

Old Monaghan.

Historical sketches of Monaghan : from the earliest records to the Fenian movement

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It often happens that many persons who are well acquainted with the history of their country have little knowledge of the story of the immediate locality to which they belong, and this is remarkably so in our native town of Monaghan, where few materials are available for the compilation of our local history. And when at a recent meeting of the Monaghan Parish Branch of the Irish National Federation the writer was called upon for a paper to be read before the Branch, he thought the best subject he could treat was one which would give a general idea of our ancient town and its surroundings. The hurried manner in which these few notes have been jotted down between hours of business will be the writer's excuse for the many blots and omissions which may be found amongst the following pages.

In ancient times, before the "Saxon set his foot" on the sod of our native land, the district of country now occupied by the County of Monaghan, was then called West Oirgial (or Oriel), and the parish now called Monaghan was called Rackwallace. Near the shore of a small lake from which our barony took its name, Lough Tigh, a certain saint called Maclodius or Malodius founded an Abbey sometime about the 6th century. A small village grew up around its gates called Muineachan, which, according to some authorities, means the "Town of the Monks," and according to others a place surrounded by little hills. Very little is recorded of the abbey or village from the 8th to the 15th century, except the election or death of its learned abbots or pious monks, and the plundering of the abbey by the Danes. About 1350 two branches of the M'Mahon family quarrelled, and the Chief of Muineachan, Bryan M'Hugh M'Mahon was expelled from Rath-Tulad, (now called Tullyforth), where the family had lived up to then. The Irish restored the abbey and town after the overthrow of the Danes.

In 1417 Lord Furnival, at the head of the English army, crossed the Pale and devastated the whole of Oirgial, burned all the "towns and corn," and killed and wounded a great multitude of people, and carried off all the cattle they could catch. In this raid the town and abbey of Muineachan were again burned. While private quarrels distracted the Irish Chiefs, the old abbey and village of Muineachan appear to have been completely dismantled and deserted. During these troubled times, when war laid in ruins many a home, the M'Mahons, chiefs of Oirgial, for protection and safety, built a small house in the island of the lake of Muineachan, from which the lake and barony took its name of Lough Tigh (the Lake of the house); and in the year 1442, The M'Mahon of Oirgial, whose Christian name was Phelim (the son of Bryan, the son of Ardgal), restored the monastery and placed in it Friars Minor (Franciscans) instead of the Canons Regular of the Order of St. Augustine, who formerly occupied the ancient abbey.

For many years an old quarrel lay smouldering between the people of Lough Tigh and the people of Dartrey. In 1496 The M'Mahon, or over lord of all West Oirgial, was the Chief of the clans of Dartrey, and had his castle and principal town near where Rockcorry now stands. His name was Hugh Ogue M'Mahon (the son of Hugh Roe, son of Rorey). In the above year

his two sons, Gilla Patrick and Rorey, accompanied by 16 scollops (farmers), came by night into Muineachan and killed Glushuiagh M'Redmond M'Rory M'Mahon of Lough Tigh in his own house. They took as a hostage a youth named Rossa M'Mahon, son of Manus, son of Hugh Roe. This murder was the cause of a serious war, which kept Oirgial in trouble and sorrow for many years. In those times, and down from the first English invasion, the result of war was for the conquerors to lay waste the lands of the conquered, to carry off all their portable property, and burn and destroy all they could not carry away.

Glushuiagh's brother Bryan and his sons collected their whole clans and marched into Dartrey, and attacked M'Mahon's town and castle, which they took and burned, and carried off some prey, though an equal number were killed on both sides, and the Lough Tigh men had to retreat to their own territory. O'Hanlon of East Oirgial (now Armagh) joined Bryan and made another attack on the Dartrey clans. The battle was fought near the partially restored town of M'Mahon, and the Dartrey men were again routed ; Gilla Phadruig, the murderer of Glushuiagh, was killed, and his father Hugh Ogue (The M'Mahon), fled into Brefney and persuaded O'Reilly to espouse his cause, while the rest of the warriors of his clan fled to Farney, where the whole Farney clans rose to their assistance.

The English of the Pale, finding now that a great war was raging so near their borders, and seeing an opportunity of getting a foothold in Ulster, at once took sides with the wrongdoers, and sent an army to assist Hugh Ogue, the Farney M'Mahons, and the O'Reillys of Brefney. The clans of Lough Tigh, Trough, Cremorne, and the O'Hanlons were now sorely pressed ; one-half of their army were trying to keep the Farney men and the English at bay along the Aughnamullen Hills, while the other half were fighting O'Reilly on the borders of Dartrey.

O'Donnell of Tirconnell, who was then the principal chief of Ulster, coming to know of the English crossing the Pale, and dreading the effect of an English settlement in Ulster, marched at the head of a large army to the aid of the Oirgiallians. His first move was to crush O'Reilly on his flank, and then turn and face the English. This he accomplished by leaving the half of the Oirgiallians where they were in Aughnamullen, and joining the other half and attacking O'Reilly and Hugh Ogue M'Mahon. A couple of successful skirmishes brought the Tirconnellians and the Oirgiallians into the Territory of Brefney, where a short but desperate battle was fought, in which the Brefneians were completely crushed. The usual result followed, and all East Brefney, from Dartrey border to Cavan town, was devastated, and the town itself was taken after a short resistance and razed to the ground.

The victorious army, after having got rid of this troublesome foe from their flank, proceeded towards Farney, which they entered south of Ballytrain ; the English and the Farney men at once faced the Tirconnellians and Oirgiallians, and while the battle raged, the other half of the Oirgiallians, who had been holding the English in check, and who followed them up suddenly, came on the right flank of the foe, and a great victory was gained for Ulster. The English and some of the Farney and Dartrey clans retreated across the Pale. They threw garrisons into all the castles and fortresses of the Pale, to keep the Ulster men at bay, while another English army was collected from Dublin, Meath, and Louth. The Ulster army now grew to great proportions, being joined by most of the minor clans of Farney and Dartrey, in addition to the rest of East and West Oirgial, part of Brefney, and O'Donnell's army from Tirconnell. All the fortresses were forthwith attacked and taken in a wondrous short time, and the Ulster men pressed forward and met the English near the town of Louth. The English were drawn up on a hill facing the north-west. The archers were in front, while the centre was a line of light troops, armed with spears and shields, made up of Irish kerns, who resided

within the Pale, and the rere was occupied by heavy infantry clad in steel and armed with spears, heavy swords, and battle axes ; on the flanks were the cavalry, armed like the heavy infantry. The Irish soon appeared in a long line of kerns or light infantry, each man armed with a couple of spears, and a shean or dagger and shield ; but this array was made up of the small clans of Oriel joined together in one line ; each clan was headed by its piper. The line was flanked by mounted kerns, while behind marched the solid line of Gallowglass, heavy infantry, armed with spears, battle axes, swords, and sheans, some covered with chain armour, and others merely carrying shields. As the Irish army slowly advanced, the English archers fired on them, and the mounted kerns charged down on the archers and drove them from the field.

The English heavy cavalry, which consisted principally of the knights of the Pale, flanked by English light cavalry, charged the mounted kerns, who divided and fled to the left and right of the line, while the English galloped after them. This left the centre clear, and the whole Ulster clans, who had been quietly marching forward behind the cavalry, advanced at the charge, the pipers playing, and the clansmen shouting their war cry. So close had they come before they were observed, and so rapidly did they charge, that the English archers had barely time to fire more than a couple of arrows towards them, when they were on top of them. The archers were not good swordsmen, and could not withstand the onslaught of the Ulster kerns, so they were driven pell-mell in on top of the English light armed troops, and broke their line in several places. The Irish followed up these advantages by dashing into these gaps. The English made desperate resistance for a short time, devoting much of their energies to kill the pipers whose music was well known to have greater effect in rousing the “ Irish enemy” in battle, than the command of the chiefs. When the effect of this charge was noticed by the English General, he ordered back the cavalry, who on their return were followed by the Irish Gallowglass, flanked by the mounted kerns, and before the English knights had time to rally, they were thrust by the Gallowglass in on top of the English centre, which was then striving to keep in check the Irish clans who had broken through the second English line. Thus the whole army was thrown into confusion, and had to fight at close quarters with the Irish, who, having their bodies comparatively free, could easily crush beneath them the English soldiers and knights encumbered with steel armour and harness. The English soon broke up and fled, leaving many knights and nobles of the Pale, and free-men from Dublin, Drogheda, and Dundalk dead and wounded on the field behind them.

Most of the English fled into the fortifications of Dundalk, while the rest took refuge in the castles in the southern parts of Magher Oriel (Louth). O'Donnell followed the English to Dundalk, and having neither the time nor the means to besiege Dundalk, left sufficient force around it to invest it, and turned on the remaining castles and minor fortresses of Magher Oriel. Everything gave way before the victorious Ulster Irish ; the castles and towns were all abandoned at their approach, and the English were driven beyond the Boyne. We are told the saddest words in real life as well as in fiction, are : “ What might have been.” But they appear saddest when read in Irish history. “ What might have been” had Tyrone, Fermanagh, Brefney, Dalriada, and all the rest of Ulster sent assistance to O'Donnell and the Oirgiallians, enabling them to follow up this victory, by storming Dundalk and Drogheda, and crossing the Boyne, and driving the English into Dublin Bay as Brian Boru had the Danes. When O'Donnell saw he had not sufficient forces to permanently occupy Louth, he and the Oirgiallians returned home, carrying with them all the cattle, horses, and moveable effects in the County Louth, and burning and destroying all the towns, castles, houses, and crops, and in fact, everything they were unable to carry, leaving the whole beautiful plain of Magher Oriel from the Boyne to Slieve Gullion one dreary desert, covered with black and smoking ruins,

so that our ancestors of old Muineachan had their hills covered with cattle and sheep, fattened on the rich plains of Louth, and their stables filled with the steeds of the knights of the Pale.

This terrible devastation of a rich country, and wanton destruction of private property, is very repugnant to us who live in the end of the 19th century, but we must remember that the people of Magher Oriel had made several raids into West Oirgial, and the lords and knights of the Pale had raided all parts of Ulster they could get at, and everywhere they had set foot in, they laid waste with fire and sword, and doubtless the dams and sires of many of the cattle and horses carried off in this war, had been stolen by the men of the Pale from the Ulster Irish.

Poor Hugh Ogue never returned to Dartrey, but died shortly afterwards in Farney in disappointment and grief ; rilled with mourning at his own overthrow and sorrow for the many friends whose ruin he brought about. On his death his son Bryan was “ made” The M’Mahon by his followers, but was never acknowledged by the majority of the clans of Oirgial. The year after his proclamation he quarrelled with M’Guinness of Iveagh, and started on a raiding expedition with all the followers he could gather for M’Guinness’s country. M’Guinness collected his forces, and gave him battle, routed the M’Mahons, and killed the unfortunate Bryan. His descendants and followers settled finally in the upper part of the parish of Magheross, near Ballytrain. Rossa, the son of Manus, who had been carried off from Lough Tigh, was “ made” The M’Mahon, immediately on the death of Bryan, and was acknowledged by all the clans of Oirgial. The descendants of Redmond continued to hold Lough Tigh, and to protect the town and monastery of Muineachan.

The result of this unhappy war was to create an estrangement between Farney and Lough Tigh, which continued for several generations, and sometimes the M’Mahons of Farney were allies of the English of Louth, but were generally at war with them ; and when at war, the English sometimes made raids into Farney, and stole the cattle of the Irish, while the Farney men always returned the compliment with interest. But neither M’Mahon of Farney nor the English of Louth could make any headway into Lough Tigh, for the hills of Aughnamullen formed a barrier which protected Muineachan, and in the glens of Cremorne, the Lough Tigh and Dartrey men defended their property against all foes from the south.

In the year 1508 Redmond’s son, Redmond Ogue M’Mahon, was guilty of a sacrilegious deed which brought shame on the whole clan of the M’Mahons of Lough Tigh. He had some dispute with Maguire of Fermanagh. Philip (son of Edmond) Maguire of Fermanagh was on a visit with M’Kenna of Trough, and while Maguire and M’Kenna were assisting at Mass in Donagh old church, on St. Patrick’s day, the M’Mahons surrounded the church and called on M’Kenna to surrender Maguire to him. M’Kenna refused, and M’Mahon set fire to the roof of the church. The priest addressed the congregation and invoked on them the blessing of God and of St. Patrick. Maguire and M’Kenna sallied forth, and after a determined fight, slew Redmond Ogue and many of his followers, and put the rest to flight. With this disgraceful exception, for nearly a century the power of the M’Mahons kept at bay both native traitor and foreign foe, until at last, all our countrymen were overcome, and the monastery of Muineachan was in 1540 plundered and destroyed by the Protestant English soldiers of Henry VIII. Of that terrible day we have little record except that the Guardian and a number of Friars were beheaded, and the monastery turned for a time into a British fortress. Tradition pointed out the graves of the martyred Guardian and monks as near the Holy Well, which was filled in, and covered up many years ago by the building of the Provincial Bank, on the North road. The British rebuilt and remodelled the town, but they do not appear to have enjoyed it

long, for the M'Mahons were in full power and occupation of it some years afterwards. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, about the year 1580, a family quarrel arose among the M'Mahons about the division of the estates of Rossa Buidha M'Mahon, who had died without issue, and his brother Hugh Ruadh M'Mahon, the Tanist or heir in an unlucky moment called in the English Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, to settle the dispute. Fitzwilliam, taking advantage of the quarrel, seized on Monaghan, and placed a Sheriff and a garrison in possession of the town and fortress ; and because M'Mahon complained, he was arrested on a false charge, but the jury who tried M'Mahon could not be induced to find an innocent man guilty, and were discharged. Fitzwilliam then hit on a plan which has been imitated in all political trials, even to our own times, viz., of "packing a jury," who performed their work, by finding M'Mahon guilty, and he was publicly executed in the Diamond of Monaghan. This judicial murder following so vile a plot had the effect of sending several of the Ulster Irish into arms against the English, and to join Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell, who were then beginning their war against Elizabeth.

There is a small picture still extant of the Monastery of Muineachan, drawn in 1590, from which it appears that the site is near where the Convent Schools or Presbytery is now situate. The picture also shows M'Mahon's house on the Island in Lough Tigh ; and also shows that the monastery was then restored and in proper repair. The discovery of this picture shakes all our previous opinions as to the site of the monastery, which local tradition pointed out as the southern side of the present Diamond. It is certain that a castle stood there, portions of which were used, up even until about 30 or 40 years ago, as business houses, and as we have the fact recorded in several of our annals, that the monastery was fortified, and that there is no mention made anywhere of the building of the castle, it is probable that during the wars the monastery was converted into a fortress, and that tradition is right in fixing the Diamond as the site. Besides, the distances may not have been very well preserved in the old picture referred to, and no trace has ever been discovered of the Monastic ruins elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

Under the sway of Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell, during the reign of Elizabeth, the M'Mahons became less factionist and more National, were united and fought well for Ireland. In fact, an English writer, while abusing them, says they were "the proudest and most barbarous sept among the Irish and do ever soonest repine, and kick, and spurn the English Government."

During the war which followed the murder of M'Mahon by the English, Monaghan was besieged and taken, and retaken and taken again. In fact, it stood five or six sieges, during these heroic struggles of the Ulster Irish against the English. It was during one of these sieges that the English army under Norris came from Newry to relieve the town which O'Neill had invested, that the famous battle of Clontibret was fought in June 1595. I will not here attempt to describe that victory of our heroic ancestors. Suffice it to say, that the English were completely defeated, with the loss of some of their best generals, all their artillery, baggage, etc. The town capitulated a few days afterwards, and was held by the Irish until the end of the war in 1603, when the last struggles of O'Neill and O'Donnell terminated in a treaty, by which the English possessed themselves of all the garrisons, including Monaghan, out of which they soon afterwards expelled the Irish. The old Irish, who were driven to the hills in the neighbourhood, appear not to have been content with this robbery, and made attacks on the town at intervals, the result of which was that the town and castle were deserted, and left in ruins by the English, who could not withstand these repeated surprises. About 1608, Sir Edward Blayney got a grant of the place from the Government, and rebuilt one of its forts. When the

Lord Deputy visited the town about this time, he found only the fort, and about fifty huts occupied by soldiers, and everything else in ruins. A sum of money was granted by the King to repair the fortress, and in 1611 Sir E. Blayney got a grant of the markets and fairs. In 1613 the town was created a Borough, with a right to send two members to the old Irish Parliament. The first members, who were returned on 13th April, 1613, were Thomas Reeves, T.C.D., Dublin ; and Henry Conlie, Gent, of Monaghan. The Corporation of Monaghan, which was then also established, consisted of a Provost, twelve free Burgesses, and an unlimited number of Freemen ; a Recorder, and some other officers. All these have long since disappeared. There were very few elections during the 17th century, as owing to the repeated efforts of our ancestors to gain back our country, the English inhabitants had much more to do than sending members to Parliament. Queen Elizabeth confiscated the whole country, and Cromwell had the pleasure of re-confiscating a great deal of it ; for many of the recipients of Elizabeth's favour never got more than an estate on paper, and knew better than to come to Monaghan to grab land. Most of the M.P's. for Monaghan Borough, in the 17th century, resided in Dublin, and other parts of Ireland outside Monaghan, and probably never saw Monaghan ; but being on the spot where the Parliament met, they, no doubt, considered themselves much safer in getting elected by the filling of an official return, than by going to Monaghan to canvass for votes.

The Civil War of 1641 affected Monaghan considerably, for one of the first conspirators was The M'Mahon, and when Owen O'Connolly got drunk and informed on the Irish Chiefs in 1641, M'Mahon and Maguire were arrested in Dublin, and brought before the Lords Justices, where they gloried in their plot for the liberation of their country. They were brought over prisoners to London, where M'Mahon suffered the most cruel tortures, and was ultimately put on the rack, and when no betrayal could be extorted from him, he was beheaded at Tyburn in 1644 along with Maguire. Thus died this heroic Monaghan man, a martyr for his country. His Christian name was Hugh, after his maternal grandfather, the great Hugh O'Neill. In his youth he joined the Spanish army, in which he rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and was just the class of man to head the rising, but wholly unqualified as a conspirator.

The absurd and lying stories of massacres, got up by the new settlers and land-grabbers in other parts of Ireland at this period, did not affect Monaghan much, for these gentry were in too great a hurry away to manufacture stories, they knowing well they were robbers, and not wishing to be caught with the stolen goods in their possession, appear to have departed at the first alarm. We find a few of them stating they had been deprived of their cattle, and making a long complaint of wrongs, containing as little truth as the modern claim for malicious injury of a boycotted land-grabber or emergency bailiff. When O'Neill took Monaghan, he hanged Lord Blayney's son in retaliation for M'Mahon's execution. The pear tree on which he was hanged was pointed out in the garden where the old castle in the Diamond above mentioned stood, and was cut down about thirty-five years ago, by the man who rebuilt that side of the street. In an old map of the town of a somewhat earlier date than this war, there were but four streets and the Diamond in almost the same position as it now is, the south side of the latter being occupied by the castle, the gardens and pleasure grounds of which extended as far as the Convent Lake (then Lough Tigh). One street ran down part of Dublin Street, and was then, and for years after called Ballywollen Street, and the East Gate appears to have been about where the Misses Tierney's house is. Another street ran up part of the grounds occupied by Glasslough Street, and the North Gate was about where Mrs. Garrity's house is. The third street ran up where Mill Street now is, and the West Gate was close to Mr. M'Gurk's present house. The fourth street, which was the longest, came out of Mill Street at right angles, ran

through where the Protestant church now stands, parallel to the castle and gardens to the Clones gate, where the lower gate of the Convent now is. Mill Street was afterwards further extended, and turning to the left along the back of the Market house terminated at the lower part of Park Street. This street was for many years called Clones Street. There was a wall round the town except where the lakes protected it.

During the gallant struggle of twelve years which followed 1641, Monaghan was not much exposed to the war. But Monaghan men fought well for Owen Roe O'Neill, and it was the divisions from Truagh and Monaghan whom he sent to intercept Monroe's brother coming from Coleraine to the Blackwater at Benburb. How well they discharged their mission, is seen by the fact that the Coleraine men never reached the Blackwater, and the Monaghan men were back in time to take part in that glorious day when the power of England in Ulster was shaken to its very foundation. At the battle of Benburb, and all through the war, the patriotic Bishop of Clogher, Eiver M'Mahon of Monaghan, accompanied the army, and when Owen Roe O'Neill died, he was elected general, being the only man who could unite and keep together all the Irish of Ulster ; but, in 1660 he risked a battle with the English in Co. Donegal, in which fatal fight his army was defeated, and the last hope of the Ulster Irish vanished. Eiver M'Mahon was shortly afterwards taken prisoner and was executed at Enniskillen by an officer whose life he had preserved on a former occasion. M'Mahon was buried in Devenish Island, and no monument or stone was raised to his memory until his successor, our late patriotic Bishop of Clogher, placed a statue to him in the magnificent Cathedral of St. Macartan, in Monaghan. It is very hard to trace the descent of the noble house of M'Mahon, for those of them who did not go into exile, were absorbed into the peasantry of our country, and many a humble thatched roof in our county contains under it more noble blood than the whole of the mansions of our present county snobocracy. Some of the M'Mahon's names were changed into other Irish names, as will be explained in a subsequent chapter, and some were Anglicised. The descendants of Glushniagh, who was killed in 1496, came through his son Redmond, who was married twice : first, to the daughter of O'Neill ; and second, to the daughter of the Geraldine of Kildare. By the former he had four sons, viz., Glushniagh Ogue, Bryan, Manus, and Toal ; by the latter, one son, Art Moyle. Glushniagh Ogue was the ancestor of the M'Mahons who always lived about Monaghan, and took part against the English in every war and rebellion that arose in Ulster, while the race lasted. Some went to Spain, some to France, and others to South America, while of those who remained in Ireland, the last of the family died in Monaghan about sixty years ago, and is buried in the old Parish Church graveyard, Latlurcan. He left two sons, one of whom entered the English army, and had risen to the rank of Colonel, when he was stationed in the barrack of Monaghan, about the time of the Crimean war. The other son resided at Castleblayney until his death ; his children emigrated to America. Redmond's second son, Bryan, was grandfather of Hugh Roe, who was put to death by Fitzwilliam. Bryan had another grandson called Ross, who lived at Corfinlough, and is said to have been the great-grand father of Glushniagh M'Mahon of Ballybay. This Glushniagh had a son, Roger, who had two sons named Bernard and John. There is no descendant of Bernard now alive except his daughter, Mrs. Fitzpatrick of Cormeen House, Ballybay. John was a surgeon in the British army, and died leaving issue.

Manus and Toal settled in Trough, and the M'Mahons who reside there, are their descendants.

The six sons of Art Moyle, viz., Patrick, Rorey, Art-Bwee, Ross, Toal, and Redmond, declined to submit to Elizabeth after the overthrow of O'Neill and O'Donnell, and they

settled on the south-eastern slopes of Slieve Beagh, where, amid its fastnesses, they held their own against all the power of the English Government. From these six men all the M'Mahons of College Lands are descended.

Most of the other M'Mahon families went to Spain and France.

The M'Mahons who remained in Ireland assembled a regiment for King James, and fought at the Boyne, Athlone, Limerick, and Aughrim ; the muster roll shows thirteen companies of a total of 650 men, under command of Colonel Art Ogue M'Mahon, Lord Lieutenant of Co. Monaghan. He was killed at the siege of Athlone. Bryan M'Mahon and Hugh M'Mahon were the two Deputy Lieutenants, and Members of the " Patriot Parliament" for the County of Monaghan. The Borough sent no representative to that famous assembly. Lord Blayney was the only Peer from this County who sat in the House of Lords under King James, which seat he occupied as Baron of Monaghan.

During the reign of King James II., when the Catholics got some fair play, the first act of the Monaghan Catholics was to restore the monastery, and collect into it the Friars who had been carrying on their duties through the country, at the peril of their lives. The Bishop of the Diocese, the Most Rev. Patrick Tyrrell, came out of his hiding and took up his lodgings in the restored monastery. There was great pomp at the ceremony of reopening of the monastery, and consecrating the buildings, at which the Bishop presided.

When William III. had conquered Ireland, Monaghan was re-occupied by the English settlers, and no Irishman or Catholic dare live within its walls. During the penal times God only knows how the Catholics of the country about Monaghan managed to live with the garrison in the town always on the watch for priests and Papists. During those long and dark penal days, the glen now occupied by the Corby Rock Mill, was the spot where Mass was generally celebrated. There were no roads or lanes through it as now, and a man always kept watch towards the town from Killyvane Hill, lest the garrison would surprise and murder the priest and people. This old glen brings to our minds two eras of our history. Its name betokens it to have been the property of the Abbot from Comharba (Coarba), an abbot or successor of a saint, and the Baughog of penal days, with the rough or damp ground for a floor, and the cloudy sky for a roof, where our brave ancestors worshipped God, and heard Mass at the risk of their lives.

Priest-hunting appears to have been a lucrative occupation of the Loyalists in those days. For the infamous Penal Code contained a law, rewarding persons who informed on Catholic Clergy, etc., viz., for discovering on an Archbishop, Bishop, or Vicar-General, £50 ; on Priests, £20 ; and on Catholic Schoolmasters, £10. There are many traditions still extant of priest-hunting during these dark times, on only one of which I will touch here.

There was a priest named M'Kenna, who used to look after the spiritual wants of the people of Slieve Beagh, and parts of Truagh. The government officials were constantly on the look-out for him, but always failed to catch him, owing to the careful guardianship of his faithful people. However, information was brought to Monaghan, that on a certain morning before daylight, he was to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on a Druidical Stone, in Broughan-Shee-Bragan. A party of soldiers were dispatched early in the night, and having proceeded through the townland of Eshcloughfin, sometime before daydawn, they observed the light of the two candles on the altar. The officer fearing to approach too close to the place where the people assembled, lest some of the scouts who always were on the " look-out" for

surprises from soldiers and priest-hunters, would detect him, and that the priest would thereby escape, detached a good marksman and told him to approach within gunshot, cover one of the lights, and to fire when it was darkened by the priest passing before it. This command he executed, and when the priest moved to read the last gospel, fired. The ball passed through the priest's head. The place where he fell can still be seen in Bragan, and is called Lath-na-taggart. There was a hole in the Druidical Stone, which some modern people say was caused by the bullet. This is manifestly absurd, for the most modern rifle could not have perforated it in like manner.

When labour began to get scarce by the emigration of the Presbyterians in the middle of the eighteenth century, the Catholics were permitted to come to work within the walls of the town, but were required to live outside in a place called the Pound, now the Pound Hill, where they were impounded after the nine o'clock bell rang. The custom of ringing the bell at nine o'clock, p.m., was kept up until recent times in Monaghan, to remind us of our former slavery, and is still practised in Derry, and other northern towns.

Henry Blayney, Lord Baron of Monaghan, having sided with King James II. for a while, covered his estate with a mortgage to protect himself from confiscation, and the mortgagee of the Monaghan portions of his estate foreclosed, and sold the estate to a Williamite General, named Robert Echlin, who got the borough of Monaghan to return him as its member in 1695. Echlin sold the estate to a man called Cairns, and who was created a baronet (Sir Alexander). Cairns had one son (Sir Henry Cairns), who died without issue, and had one daughter, who married the then Lord Blayney ; and he having died without issue, his widow re-married a man called John Murray. The estates descended to Mrs. Murray, who had five daughters, but no sons.

These daughters were married as follows : the eldest to Lord Claremont, who had no male issue, and while the estate was in her hands, she began to build her castle where the Monaghan Tennis Court is now. Before she had proceeded far with the building, she changed it into a farmyard, but died before it was complete. On Lady Claremont's death the estate passed to the second daughter, who was married to General Cunningham. Cunningham, when the estate passed to his wife, got the patronage of the Borough. In 1796 he bargained with Castlereagh for the two votes for the Union of the borough members. The price he received was the creation of the title of Lord Rossmore. There was no issue of this marriage, and on the death of Lady Rossmore, the third daughter having died unmarried, the estate would have descended to the fourth daughter, who was wife of a gentleman called Jones, who had one son, but both mother and son pre-deceased Lady Rossmore, so it descended to the fifth daughter, wife of a Mr. Westenra. Westenra belonged to a wealthy family of Dublin shop-keepers and tradesmen, from whom the present owners of the estate are descended. The first Westenra who represented the borough of Monaghan in Parliament, was about 1775 when he "kept the seat warm" for one of his wife's relations, "Fortescue." The title of Rossmore died with Cunningham's widow, but was re-established at the beginning of the present century.

In the last Parliament that sat in Dublin, 1799, Henry Westenra and William Fortescue represented the borough of Monaghan. In Sir Jonah Barrington's "Black List," which contains the corrupt gang of traitors to their country, the names of Henry Westenra and William Fortescue appear as giving that treasonable vote which destroyed the nationality of their country, and wiped out of history our native town of Monaghan, for the old Borough was disfranchised by the Act of Union.

At the end of old songs and ballads it was the custom to conclude with a moral, but what necessity is therefor me to add a moral here ; for such can be traced in every line of the history of our town, as well as of our own country. Faction, family quarrels, and drink have opened the gates for our enemies, and that the last betrayal was made by two of that mongrel breed, who, though nominally Irishmen, hate their country and their people, and bear not one noble or patriotic sentiment in their hearts.

I must now conclude by hoping that lessons of the past may become our beacons of the future, and that if we do not gain much, we have lost nothing by learning the lesson of old Monaghan.

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Local Geography and Topography.

OUR daily avocations often bring us through adjoining townlands and parishes, the names of which are completely unintelligible to most of us, and over roads and lanes, about the origin of which we know little or nothing. Now our object in this paper is to show that there is a good deal of interesting local history to be obtained from a knowledge of the meaning of these names ; while at the same time, giving some curious information about the origin of the roads and lanes of our native parish ; and though the subjects are not so interesting as those treated in former papers, still there are many things to interest us in glancing over the map of our native parish.

In previous Chapters I have treated of the names of our town and county, and made occasional allusion to old roads ; in this I will treat of the topography of our neighbouring townlands and parishes, and examine more minutely into our highways and byways.

First let us take the Bally boes or townlands around our town. Mullaghmonaghan either means Monashan's hill, or The Hill of " Muineachan." Rooskey, which means a marsh or morass, has probably lost some other syllables which would make the name more intelligible. Tir-keenan, Keenan's land ; who this Keenan was or when he lived is a complete mystery to us. Aghananimy, the Field of the Butter, from *Acad*, a field, and *ime*, butter. *Annahagh*, the kiln of the marsh, from *Annagh*, a marsh, and *hagh*, a kiln. Bellanagall, the mouth of the ford of the strangers, *Belatha*, the mouth of the ford, and *n-gall*, the foreigners. Carrickanoran, the rock of the cold spring, from *Carraic*, a rock, *Fuarain*, cold spring. Castleshane, John's Castle. Coolmain, Middle Corner, *Cool*, a corner, and *mèadain*, middle. Coolshannagh, the fox cover, *seanac*, foxes. Corlat, the round hill of the monument, *Cor*, a hill, and *Leact*, a monument. Cornacassagh, the round hill of the keshes or little bridges : Corness, the round hill of the cataract ; Cornamunady, the round hill of the long shrubbery ; Drumbear, the ridge of the shaving ; Drumhirk, the ridge of the boar, Torc, a bore ; Dunsinair, Sinar's earthen fort ; Feragh, grassy ; Gallanagh, white marsh ; Killygowan, the smith's wood ; Killyvane, the white church or woods ; Kilnacloy, the wood of the stone, or the stone church ; Knocknaturley, the hill of the dried-up lough (*i.e.*, the Winter lough).

Latlurcan, Lorcan's or Laurence's Monument.

Legnacreeve, the Hollow of the Bush. In a hollow in an old bush in this townland was an altar on which Mass used to be celebrated during the penal times. In 1705 the parish priest, Rev. James Duffy, resided there. He was ordained by Dr. Tyrrell, Bishop of Clogher, in the

reign of King James II. Liseraw, the fort of the fort ; Mullaghadun, the hill of the fort ; Dun, a fortified fort, or fortified kingly residence ; Mullaghmat, the withered summit ; Rakeeragh, the fort of the sheep ; Rarnanny, the fort of the monks ; Rackwallace, the Rath or fort of the sons of Malus ; Sheetrim, fairy hill ; Tandragee, the hill of the winds ; Ban and Brack, white and spotted are added to distinguish the two townlands of that name. Tamlat, a plague burial ground ; Tiravray, the land of judgment ; Tully, a hill ; Tullyard, the high hill ; Tullyhirm, the dry hill ; and Tully leer, Lir's hill ; Uribalkirk, the hen's tail ; Scarnageeragh, the shallow ford of the sheep ; Glasslough, the Green Lake ; Ballybay, the ford mouth of the birch. The names of some of these places are explained by the appearance of the land ; others are derived from lakes, and marshes, and woods, drained, reclaimed, or cut down centuries ago, while others take their names from long-forgotten people and stories.

In the names of the parishes, there is much more to guide us. Tydavnet, Teigh-Damnad—St. Dympna's House, called in Irish, Downa, Downey, Davna, and Davnet. She was abbess of an old monastery, which she founded near the old graveyard of Tydavnet, where a little church was built and dedicated to her. She had to fly from the rage of her infidel and incestuous father, who pursued her through Cavan, Leitrim, and Mayo to the sea, over which she fled to Gheel, in Belgium, where she founded another convent, but was discovered and martyred by her father. The late Most Rev. Dr. Donnelly got her appointed Patroness of this diocese by the present Pope. There is a statue to her outside the south Transept of St. Macartan's Cathedral, Monaghan, and a stained glass window commemorating events in her Life, in St. Benedict Joseph Labre's Chapel, in the Cathedral, erected by the Very Rev. Canon O'Connor. Her Shrine at Gheel is much venerated, and visited by those suffering from mental diseases. Her Crozier or Bach all is preserved in the Royal Irish Academy. It was called the Bahall Dhownagh, and was used for swearing people on when disputes arose in commercial transactions.

Errigle Trough—Trough means a cantred or district, and Errigle, a small church. St. Mallin was the founder.

Donagh—The full name is Domnach-Maighe-da-Chlaione, the church of the plain of the two slopes. This church was founded by St. Patrick himself. Almost every place St. Patrick founded a church has Domnach (Donagh), which means Sunday, connected with its name, because St. Patrick founded these churches on the Sabbath.

Tyhallen, Teach-Talain, St. Killen's House—St. Killen was consecrated Bishop, and placed in Tyhallen by St. Patrick.

Kilmore or Kilmoreacdhan, Cil-mor-Adhain—The church of St. Aedhan Mac Angus, who died in the year 534.

Drumsnatt, Druain—Snechtha, the hill of the snow. The people of this district wanted a church, and they went to St. Teirnagh (Tierney) to Clones, to consult him as to the site. He told them to return, and pray that God would show them a place to build a church, at the same time ordaining St. Molua Mac Oche (M'Geough) their priest. After having prayed for some days, they discovered, on arising one morning, that the top of Drumsnatt was covered with snow, though all the surrounding fields were green, the time being midsummer. Now they took this so unusual occurrence as a sign from heaven, and forthwith proceeded, under St. Molua's directions, to build their church on the spot. [1]

It is a remarkable fact that this is the only ancient graveyard in this neighbourhood on which the Protestants did not lay hold. Though the old church has long since disappeared—not a stone upon a stone of it has been left—still the graveyard has always remained in the possession of the Catholic people of Drumsnatt and the surrounding parishes.

Tullycorbet, Tulach-Carpaith—The hill of the chariot, so called from St. Patrick's chariot having broken down here.

Clones, Cluain-Eois, Eos's meadow.—Eos was a pagan chief. Here St. Tighernach founded the great abbey of Ss. Peter and Paul, and in it he died on 4th April, 548. In this abbey was preserved the great relic known as “ the Donagh,” Domnach-Airgid, a case of precious metals which contained, in addition to many relics, a Latin copy of the Gospels in Irish characters, which once belonged to St. Patrick himself. According to some authorities, St. Patrick brought this book from the Pope, and presented it to St. Macartan on his consecration to the See of Clogher ; while, according to other authorities, it was dictated by St. Patrick to St. Macartan, in whose handwriting the book is said to be. It is probable, if the front page could be found, it would contain St. Patrick's imprimatur in his own handwriting.

The Abbey of Clones flourished until its lands, property, and buildings were stolen by the soldiers and favourites of Queen Elizabeth.

Clontibret, Cluain-Tobraid.—The meadow of the spring. The church and parish were founded by St. Macolmag or Colman.

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The next branch of this subject takes me to the roads leading to and from our native town. Nothing is so hard as to form an accurate idea of the map of this district at any fixed date, for the roads passing through our county were being constantly altered, changed, widened, narrowed, or closed, so as to render it almost hopeless to follow the course of any of the older roads. The first road we find any definite trace of, was the old military road from Derry to Dublin. There is reason to believe it was made about the time of Elizabeth on the site of an older trade road from Tara to Derry-Columbkil. This old road entered the county over a ford of the Blackwater—called in olden times the Avonmore Great River, because it was the largest river in the district through which it passed—near Aughnacloy between Tully and Aughaderry, where the river is still fordable, passed close to where the “ old road” now runs through Moy and Mullnacross, until it reached Errigle old church ; it continued on to Monaghan. The present old road often runs in the exact place, but in most places it has been slightly diverted to avoid hills, etc. However, it is almost identical with the road past Lamb's lake through Coolshannagh, past the Barrack into the town. It left the town at James Martin's entry, over the Pound Hill, Gallows Hill, through Tirkeenan, to the north of Aughaninimy Lough, past the old parish chapel, through Ballynagaul, Drumhirk, Corness (where it is now crossed by the Castleblayney road), and passed over Carrickanoran hill, into Tullycorbet. It is cut again by the broad road (to Ballybay), passes near Tullycorbet church, over the hills, until it descends from Drumroosk into the parish of Clontibret. It is crossed by the Great Northern Railway half-way between Castleblayney and Ballybay, and near the same place by the broad road and the old road between the same two towns. It runs close to the east wall of All Saints' Church, and proceeds straight southward near Lough Eagish into Carrickmacross.

When the coaches began to run, it was found that these old roads were most inconvenient, both as to the hills and the narrowness, and alterations were made in many roads, and new pieces were added here and there. About the middle of the last century the mail coach from Dublin to Derry was changed to the road which ran from Castleblayney to Aughnacloy, almost over the same road that runs now from Blayney to Castleshane, through the main street of the old town of Castleshane, which ran from where the castle now stands, down to where the roads from Blayney and Rackwallace now meet for Monaghan, then to the right of the present road, near Knockbwee fair green, between Cam and Liscarney, passed the “ Hand and Pen” over the Blackwater at Faulkland, over the hill behind Faulkland ; is crossed by the Great Northern Railway near Billis National School, through the east side of Donagh, through Grange, until it crossed the Blackwater at Mullnahornbridge. between Mullinure (Grange) and Tully. The people of Monaghan who wanted to go to Dublin had to meet the coach at Castleshane. The road to Castleshane ran through Latlurcan, behind Corlat, to the north of the present road, where it is still used as a lane, until it entered the street of Castleshane. Thus the old town of Castleshane became one of considerable importance.

The people of Monaghan got a coach for themselves. It passed through Ballybay, passed Te Tappa Mills, through Dunraymond until it met the old Co. Cavan road, passed Liseraw, Knockaturley, Uriblekirk, Sheetrim, through Drumbear, over Far-Meehul bridge, which is still to be seen near the writer’s residence, over Tully hill, and into the town between the Convent and the Lake. A good deal of business was done between Aughnacloy and Monaghan ; so the old road was improved and altered in several places, and Moy bridge built. It was about that time the traffic was turned into the village of Scarnageeragh, now Emyvale. The only road to the parish of Tydavnet passed from the town close to where it is now, until it leaves it near the Manse along the lane at the foot of Mrs. Deighan’s fields, through Cornacassa demesne. There is a little bridge still standing some distance to the north of the County road between Gallinagh and Lisbristlen. There was no road past the end of High Street, but a footpath from Milltown, which was then only a small corn mill, and a few houses approached from the town from the end of Glasslough Street. The road to Clones went along the Pound, through Mullamatt, and over the hills close to the present road ; parts of it are identical near Smithboro’ ; the road to Glasslough began at Ballyalbany, where it turned to the east off the Aughnacloy road, and went by the back of St. Macartan’s Seminary. This road still exists and is a good road the whole way to Glasslough at present. The way to Armagh was an old road through Knockbwee to Middletown ; it left Monaghan to the east from the Pound Hill down Annahagh Lane, and along what is still called the old Armagh road.

Thus were the roads when the Irish Parliament in 1777 ordered a survey, and from the completion of that survey up to within a few years of the Union, improvements were being made year by year, which rendered the transit of the mail coach easier. Amongst the principal changes was the widening of the old Armagh road, and its being brought into the town where it now runs ; alterations of the Aughnacloy road, and the road between Castleblayney and Castleshane. For a few years before the Union the great scheme for making new roads was suspended ; but in 1806, by order of the Postmaster-General, the schemes were put to work. The first road started was to Clones, to accommodate the mail coach which ran from Enniskillen to Belfast. Portions were begun through Mullaghadun, Mullacrogghery, Knockconean, and Tullygraham. In 1813-14 it was extended to Tullybryan and Brandrum. In 1822 the part from Brandrum to Skeagh was completed, and in 1825 it was brought through Carrowbarrow, whence the old road had been so much improved some years before as not to require a new one. The next road made was the new road to Aughnacloy in 1806. It was made through

Dernagrew, Coolkill, Mullabrack, Legacurry, and Drumcam, in 1811 ; through Coolshannagh in towards the town, then through Mullmurphy, Killnadreen, Dernagrew, Coolkill, Tirnaneil, Enagh, and Mullabrack, forty-four feet wide. In 1811 an old road was widened, and new portions of the road made from Scarnageeragh to Aughnacloy, and in 1812 it was brought to Dheariugh's bridge. In 1805 a new road was begun to Glasslough by widening an old lane through Drumrutagh and Tullyhirm. It was continued in 1809 near Scroggy's Bridge. Some time between 1811 and 1820 the road was joined to the Aughnacloy road where it joins it now. In 1820-21 it was extended to the Silver Stream, through Cavanreagh, Croghey, Corbeg, Cavally, and Tyravera ; but it was not until 1834 that it was fully finished into Glasslough.

The new road to Armagh and Middletown began in 1809 by branching off the old road at Cavanreagh, through Tullynure, Tullylush and Tehallan Glebe. It was continued in 1815 through Kildoagh, Killaneil, Leitrim, Killeiff and Tamlat. Soon after it was joined to the new Glasslough road, and got its finishing touch in 1825. In 1810, when a good portion of the new Aughnacloy road had been made, it was thought advisable to make a good coach road from Monaghan to Castleblayney, and to transfer the Dublin and Derry mail to it, and the broad road was begun through Killyvane, Tamlat, Rakeeragh, Dunaldron, Carrickanoran, Beagh, Crosses, Greaghglass, Ardagh, Lisleitrim, Rackwallace, etc. In 1812 the road was made up the Glen and along from the Mall. In 1813 it was altered to its present position in Tamlat, Dunaldron, Carrickanoran and Greaghglass ; and in 1814 it was altered to its present position in Ardagh, Killyvane, Lisleitrim, etc. In 1813 the road over the hill was begun through Mullaghadun ; and in 1813 went through Mullaghmore Crosses and Drumghost, past Raconnell until it came in on the old Tydavnet road. In 1814 the present Newbliss road was made through Tullygraham, Gortakeehan, Killycushil to back gate of the park, then along the old road to Killeevan, over an old bridge through Clonavarn, Drumaclan, Carnlough, Crumlin, etc. In 1823 the road to Ballybay was made from the new Castleblayney road through Corvoy, Cordoolough, Leggacurry, Mullan, Drummar and Corfad ; and in 1824 through Drumcar and Braddocks. All these roads brought a considerable traffic through Monaghan, and in 1826 it was found that Glasslough Street was then too narrow, so a Methodist preaching house and an old school were knocked down in Mill Street, between Mr. M'Gurk's corner and Mr. Hanna's corner, and the road made which is now called North Street. It joined the public walks behind where the Railway Station now is, but never was continued. The coach ran only for a short time this way. The old houses which partially blocked Glass-lough Street have long since gone. In 1823 the road was made to Rosslea by connecting the Clones road with another road at Annyerley. In 1827 the present road was made to Castleshane through Killagnearly, Ballinagall, Moyles, Listrahegney, etc., until it entered the street of the old town of Castleshane. In 1828 the road to Scotstown was improved, and in 1832, '34, and '35 it was further improved, and the road to Enniskillen was considerably improved, and a great deal of a new road added through the long hollow. In 1830—'32 the Clogher road was made. The last of these leading roads finished was to Keady, which began in 1832, and was not concluded until 1838.

The Ulster Canal came in 1832.

These roads brought a considerable amount of business, and some wealth and prosperity to Monaghan. But in the Fifties the railway came, and it has been drawing off all our industries, prosperity, wealth, and even our very people to such an extent as to make a true Irishman sigh for the days of the old slow coach.

[1] An attempt was made a few years ago to assert some private ownership in the graveyard of Drumsnatt, but it was successfully resisted by Rev. Thomas Duffy, then C.C. of the parish. Both he and the writer have a very special interest in the incident.

Historical sketches of Monaghan : from the earliest records to the Fenian movement (1895)

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