the grave wherein repose the remains of the Rev. Bryan Reilly commonly known by the name of Bryan McFarrel.

\* *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. i, p. 189.



2. I order a decent tombstone to be placed over me with my coat of arms engraved on it & a suitable inscription; said tombstone to be rais'd from the ground about three feet with solid mason work. I likewise order that the tombstone of Miss Reilly, formerly of Drumgoon, be raised in the same manner.

3. I order all my lawful debts and funeral expences to be immediately discharg'd.

4. I bequeath to the children of my father Owen Reilly by Abigail Davis, to wit, to John, to Thomas, to Philip, to Owen, to Elizabeth Reilly's the sum of five shillings and five pence each.

5. I bequeath to the poor of the parish of Drumgoon twenty pounds sterling.

6. I bequeath to my uncle Bryan Brady of Cornebehy\* five pounds & five pounds to my aunt Anne Monaghan alias Brady.

7. I bequeath to my nephew Charles Reilly son of Farrel Reilly forty pounds sterling with my Pinchback watch, shirts & wearing apparel. To my niece Margaret Reilly daughter to said Farrel Reilly I bequeath twenty pounds sterling & to my niece Anne Reilly daughter likewise to said Farrel Reilly twenty pounds sterling, to my niece Elizabeth Reilly daughter to said Farrel five pounds sterling.

The residue or remainder of my worldly substance I bequeath to my well beloved sister now living in Carrigallen in the County of Leitrim & to her children. Said residue or remainder to be equally divided between my said sister Margaret Brady alias Reilly & her children.

I nominate, constitute, & appoint the Revd. Charles MacKiernan, parish priest of Kilsherdenny & my said sister Margaret Brady alias Reilly executors to this my last will & testament. Written entirely by me the above-mentioned Charles Reilly, Roman Catholic Bishop of Kilmore, & signed this seventeenth

\* A townland in Kildrumsherdan Parish.

day of February in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred.

CHARLES REILLY.

Present: Charles MacKiernan, Luke Masterson,\* Peter Reilly.

The above Margaret Brady *alias* Reilly one of the executors herein named was sworn truly to administer the same the 18th of March, 1800, before me.

JAMES COTTINGHAM, V.G.

Endorsement—*Rev. Charles Reilly's will, proved 18th March, 1800.*

An ashtree growing up alongside the bishop's tomb had caused considerable damage to the structure and quite recently, in July 1931, the priests of the parish, with commendable zeal, had the tree removed and the tomb neatly restored.

In the same tomb rests the Rev. Bryan Reilly, mentioned in the bishop's *Will*. He was a relative of the bishop, and a worthy priest of the diocese in the dread days of Queen Anne. In 1704 he was registered at Cavan as P.P. of "Killyserdin" (Kildrumsherdan), and was then aged 65. Ordained in 1671 at Rossmagh, County Louth, by Primate Plunket, he had his residence in the townland of Cornenernew (Cornanurney). In 1715 he figures among the Cavan priests who refused to subscribe to the infamous Oath of Abjuration. His sureties in 1704 were John Reilly of Corloghan and Owen Reilly of Moher. In 1715 his sureties were Edward Lernan (*recte* Kiernan) of Cavan and Johes Donegan of Cavan.

After a strenuous life he died on July 31st, 1722, at the ripe old age of 84. His tombstone, a horizontal

\* Then P.P. Knockbride.



slab, which displays a chalice and missal, has the following inscription :—

HERE LYETH THE BODY OF  
THE REV. BRYAN REILY WHO DIED  
JULY 31, 1722, AGED 84.

The bishop's slab had been superimposed on the older slab until both were temporarily removed during the recent restoration of the tomb. The inscription on Father Bryan Reilly's monument was then once more exposed to view.

Alongside the bishop's tomb is another raised tomb, at present in a broken and dilapidated condition, where rests another well remembered Kilmore priest, Rev. Charles MacKiernan, P.P., Kildrumsherdan. Father MacKiernan was a close personal friend of the bishop and one of the executors of his Will. The inscription, which is now partly chipped off and not entirely legible, is as follows :—

Hoc monumentum erectum in memoriam  
R. D. Caroli Mac K . . . in vicarii Kilmorensis  
Pastoris De Kill . . . qui in Domino obdor-  
mivit . . . anno aetatis sexi  
gesimo.

Some of the monuments of the O'Reillys of Craín carry lengthy inscriptions recording the *obits* of many of the bishop's relatives. The area reserved for the burial place of this family is to the right of the path leading to the old church, and in this area the tombs, just described, are situated. Of the old parish church only traces of the foundations now survive.

## CHAPTER XXIII

BISHOPS OF KILMORE DURING THE NINETEENTH  
CENTURY

JAMES DILLON, FARRELL O'REILLY, JAMES BROWNE,  
NICHOLAS CONATY, BERNARD FINEGAN, EDWARD  
MACGENNIS.

## JAMES DILLON (1800-1806)

Dr. James Dillon was a native of the Diocese of Armagh, where he was born in 1738. Having served for many years as a priest in his native diocese he was appointed, in 1796, Bishop of Nilopoli *in partibus* and Coadjutor of Raphoe, his consecration taking place on May 22nd of the same year, the consecrating prelate being the Most Rev. Dr. Richard O'Reilly, Primate of Armagh, in the presence of the other bishops of the province.

At this time there arose the celebrated question of the Veto, which agitated the country for years. After the ill-fated insurrection of 1798 the forces of bigotry and oppression were let loose throughout the land and constitutional action became powerless as a remedy against oppression. At this dark hour the English government of the day propounded a subtle but nefarious scheme. The English King was to be given a veto on the appointment of Catholic bishops and in return the government promised a relaxation of the Penal laws and certain grants to the Catholic clergy. The arch-conspirator who held out this bribe to a conquered country (as he thought) was no less a personage than the infamous Castlereagh. In January, 1799, the Irish bishops met in Dublin to consider the proposals from the government "of an independent provision



for the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland, under certain regulations not incompatible with their doctrines, discipline, or just influence." At first some of the Irish bishops, anxious for peace and not fully comprehending the depths of Castlereagh's cunning and malignant scheme, were inclined to consider the proposals but postponing any promise of acceptance pending the sanction of the Holy See. Prolonged discussions followed, and for some years there existed much divergence of opinion regarding the Veto. The whole weight of Irish Catholic opinion was definitely opposed to its acceptance. Finally, on September 11th, 1808, the Irish Hierarchy met in Dublin, fully discussed the merits and demerits of the scheme, and rejected it. Thus was disposed of for ever one of the most insidious and audacious schemes ever planned for the subversion of Catholicism in Ireland. The arch-conspirator himself was lashed into fury by the uncompromising attitude of the Irish bishops, supported by the solid mass of the people, who displayed their contempt for his interference in Irish ecclesiastical government. Continuing to formulate his schemes for the uprooting of Irish Catholicism he only witnessed the failure of his efforts, which did not cease until some years later he sank into a suicide's grave.

On the death of Bishop Charles O'Reilly there was an unusual and unexpected development in the diocese. The Secretary of State and other Protestants prepared to make application to have the bishopric given to a priest of their own choice. The priest who was the nominee of the Secretary of State was a Father Denis O'Beirne, a native of County Longford, in Ardagh Diocese. It is no reflection on the undoubted worthiness of Father O'Beirne (who was an alumnus of the Irish College of the Lombards, Paris) to say that the Irish bishops warmly resented this arrogant attempt at Protestant nomination and that it would receive no

recognition at Rome. For another reason the presentation of Father O'Beirne was particularly objectionable, and this will explain the sinister motives underlying the plot. Father O'Beirne was a brother of Dr. Thomas Lewis O'Beirne who, early in life, had apostatised and later on became the Protestant Bishop of Meath. The two brothers had been students together in Paris, but Thomas was expelled from the college, as the authorities had received proofs of his unsuitability for the priesthood, and his subsequent career proved that his superiors had made no mistake.\* While Father Denis O'Beirne was a good and worthy priest it must be conceded that his appointment to a bishopric could only have one effect, viz., to throw discredit on the Church. The scheme fostered by Castlereagh failed, but it gives a good insight into the psychology of the prime movers of the poisonous Veto.

The Primate recommended Dr. Dillon for the vacancy and asked Propaganda to make the appointment. Accordingly, on August 10th, 1800, Dr. Dillon was translated to the Bishopric of Kilmore.

While the question of the Veto was still under discussion Lord Castlereagh, in 1800, had a number of "Queries" forwarded to the Irish bishops (through Dr. Troy of Dublin) requesting information as to the number of parish priests and curates in each diocese, whether Regulars or Seculars, their incomes, number of monastic institutions, and sundry other details. Bishop Dillon's reply, returned early in 1801, is of interest now, as it preserves for us the names of the Kilmore clergy in that year.† The document is as follows (S = Secular) :—

Moybolge	.	.	Rev. John Reilly (S.).
Mullagh	.	.	Rev. Felix MacCabe (S.).

\* Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*, vol. ii, pp. 185 *et seq.*

† *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. iv., p. 118. The orthography of the original being somewhat imperfect I give the Parish titles in usual forms.



Killinkere	.	.	Rev. John Smith (S.).
Lurgan	.	.	Rev. Francis Reilly (S.).
Do.	.	.	Rev. T. Reilly, Curate.
Castlerahan	.	.	Rev. Daniel Reilly.
Do.	.	.	Rev. J. Brady, Curate.
Knockbride	.	.	Rev. Luke Masterson.
Do.	.	.	Rev. J. Reilly, Curate.
Drumgoon	.	.	Rev. P. Brady, Curate.
Killdrumsherdan	.	.	Rev. Chas. MacKiernan.
Do.	.	.	Rev. Bryan MacMahon.
Laragh	.	.	Rev. Michael Smith.
Do.	.	.	Rev. Edward MacCormick.
Lavey	.	.	Rev. Peter Smith.
Denn	.	.	Rev. John Brady.
Crosserlough	.	.	Rev. B. Lynch, Curate.
Ballintemple	.	.	Rev. Philip Reilly.
Kilmore	.	.	Rev. Michael Reilly.
Cavan	.	.	Rev. Thomas Brady.
Do.	.	.	Rev. P. Donoghue, Curate.
Ballyhaise	.	.	Rev. Francis MacKiernan.
Annagh (Upper)	.	.	Rev. H. Fitzsimons.
Drung	.	.	Rev. M. Reilly, Curate.
Oughteragh	.	.	Rev. Francis MacGrath.
Do.	.	.	Rev. John O'Rourke.
Drumreilly (Upper)	.	.	Rev. Hugh O'Reilly.
Do. (Lower)	.	.	Rev. Laurence O'Dolan.
Templeport	.	.	Rev. Patrick MacGuire.
Do.	.	.	Rev. Bryan MacGorin, Curate.
Carrigallen	.	.	Rev. John Kiernan.
Do.	.	.	Rev. P. Smith, Curate.
Killeshandra	.	.	Rev. Edm. O'Reilly.
Kildallan	.	.	Rev. James Fitzpatrick.
Drumlane	.	.	Rev. Farrell O'Reilly.
Do.	.	.	Rev. J. Reilly, Curate.
Annagh (Lower)	.	.	Rev. Owen O'Reilly.
Knockninny	.	.	Rev. Michael Wynne.
Kinawley	.	.	Rev. Owen Reilly.
Killesher	.	.	Rev. James MacGowran.
Cloonclare	.	.	Rev. Francis MacGuire.
Killinagh	.	.	Rev. Maurice Cassidy.

Glangevlin	.	Rev. John MacGuire.
Ballynagleragh	.	Rev. Ambrose Cassidy.
Inismagrath	.	Rev. James Ford.
Killargue	.	Rev. James MacGuerty.
Drumlease	.	Rev. James MacGowan, Curate.
Killasnet	.	Rev. Patrick MacGowan.
Rossinver	.	Rev. Bryan Clancy.
Ballaghmeehan	.	Rev. Charles Ferguson.
Regular	.	Rev. Hugh O'Dolan.
Regular	.	Rev. Patrick Ward.

The average income of the Roman Catholic Bishop, Dr. James Dillon, arising from the casual collections made by his clergy, amounts per annum to one hundred and forty guineas; average income of the Parish Priests of the Diocese of Kilmore, from forty to eighty guineas per annum. Annuity of the curates depends on the beneficence of their respective Parish Priests.

N.B.—All the Regulars in the Diocese of Kilmore are Franciscans.

From the above list, where only four parish priests are entered as Seculars, it will be seen that practically all the Kilmore priests were Franciscans. Dr. Dillon was an uncompromising opponent of the Veto and although he did not live to see it finally smashed yet he was one of those responsible for its defeat. He was a close friend of Bishop Patrick Joseph Plunket of Meath, and in the diaries of the latter we read of his meeting with Dr. Dillon at Mullagh, or Moynalty, when on visitation the bishops happened to be near the borders of their respective dioceses.

Dr. Dillon's episcopate was a short one—only six years. When appointed to the diocese he took up his residence at Church Street, Ballyconnell, in the parish of Tomregan, and died there in 1806. The oldest parochial records for Tomregan date only from 1867, and further particulars are, at present, not available.



## FARRELL O'REILLY (1806-1829)

Rev. Farrell O'Reilly, P.P., Drumlane, succeeded. He was elected to the vacant bishopric on October 4th, 1806, and his appointment confirmed by Pope Pius VII on December 14th of the same year. On August 24th, 1807, he was consecrated by the Primate.

Bishop O'Reilly was a native of the Parish of Moybolge, where he was born in, or about, the year 1741. He was the son of Terence O'Reilly and Honora O'Reilly, *alias* Clarke. His father owned a small farm and his mother belonged to a well known family which then owned considerable property around Moybolge. Regarding the exact locality in which the bishop was born I find, after local inquiry, that it was in the neighbourhood of the old church of Moybolge, and most likely in the townland of Srahan, where members of the family to which he belonged still reside. The evidence for this is very convincing and may be briefly summarised. There was a persistent local tradition (remembered by the older people) that the bishop, while performing his visitations in the old church of Tievurcher (which occupied the site of the present church), always referred to this as his native parish. On one occasion the bishop, after administering Confirmation in the church, was heard to tell some of his local acquaintances that he would take a walk up the hill and visit the place of his birth.\* A nephew of one of the men who heard this from the bishop himself is still surviving and vouches for the accuracy of the statement. In the neighbouring graveyard of Moybolge rest the bishop's parents and relatives, and there also, after a long and strenuous life, he himself was interred. His brother, Rev. Francis O'Reilly, who

\* Many priests of the O'Reilly family of Srahan ministered in U.S.A. in the last century and were highly respected. Others were attached to Kilmore and some of their tombs are in Moybolge.

was P.P. of Lurgan from 1774 to 1808, rests in the same grave. A massive horizontal slab marks their grave. From the inscription, which will be given later on, we learn that his father, his two brothers, Bryan and Owen, and evidently his mother also, all died in the same year, 1775. This remarkable fact points to one obvious conclusion: that they were the victims of one of the many plagues—the concomitants of famine and persecution—which swept over Ireland during the eighteenth century.

Of the early years of Bishop O'Reilly's life, spent amid the gloom of the Penal times, we have no record. Ordained about 1766 in some college on the Continent (probably Louvain) he returned to Kilmore where he officiated in several parishes in the southern part of the diocese for many years. Appointed P.P. of Drumlane he laboured in that parish until appointed to the bishopric.

Bishop O'Reilly was an excellent preacher, both in Gaelic and English, and as during his episcopate Gaelic was still the everyday language of the people, his catechetical examinations were usually conducted through the medium of the native tongue. It has been stated that he was the author of a Gaelic *Catechism* (*Teagasg Criostuidhe*); furthermore, a copy of the *Teagasg Criostuidhe*, edited in 1863 by William Williams, of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, for the Keating Society, and which may be seen in the National Library, Dublin, is said to be based on the work of "Dr. Farrell O'Reilly, Bishop of Kilmore." Again, in the Catalogue of the British Museum, London, and also in that of the Cambridge University Library, I find a similar entry. However, I am convinced that these entries are erroneous and that the reference is to the work of Dr. *Michael* O'Reilly, P.P., V.G., Cavan, and afterwards Archbishop of Armagh. I have already referred to this Gaelic *Catechism* when discussing the career



of Dr. Michael O'Reilly. There is no evidence, as far as I can discover, in support of the entry in the British Museum Catalogue attributing the authorship to Bishop *Farrell* O'Reilly, nor can any authority be produced in support of it. It is most likely that the compiler of the Bradshaw Collection at Cambridge merely followed the lead of the British Museum cataloguer. The copies of the *Teagasg Criostuidhe* in London and Cambridge are based on Dr. *Michael* O'Reilly's classic work; hence the compiler of the catalogue must have confused the names. The Preface to the 1863 edition of the *Teagasg Criostuidhe* clears up the point and leaves little room for doubt. During the years of Bishop Farrell's episcopate the work of Dr. Michael was then universally used in Ulster and there would have been scarcely any need to supersede it. After exhaustive inquiries I cannot find any tradition in Kilmore of Bishop Farrell having written a *Catechism*, although his powers as a linguist live in popular tradition. Such a work if published would have left some traces and I have searched in vain for a copy; hence I may state definitely that the entry in the various catalogues is merely a cataloguer's error. The fact that Bishop Farrell was a good Gaelic scholar would have given rise to the belief that he wrote the *Teagasg Criostuidhe*. Of course, in his time Gaelic was the spoken language of the people (although many of the records and monumental inscriptions of the period are in Latin) and its channels, rich in idiom and vocabulary, afforded the most natural mode of religious expression.

In 1818 Bishop O'Reilly, feeling unequal to the strain of his episcopal duties, applied for a Coadjutor, and Rev. Patrick Maguire, O.F.M., parish priest of Templeport, was appointed as such on November 23rd of the same year under the title of Bishop of *Sozopolitanus*. Dr. Maguire was uncle of the famous controversialist,

Father Thomas Maguire,\* popularly known as Father Tom, whose signal and decisive victories over the arrogant and contentious fanatics of the day were so loudly and deservedly applauded by our forefathers in Kilmore. Bishop Maguire died on April 25th, 1826, and Rev. Dr. James Browne, who had been a Maynooth Professor, was appointed Coadjutor on March 4th, 1827, his consecration taking place on June 10th of the same year.

Bishop O'Reilly died at Bailieboro', while on visitation,

\* Father Maguire was a native of Co. Fermanagh, where he was born, in the Parish of Kinawley, in 1792. He attended a classical school in Ballyconnell and then went to Maynooth, where after a brilliant course he was ordained in 1816. After serving for some years in the Parish of Innismagrath he was appointed P.P. of Oughteragh (Ballinamore) where he laboured until his death. His first theological duel was in 1827, when on a public platform in Dublin he was pitted against a Protestant clergyman, Rev. Richard T. V. Pope. In accordance with the custom of the time the discussion was in a public hall. Father Maguire easily vanquished his opponent, and a report of the discussion was afterwards issued in pamphlet form. Eleven years later, in 1838, another contest took place, when Father Maguire was arrayed against Rev. Tresham Dames Gregg, D.D., one of the most formidable Protestant controversialists of the time. Before a large and critical audience in the Rotunda, Dublin, this battle of the giants waged for nine days. Dr. Gregg was a man of wide reading, an able debater, and the most redoubtable champion which Protestantism could produce. One by one Father Maguire examined his arguments and with relentless logic demolished them. Beaten on the fields of Sacred History Dr. Gregg took his final stand by the arguments from Sacred Scripture, where again Father Maguire proved how untenable was the position which Dr. Gregg tried to maintain. The controversy came to a close on the ninth day; Father Maguire's victory was a signal one and on his arrival home he was accorded a magnificent reception. His triumph of 1838 silenced religious controversy for some time. He possessed a keen sense of humour and his ready wit enlivened many a dull hour. These controversies, issued in pamphlet form, had a very wide circulation, and Father Maguire's clear and forceful arguments, couched in the simplest and most convincing form, while displaying a profound knowledge of Sacred Scripture and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, constituted these booklets veritable reference books for those who afterwards entered the spheres of religious controversy.

Father Maguire was thoroughly hated by the fanatics of the time and there is a belief, which is substantiated by reports in contemporary periodicals, that he was poisoned by his housekeeper, who had been bribed to do so. At the early age of 55 he passed away on December 2, 1847, and a handsome monumental Cross marks his grave beside the church of Kilnavart in Templeport Parish. The inscription proclaims that his "profound knowledge of controversial theology is known to the whole world." It is to be regretted that no biography of this great Kilmore theologian has been compiled.



on April 30th, 1829, at the advanced age of 88, and was buried with his relatives in St. Patrick's Churchyard, Moybolge. In a small walled-in enclosure at the east end of the ruined church, and on the spot where for so many centuries stood the magnificent High Altar of this venerable sanctuary, may be seen his tombstone, resting on four small pillars. It carries the following inscription :—

This Monument was erected by the Rev. Francis Reilly Pastor of Lurgan and the Rev. Farrell Reilly Pastor of Drumlane in memory of their father Terence Reilly who departed this life the 10th July 1775 and of their mother Honora Reilly, alias Clarke, also in memory of their brothers Bryan and Owen who died also in the year 1775.

R. I. P.

The remains of the above Rev. Francis Reilly who died in the year 1808 aged 72 years and also of the above Rev. Farrell Reilly who was Bishop of Kilmore for 20 years and died in the year 1829 aged 88 years are laid in this tomb.

Requiescant in Pace.

In the same enclosure and alongside the bishop's monument is another horizontal slab marking the grave of Very Rev. Patrick O'Reilly, P.P., Cavan, and V.G. of Kilmore, who was a cousin of the bishop and also belonged to the neighbourhood of Moybolge. The inscription reads :—

This tomb was erected by the Very Rev. Patk. O'Reilly, P.P. of Cavan, in memory of his parents, Philip O'Reilly and Judith, alias MacDonnell, and also in memory of his sister Mary, alias McDermott, and her two children, Rev. Patk. McDermott, and

Judith O'Reilly, alias MacDermott, all of whom died young.

Dated May 1st, 1839.

The remains of the above Very Rev. Patk. O'Reilly lie here also, who died in the year 1843, aged 78 years, being then P.P. of Cavan and V.G. of Kilmore for 30 years.

In the surrounding cemetery are interred many other distinguished priests of the diocese.

### JAMES BROWNE (1829-1865)

Dr. James Browne automatically succeeded to the vacant See on April 30th, 1829. This truly great and remarkable man was a native of the Diocese of Ferns, where he was born, in 1786, in the Parish of Mayglass and Barony of Forth. He was the son of John Browne and Eleanor Rochfort, and was thus descended from two of the most notable of the ancient Norman families who had settled in County Wexford in the twelfth century.

The family of Le Brun, anglicised Browne, settled first at Mulrankin, where the remains of their castle still stands. In the thirteenth century they built Rathronan Castle and up to the seventeenth century, as the family spread, built several other castles throughout County Wexford. This was one of the conditions of a grant of land in feudal times. The family of Browne took a prominent part in the great Irish Revolution of 1641, and in the Cromwellian confiscations which followed they lost all their property in County Wexford and elsewhere. In the eighteenth century Rathronan Castle and lands were bought back by the family and is the only part of the ancient property now in their possession. The family to which the bishop's mother belonged was also of ancient and



honourable descent. The de Rochforts had their principal castle at Tagunнан, in the Parish of Mayglass. They, too, were distinguished for their firm adherence to the Faith of their fathers and lost all their property in the Cromwellian confiscations. John de Rochfort, having gone to the Continent to seek aid for the Catholic cause, died in Flánders with Bishop French of Ferns, then in exile.

Both the Browne and Rochfort families gave members to the Church for centuries. One was the Rev. Nicholas Rochfort, who was associated with Lord Baltinglass in his unsuccessful insurrection during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Both spent some time in hiding in Mulrankin Castle before escaping to the Continent. Another member of the family, Father Rochfort, O.F.M., was among those murdered by Cromwell's hordes in Wexford town.

The Attainder List of 1691 contains the name of Patrick Browne, of Mulrankin, County Wexford. The bishop's grandfather, Patrick, who was third in descent from this Patrick Browne, the last of his race to own Mulrankin Castle, lived at Harpourestown, in the Parish of Mulrankin, and married a lady named Devereux, who belonged to another famous Norman family long settled in County Wexford. Patrick Browne died April 16th, 1791, aged 74. His fourth son, John, lived at Bigbarn, in the Parish of Mayglass, and died January 18th, 1836, at the age of 87. This John Browne was married to Eleanor Rochfort, who died May 3rd, 1802, aged 52. Their eldest son, Thomas, died March 19th, 1792, aged 14, and their second and only surviving son, James, born 1786, was the future Bishop of Kilmore. The bishop's only sister, Alice, married John Nolan and lived at her father's place, Bigbarn, where she died January 19th, 1860, at the age of 64. Their only children, John and Alice Nolan,

died unmarried, and so the bishop's line became extinct.\*

In the closing years of the eighteenth century the Franciscans had a Classical Academy in Peter Street, Wexford, of which Father Patrick Lambert (who, in 1806, became Bishop of Newfoundland) was President. At this Academy James Browne appears to have received his early education. As a boy he witnessed the horrors of 1798, when the Revolution was crushed in Wexford, and the people were massacred in hundreds. The terrible scenes then enacted in Wexford town must have left an indelible impression on his memory. He entered Maynooth in 1806 and was ordained in 1813. After his ordination he acted as C.C. of Newtownbarry, in North Wexford, for less than two years, when he was recalled to Maynooth in August, 1814, and appointed Junior Dean. His mission in Newtownbarry was a hazardous one, as that town was then a centre of rabid Orange fanaticism, where the anti-Catholic fires of 1798 were still smouldering, and more than one attempt was made to murder him. At Maynooth his career was a brilliant one. Having successively filled the Chairs of Sacred Scripture (1816) and of Hebrew (1818) he continued at Maynooth until 1827, when appointed to Kilmore as Coadjutor to Dr. Farrell O'Reilly.

On his arrival in Kilmore, in the summer of 1827, he selected the Parish of Drumgoon as his mensal parish, and for some years afterwards lived in Market Street, Cootehill. In 1843 he transferred the *Sedes Episcopalis* to Cavan town—the united parishes of Urney and Annaghgelliffe—and was the first bishop, as far as we can gather from our historical records, to live in Cavan since early times, when some Franciscans

\* I must acknowledge my indebtedness to Senator Miss K. A. Browne, of Rathronan Castle, Co. Wexford, for extracts from the family records. Her grandfather, John Browne, who died in 1877, was the Bishop's second cousin. A fine painting of the Bishop is preserved at Bigbarn.



belonging to St. Mary's Abbey were promoted to the bishopric.

Bishop Browne was a zealous worker and we have many records of his pastoral activities. Soon after his arrival in Kilmore the forces of proselytism were marshalled and, supported by tyranny, money and influence, a determined onslaught was made to uproot the ancient Faith. Land and money were promised to all who would pervert and furthermore, the dire threat of eviction was held over all who refused. That these threats were no empty ones is clear from subsequent evictions. In 1831 and 1832 Protestant Bible Societies were established throughout the diocese, public meetings under distinguished patronage were held, calling on the Catholics to join the Established Church and "abandon superstition," and pamphlets of a scurrilous type freely distributed. Many volumes might be written on the methods adopted to further the "Second Reformation," as it was called, throughout Kilmore Diocese. Then the Great Starvation (or Famine—"a famine in the midst of plenty") of 1847 gave the proselytisers new opportunities and they hoped to garner a rich harvest. Soup-kitchens were established to feed the starving people—but only those who were prepared to apostatise. The older generation who remember those terrible times recount many stirring episodes of the fight maintained by the people against terrible odds. Apostates were brought from distant parts and addressed the people at fairs and markets. The people usually gave chase to these renegades, who were forced to seek the protection of the law. In doggerel verse the apostates were lampooned, and the "Second Reformation" was a dismal failure. Claims regarding the large numbers of "converts" were forwarded to the English newspapers, but those "converts" were purely imaginary, for English consumption. It is true that there were

occasional lapses. While the threat of starvation and eviction was hanging over them a very small number of people feigned adherence to Protestantism—the "landlord's religion"—but nearly all of these were afterwards reconciled to the Church. The leaders of the "Second Reformation" had a redoubtable antagonist in Dr. Browne, and when the Famine years had passed away the gains of proselytism proved to be few and unsubstantial.

The present Presbytery of Cavan was purchased by Dr. Browne in 1838. The need for a Diocesan Seminary was a pressing one, and in 1839 St. Augustine's Seminary was opened. Schools were urgently needed. The proselytising institutions directed from Kildare Street, Dublin (and euphemistically called "National") were primarily established by Whateley and his underlings to undermine Catholicism and it behoved Dr. Browne to guard Catholic interests in these schools. Supported by loyal Catholic teachers the efforts of Dr. Browne were crowned with success and the attempts to foist on the schools spurious editions of the Scriptures and text-books of a degrading and denationalising character proved a complete failure. Catholic education again triumphed but the fight was a prolonged one. As late as the year 1890 we find a case in the diocese where a Protestant landlord refused the site for a Catholic school until compelled by the Privy Council to furnish a site.\*

The churches were also in a poor condition and were mostly mud wall structures which had been erected in the shadow of the Penal times. The erection of new churches was an urgent necessity but the difficulties were many. The people were poor and out of their poverty were compelled to pay exorbitant rents to

\* This occurred in the parish of Killinkere during the pastorate of Rev. Bernard MacCabe (1888-1902). The site for the school at Lisnagirl was secured after lengthy legal proceedings.



absentee landlords. "Ground to powder by the exactions of relentless landlords" was the description given by a legal luminary of the day. Again, there was always the difficulty of obtaining a suitable site; for the lord of the soil would refuse to allow the erection of a church except, perhaps, on some waste or boggy land. Hence we find that many of the churches erected in the early nineteenth century had to be built alongside swamps or on rocky hillsides. Dr. Browne initiated a scheme of church building and most of the splendid edifices which now adorn our diocese were erected during the fruitful years of his episcopate.

During the thirty-eight years of his rule over Kilmore he witnessed many direful cataclysms and afflictions. In the Spring of 1832 the deadly Asiatic cholera swept over the diocese and decimated the people.\* Seven years later, on the night of January 6th, 1839, the greatest storm of the nineteenth century—the *Big Wind*, as it is usually called—burst over the country and caused immense damage to property.† The terrors of that night have left an indelible impression on the memories of the last generation. In 1846–47 came the Great Starvation, when the partial failure of the potato-crop and the compulsory export of grain to pay exorbitant rents launched the country into the throes of an artificial famine. There was plenty of food in the country; although the potatoes failed there was abundance of grain, but it was exported and the people died in thousands. O'Connell foresaw the scarcity of food and called for the prevention of grain export; but his warnings were unheeded until too late. In Cavan and Leitrim the effects of the famine were very severe. The *Anglo-Celt* newspaper was founded in

\* In the Parish Register of Lurgan I find, under date May, 1832, the following entry: "Anno Cholero Morti."

† Another entry in the Lurgan Register under the year 1839 is as follows:—"January 6th and 7th—The night of the most destructive wind on record."

the early part of 1846, and its columns, in the years 1846-47, preserve the harrowing reports of starvation. An examination of the files of that newspaper (published weekly) for that period will bring home vividly to the reader the appalling condition of the people of Kilmore in "Black '47." After the famine came plague and emigration, followed by wholesale evictions and new Plantations. Encouraged by the terrible plight of the people and taking advantage of their misfortunes the forces of proselytism made a final rally, but an unsuccessful one, to shake the Faith of the people. Through all those critical periods the great Dr. Browne proved himself a heaven sent leader, to guide the people in their fight against the forces which threatened to destroy them. He kept a record of his visitations, which fortunately preserves the chief events of his episcopate. In some pedigree notes on the Browne family (compiled in 1896) the author, who was a cousin of the bishop and knew him well, says: "The bishop used generally to come home for a week or a fortnight in the summer. He was a kindly old man when I knew him in the early sixties, full of anecdotes of his early priesthood."\*

Bishop Browne died on April 11th, 1865, and was buried before the High Altar in Cavan Cathedral, where an inscribed slab marks his grave.†

#### NICHOLAS CONATY (1865-1886).

Dr. Nicholas Conaty was born in 1820 in the townland of Kilsallagh, in the Parish of Kilmore, and was

\* Communicated to me by Senator Miss K. A. Browne, whose father compiled these pedigree notes. On the death of John Nolan of Bigbarn (the Bishop's nephew) the family home at Bigbarn was purchased by the late Most Rev. James Browne, Bishop of Ferns (who died in 1917) a kinsman of the Bishop of Kilmore.

† It is a testimony to the great popular esteem in which Bishop Browne was held that the members of the older generation who had received Confirmation at his hands always recounted the fact with special pride. The father of the present writer was confirmed by him in Lurgan parish, and retained a vivid recollection of the bishop.



the son of John Conaty and Honora Brady. His father was a prosperous farmer. Receiving his early education at a local school he entered Maynooth, where he continued his studies for the priesthood and was ordained at Pentecost, 1848. In July of the same year he was appointed professor in the Diocesan Seminary of Cavan, where he remained until 1854, when, on the death of Rev. Terence O'Reilly, P.P., in September of that year, he was appointed P.P., V.F. of the Parish of Castlerahan and Munterconnacht. He was made Coadjutor to Dr. Browne on March 11th, 1863, his consecration taking place on May 24th of the same year. On the death of Dr. Browne he succeeded to plenary jurisdiction. Dr. Conaty assisted at the Vatican Council, 1869-70. A great educationist, he built St. Patrick's College, Cavan, and had it opened in 1874.\* In 1872 he introduced the Poor Clares into Ballyjamesduff; they had already been established in Cavan in 1861. He also introduced the Sisters of Mercy into the diocese. The efforts of Dr. Browne to provide the diocese with new and spacious churches were continued by Dr. Conaty and many of the modern churches were erected during his episcopate. When appointed Coadjutor he transferred the mensal parish from Crosserlough to Castlerahan and since then it has remained so.

His death took place on January 17th, 1886, and he was buried at his own request in the grounds of St. Patrick's College, Cavan, where an inscribed monument marks his grave.

#### BERNARD FINEGAN (1886-1887)

Dr. Bernard Finegan was born on August 15th, 1837, in the townland of Corlurgan, a few miles south-west of Cavan, in the Parish of Urney and Annaghgelliffe. He entered St. Augustine's Seminary, Cavan, in 1849,

\* The foundation stone was laid by Cardinal Cullen in January, 1871. The College was opened for the reception of students on the Feast of St. Gregory, March 12, 1874.

and passed to Maynooth in 1854. Ordained at Maynooth on September 1st, 1861, he was soon afterwards appointed Professor of Theology in St. Augustine's Seminary, in his native parish. For a short time he was C.C. in the Parish of Moybolge and Kilmahamwood, and later was C.C. of Lavey. In 1865 he returned to St. Augustine's Seminary as President. Funds were then being collected for the new College of St. Patrick's, which Most Rev. Dr. Conaty had projected, and in September, 1868, Dr. Finegan went to U.S.A., where he made an extensive and very successful tour, collected a large sum of money from among the Irish exiles in the great American cities, and returned home in the summer of 1870. He continued as President of St. Augustine's Seminary until January, 1878, when he was appointed P.P. of Kinawley, where he remained for two years. In March, 1880, he was transferred to Drumlane as P.P., and in 1882 was created Vicar-General. On the death of Most Rev. Dr. Conaty he was elected Vicar-Capitular, and on May 10th, 1886, was appointed to the bishopric. He was consecrated by Most Rev. Dr. Donnelly, Bishop of Clogher, on Pentecost Sunday, June 13th of the same year. The episcopate of Most Rev. Bernard Finegan was all too brief—less than a year and a half. He passed away at 8.30 a.m. on November 11th, 1887, and was interred beside Cavan Cathedral, where an inscribed tablet marks his grave.

#### EDWARD MACGENNIS (1888-1906)

Most Rev. Edward MacGennis was born March 25th, 1846, at Tullyvin, Parish of Kildrumsherdan, County Cavan, and pursued his ecclesiastical studies at Maynooth where he was ordained on June 23th, 1872. His first mission was Kilmore, to which he was assigned on August 26th, 1872. Appointed Professor of Theology at



St. Patrick's College, Cavan, on February 24th, 1875, he filled with distinction the professorial chair for ten years. In July, 1885, he was appointed C.C., Killesandra, and in May, 1886, was promoted to Drumlane as P.P. to replace Most Rev. Dr. Bernard Finegan. Dr. MacGennis was appointed Vicar-Capitular on November 15th, 1887, and Dignissimus on December 6th of the same year. He was appointed to the bishopric—informed by the Archbishop of Dublin—on February 3rd, 1888. On April 15th, 1888, he was consecrated by Cardinal Logue. He ruled over the diocese for eighteen years and passed away on May 15th, 1906. He was buried beside Cavan Cathedral.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## BISHOPS OF KILMORE IN THE PRESENT CENTURY.

ANDREW BOYLAN, C.SS.R., PATRICK FINEGAN.

ANDREW BOYLAN, C.SS.R. (1907-1910).

MOST REV. ANDREW BOYLAN, C.SS.R., was born in or about the year 1837 in the townland of Tonylion, Parish of Crosserlough and Kildrumfertan, County Cavan. He was baptised in the old parish church of Crosserlough, but the record of his baptism was lost in the fire which destroyed the church in the early eighties of the last century. He belonged to a well known Crosserlough family and was a relative of the late Rev. John Boylan, P.P., Crosserlough, the great pulpit orator. This Father Boylan was a very distinguished man, issued several pamphlets on the Irish Land Question, built the present magnificent parish church of Crosserlough, and on three occasions conducted successful lecture tours through U.S.A.; he died in 1899 at the age of 78.

Dr. Andrew Boylan was educated at St. Augustine's Seminary, Cavan, and ordained on March 31st, 1867. For some years afterwards he was attached to the professorial staff of St. Augustine's Seminary and later of St. Patrick's College. In the summer of 1875 he was appointed Assistant Bursar in Maynooth, and in 1883 became Bursar. He joined the Redemptorist Order in 1887, was twice Provincial, and laboured for some years in the Philippine Islands, where he displayed great missionary zeal and organised many new missionary centres. Recalled in 1907 he was appointed



to the vacant bishopric and consecrated in the Cathedral, Cavan, by Cardinal Logue on May 19th of the same year. Dr. Boylan is remembered as an effective preacher and a great organiser. At his hands the present writer received Confirmation. The episcopate of Dr. Boylan was a short one—less than three years. He died on Holy Thursday, March 25th, 1910, and rests alongside some of his predecessors at Cavan Cathedral. A mural tablet, with an inscription which he himself had directed a short time before his death,\* marks his grave.

MOST REV. PATRICK FINEGAN, D.D.

(Succeeded, 1910)

Most Rev. Patrick Finegan, D.D., was born in the townland of Corlurgan, Parish of Urney and Annaghgeliffe, on August 17th, 1858, and belongs to a family which has given some distinguished priests to the diocese.† His early education was received at the Christian Brothers' Schools, Cavan, and at St. Augustine's Seminary. Entering St. Patrick's College, Cavan, he studied Philosophy and Theology, and was ordained to the priesthood by Most Rev. Dr. Conaty, in Cavan Cathedral, on December 18th, 1881.

He was appointed C.C. in Belturbet, Parish of Annagh, where he remained until July, 1885, when he was recalled to St. Patrick's College, Cavan, where he was appointed Professor of Theology. In 1889 he was transferred to missionary work and served as C.C. in his native parish of Urney and Annaghgeliffe until September, 1890, when he went to Knockninny as C.C., remaining there until July, 1893, when he was

\* As I was informed by the late Very Rev. B. Gaffney, P.P., V.F., Lurgan, who was the Bishop's intimate friend.

† His uncle, Most Rev. Bernard Finegan, ruled over the diocese in 1886-1887.

transferred to Laragh as C.C. On March 1st, 1898, he was appointed Adm. of Urney and Annaghgelliffe, and on July 17th, 1902, was transferred to the Parish of Templeport as P.P., V.F. He was Vicar-Capitular in May, 1906, and was appointed Vicar-General by Most Rev. Dr. Boylan in April, 1907. In November, 1908, he was transferred to Oughteragh (Ballinamore) as P.P., V.G., and was again Vicar-Capitular—appointed on March 29th, 1909. He was elevated to the bishopric in the summer of 1910, his consecration taking place in Cavan Cathedral on September 11th of the same year. The consecrating prelate was Most Rev. Patrick O'Donnell (afterwards Cardinal Primate), Bishop of Raphoe, assisted by Most Rev. Joseph Hoare, Bishop of Ardagh, and Most Rev. Laurence Gaughran, Bishop of Meath. Most Rev. Charles MacHugh, Bishop of Derry, and Most Rev. Patrick MacKenna, Bishop of Clogher, were also present. Most Rev. Dr. Finegan still happily rules over the diocese.

The episcopate of Dr. Finegan has been productive of a great diocesan expansion, the fruits of which are manifest in every parish throughout the extensive diocese over which he rules. Some new churches have been erected, several restorations have been effected, and many new schools and convents have been established. New and spacious churches have been erected at Cootehill and Maudabawn, in the Parish of Drumgoon ; at Coronea and Arva, in the Parish of Killeshandra ; at Doobally, in the Parish of Killinagh, and at Killasnett. Among the many churches repaired, and dedicated, the following may be enumerated : Potahee, in the Parish of Ballintemple ; Carrigallen ; Maghera, in the Parish of Lurgan ; Newbridge, in the Parish of Inishmagrath ; Killann ; Tievurcher, in the Parish of Moybolge and Kilmainhamwood ; Lurgan parish church—the splendid new High Altar Memorial Window with the High Altar of which was presented by His Eminence Cardinal



O'Connell in memory of his parents, who belonged to the parish. Public oratories have been opened at Portlongfield, in the Parish of Killeshandra, and at Killargue.

Under the auspices of Dr. Finegan the following Religious Orders have been introduced into the diocese :

I. The Marist Brothers, St. Patrick's Juniorate (formerly Lisgar Castle), Bailieboro' : founded in 1915 from Dumfries, Scotland [transferred 1936].

II. The Canons Regular Premonstratensian, Priory of the Holy Trinity and St. Norbert, Kilnacrott, Parish of Crosserlough : founded in 1924 as a House of Studies for youths entering the Order.

III. The Missionary Convent of the Holy Rosary, Drum Mullac, Killeshandra : founded in March, 1924, for the training of Sisters for the evangelisation of Nigeria and other pagan territories of Africa.

IV. The Loreto College, Dromkeen, Cavan : founded in May, 1930, from Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin, as a Day and Boarding School for girls. This is the first Secondary School for girls established in the diocese.

V. The Missionary Convent of the Presentation Order : founded at Virginia, in May, 1933, for the reception of postulants and the training of novices for the work of the Presentation Order in the Punjab, North India.

VI. The Convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, Rossinver, Co. Leitrim : founded in 1934, from Graymoor, Garrison, New York.

#### THE NEW CATHEDRAL.

Preparations are being made for the erection of a new cathedral to replace the historic edifice at Kilmore, which has long since passed from Catholic hands. Recognising the necessity for a new and spacious

cathedral, Dr. Finegan has secured an admirable site beside the town of Cavan, and as soon as funds permit this site will be cleared and the work of building will be commenced ; a large sum of money for this purpose has already been collected. The site, which occupies a commanding position, is an appropriate one. The land once belonged to the Franciscan Abbey of St. Mary's, and the townland is known as Drumavanagh, i.e., the ridge of the monk, who was evidently the Guardian of the Friary. The " Monks' Walk " passes alongside the site. About a hundred yards away rises the ivy clad tower which is the sole remnant of this once great Franciscan house. All round was once the property of the Franciscans, and the twentieth century has already witnessed its passing back into the hands of the Church again. The Abbey graveyard, which the new cathedral will over-shadow, is the last resting place of a long line of venerable and distinguished Kilmore ecclesiastics. It is, indeed, sacred ground. Here also are interred the long line of Breiffne chieftains who, from the thirteenth century until the dissolution of the monasteries, endowed, enriched, and beautified this Abbey, and where their splendid altar-tombs adorned the church until the intruders of later days uprooted and demolished them. Here rests Owen Roe O'Neill and, most probably, also Myles the Slasher. It must never be forgotten that somewhere in the chancel of the old Abbey church, in an unmarked grave, rest the ashes of Primate Hugh O'Reilly who was born in the neighbourhood, ruled over the diocese for a few years, and whose accomplishments in the dark days of the Puritan regime shed lustre on the diocese of his birth. His name and fame alone would compel us to regard this place with special reverence. At an early period Bishop Richard Brady was a Friar here and was intimately acquainted with the district. The names of the great majority of the



Franciscans who trod the " Monks' Walk " in Drumavagh cannot now be ascertained ; they are forgotten in the long night of time, but the dust of many rest in the precincts of the Abbey.

Hence it is most appropriate that these hallowed precincts should have been chosen to be the site of the new Cathedral of St. Feidhlimidh, the crowning architectural glory of the diocese, which the present generation will be privileged to witness rising in all its splendour and magnificence—a cathedral which will herald the restoration of the diocesan glories which were ours in the Middle Ages, will restore in the twentieth century the lofty ideals conceived and fulfilled by Bishop Andrew MacBrady in the fifteenth, will revive and perpetuate the ecclesiastical traditions of Cavan Abbey, will be an everlasting monument to Breiffne's illustrious dead who sleep in the Abbey cemetery, and will be commensurate with the historical importance of the Diocese of Kilmore.

This is the great task which His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Finegan, has set out to accomplish. His efforts have met with well-merited success, and it is the earnest wish of all his people that he may be spared to see his project realised.

AD MULTOS ANNOS.

I deeply regret to have to add that while these pages were passing through the press Most Rev. Dr. Finegan died, after a short illness, on January 25th, 1937.

AR LÁIMH DEIS DE GO RAIB D ANAM.

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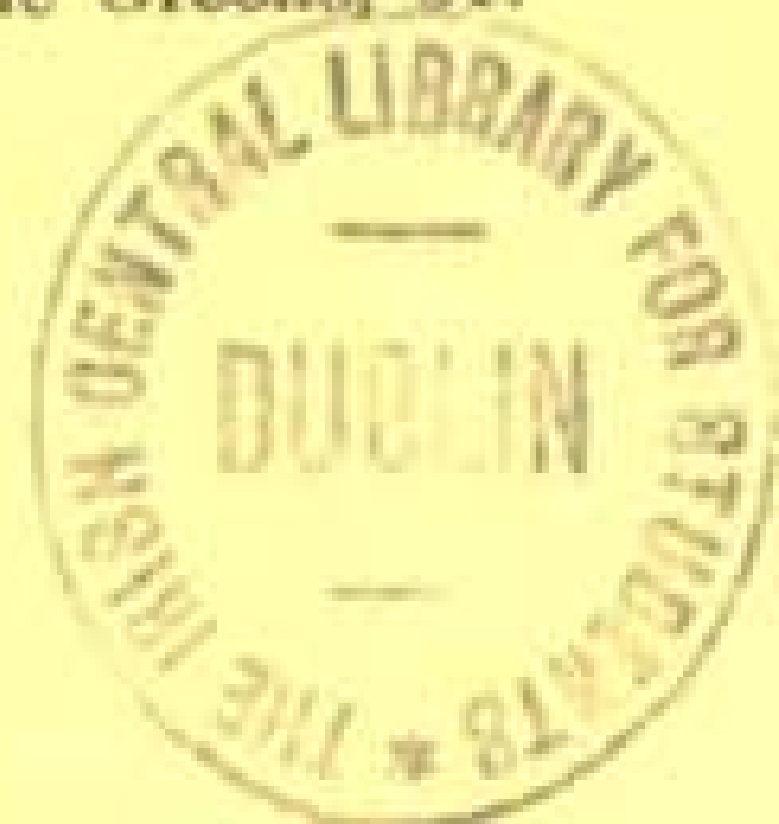
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