County Louth Archaeological and History Society

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Source: *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Dec., 1919/1920), pp. 359-366

Published by: [County Louth Archaeological and History Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27729237>

Accessed: 16/06/2014 02:21

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The Death of Patrick Fleming.

EDITED BY HENRY MORRIS.

THE tragic death of Patrick Fleming early in the eighteenth century was widely lamented in Meath, Louth and Monaghan, and the following lament made to commemorate the tragedy has continued to be sung almost down to the present day—for a space of two hundred years. Hence it has earned for itself—quite apart from the theme—a right to be recorded in our Journal.

As the oral versions now obtainable are scrappy and fragmentary, the song as here given is compiled from three Irish MSS. :—

(1) The “Bardic Remains of Louth,” a MS. now in my possession, but compiled by Matthew Moore Graham of Dundalk, about 80 years ago.

(2) Nicholas O Kearney’s MS. in the Royal Irish Academy, numbered 23 E. 12.

(3) A MS. numbered XVII in the Belfast collection, written (presumably) by Hugh MacDonnell about the middle of the last century.

I have also seen other MS. versions which I cannot at present consult.

The version in (1) and (2) contain 12 verses each, but only nine of these are common. The Belfast MS. has only 8 verses, and of these only three are common to the Dundalk copies. From the inconsistencies of the metres it is clear that the song has suffered a good deal of corruption. Some of the verses appear to be later additions, very probably by O’Kearney.

My experience of O’Kearney is that as a scribe he is untrustworthy. The genuine scribe was as a rule faithful to his copy. O’Kearney wrote with a view to publication, and he frequently dresses up his materials and puts his own stamp on them—not always an improvement in my opinion. Neither should I rely absolutely on the details he gives in his explanatory notes. But as far as the main features of this tragic episode are concerned they are beyond all doubt.

I cannot tell who is the author of the Elegy. A pencil note in the Belfast MS.—added I conjecture by Robert MacAdam—says “by *Brian Tailliur* (perhaps).”

This is not very satisfying. The song should be found in some of Galligan’s MSS., Galligan being a Meathman and a voluminous scribe.

The Belfast MS. says in a note “The first poem in this book is eight verses of the Elegy of Patrick Fleming, son to James Fleming of Sydden, barony of Slane, Co. Meath. He was represented as being one of the *Ceithearn Coilleadh* [Wood Kern], and a price having been offered by the government for his head, he was murdered by the Tory-hunters of Ardee, his head cut off, and sold to the government, as was many of the Irish nobility of these days, for it was no uncommon thing under William the Third’s government to commission men to erect a gallows to execute

travellers and strangers, whence arise these splendid epithets *ἡ τῶν κεφαλῶν πόλις* na *ḡceann*, and *ἡ τῶν κεφαλῶν πόλις* na *ḡceann* (i.e., Townley of the Heads and Peter of the Heads) . . . This was the Townley who hanged Mr. Dromgoole of Dromgoolestown Castle, Co. Louth.

This 'Townley of the Heads' had a gallows at Turtle Hill near his own demesne and kept a hangman himself. [He had] another [gallows] at Paddy Gray's wood, two miles from Ardee and two miles from Drumcondra in Co. Meath. Peter English *ἡ τῶν κεφαλῶν πόλις* na *ḡceann* was his disciple and hangman there. The people to this day [about 1850] feel timid to travel by night in either of these places. But to return to the illustrious family of the Barons of Slane . . . we learn from the poet that Patrick Fleming was married to a Mary O'Neill. He was not believed to be a Tory or Robber, but was reputed [as such] by the government, as he was holding his property by force. When a price was offered for his head, he took refuge in the house of Conn MacMahon, where he was betrayed to what is called the *Ceitharn Mharusgall*, otherwise the 'Marshal's Band.' It is said that MacMahon's sister *κατερίνη ἡ ξανθή* (short Catherine) wetted the powder in his arms, thus leaving him unable to defend himself. It is a remarkable tradition among the people that those who murdered Fleming never prospered afterwards. It is also believed that [since the murder] the air is never clear over Ardee, but still (= continually) a black cloud hands over it."¹

Lengthy notes are given of the episode in both O Kearney's and Graham's MSS., but these notes, though somewhat fuller and more detailed in the former, are practically the same in substance, for Graham and O Kearney worked in collaboration. Indeed, it is not improbable that "The Bardic Remains of Louth" though styled "Collectanea Grahamea" were really compiled by O'Kearney. The English style of the latter was long-winded and rhetorical, so instead of giving the notes of the MSS. in full, I will give the substance in condensed form.

Patrick Fleming is conjectured to have lived about 1709, and as a boy took some part in the war on the side of James II, or at any rate was supposed favourable to the Jacobite cause. Not this, however, but an untoward circumstance which happened later was the cause of his ruin. "Three young men said to have been in Mr. Fleming's employment, rescued some cattle belonging to a neighbour, and maltreated the bailiffs in effecting the rescue"; warrants were issued; the men evaded arrest and were outlawed. Fleming tried in vain to procure their pardon. As a last resource he forged a pardon for the men, signed as it purported to be by a relative, "the people say an uncle who was Chief Justice."

The forgery having been exposed and the signature repudiated, Fleming himself was now outlawed, and put upon his keeping. He fled to the mountains and soon a number of men in similar circumstances to his own gathered around him, and acknowledged him as their chief. Though he now led the predatory life of a *certeapnas coilleas*, he neglected no opportunity of getting his powerful friends to obtain a pardon from the government. "It is traditionally related" that a pardon was granted to himself, but that he held out for a pardon for his comrades also. While this latter was being re-considered by the government, a Tory-hunter resolved if possible to earn the promised reward. Even if he failed to get the "blood money" he anticipated no punishment for compassing the death of Fleming, the latter being a Catholic.

1.—"Ardee with the black cloud over it" was a common phrase with the last generation, but is now almost forgotten. The origin given here was not known in surviving local tradition. The only explanation I could ever get for it was the additional tag "where they killed the priest," which some old people gave, but they could tell nothing of any incident of the kind.—Ed. *L. A. Journal*.

Conn Fada (Tall Conn) MacMahon kept a "shebeen" in the townland of Miascaish near Inniskeen, in Co. Monaghan; Conn was also a dealer in yarn and Connemara stockings. The Tory-hunter learned that Fleming and his men frequented this place, so he bargained with Conn for their betrayal. MacMahon was to invite Fleming and his band on a certain day. The invitation was accepted; Fleming came attended by six of his followers. The Tory-hunter came also, with another band and noticed with delight that MacMahon was "digging sods on the green hill above the house." This was the pre-concerted signal which told that Fleming and his men were enjoying themselves inside. Catherine Gearr (MacMahon's *wife* according to O Kearney) freely supplied liquor to the outlaws, and also managed unnoticed to pour water down the muzzles of their guns. While the house was being surrounded one of Fleming's party escaped by a back-window, but the remaining six were captured after a fierce struggle, in which they discovered to their horror that their arms had been rendered useless. They were immediately taken out to the back of the house and beheaded, the heads placed in a turf-creel and carried off while the bodies were thrown into a dyke where they lay untouched for three days. With them also was beheaded "a poor innocent lad who sold tobacco and who happened to lodge in MacMahon's house."

According to the "Bardic Remains" the judge of assize before whom the heads were brought was a relative of Fleming's, and instead of granting the reward claimed, severely censured the Tory-hunter for killing a man whom the government had pardoned, and caused the patronage of the government to be withdrawn from the family.

Some time afterwards this same judge—Fleming's uncle "'tis said"—presided at Trim where MacMahon's son was arraigned for horse stealing. The judge charged the jury dead against the prisoner, the latter was found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged "on the morrow" says one MS., and "that same day" says the other. So that it was commonly believed at the time that no MacMahon could escape hanging in Trim for almost any crime. The murderer's clan faded away after this. Conn MacMahon died "an ignominious death," and O Kearney claims to have seen his grandson. And "on the spot where these men were beheaded neither grass nor weeds nor anything green grew from that time up to this."

O Kearney claims no authority for the song or the history beyond traditional narration—the event being over a hundred years old in his day.

MAIRGNEAD PÁDRAIS FLÉAMONN¹

I. (2)

Ó éirighiú a mhá ó shac áro de éirinn,
 Ašur teanair mui bpadit san rpar
 le céile,
 Sreudais mui lámá inr na sártais
 géara,
 Nó so nguileá ríó an bá rín pádrais
 fléamonn,

1r oc, ocón ! (3)

II. (4)

A pádrais fléamonn, a éiríde na
 húire, (5)
 A mhic séamuir an tsídeann, 1r a
 oisne na túitce ;
 San claidheam, san piorcal, nó urcár
 pušóair,
 A bainfead urraim ar sallaib le
 bata dá rúršad, (6)

1r oc, ocón !

III. (7)

Ca ucéidim féin so miorcáir i mbárac,
 So cois Coimn fáda mar nvearnad
 an t-ár úo,
 Flucad sunnaí, 1r tarraingead
 lámac,
 'S an cupad bí treán 'ré mo léan
 tú a pádrais,

1r oc, ocón !

IV. (8)

1 miorcáir féin a rinnead an ró-
 šoin, (9)
 Cuiread reat šcinn 1 šcliaó na
 mónaó,
 1r na corpa geala 'cór a beir 1
 šcómraibíó,
 Bí na luige inr na viošacáib ó 'Dia'r
 oain so 'Dómnac,

1r oc, ocón !

V. (10)

A máire ní héill 1r tnom vo cóvrad,
 1r pádrais fléamonn 1 noeir a
 pollad, (11)
 Aige na bodais' nár šad baircead,
 Aniar ó baile áe fírria na feille, (12)

1r oc, ocón !

VI. (13)

Dá breicteá-ra máire dúl i néadan
 an trléibe,
 Ašur veorača alluir le na néadan,
 Cuirfead ré truaige ar mháib na
 héireann,
 Aš teat (14) so tórnam pádrais
 fléamonn,—

1r oc, ocón !

VII. (15)

Nuair a cuair rí ruar air coircéim
 rtaigre
 Cia tarla uirtí áe pádrais fléamonn;
 Póš rí a lámá, ní bfuair rí a béilín,
 áe colann san cionn, 1r ba móir an
 ršéal rín :

1r oc, ocón !

VIII. (16)

A pádrais fléamonn ó v'éas tú, a
 cupad, (17)
 'Deanfaim féin (18) vo ráit de cularó,
 Síota so bróis ašur ríó so huillín,
 A šaol na n-iarla aniar ó lonn-
 uim, (19)

1r oc, ocón !

IX. (20)

A pádrais fléamonn na šruaige
 báine,
 Sé mo cneac géar nac nveacáir tú
 ar ráile,
 Cum na ffraince le treire vo láime,
 Nó congnaí cogair le Ríš na Spáinne,

1r oc, ocón !

X. (21)

Tá sean ašam féin ar 'Dia 1r ar
 mhúire,
 'S air na ceitre fearaib v'eas v'e'n
 ceitearn coille,
 Ar pádrais fléamonn na šruaige
 šile,—
 Šnát leobta šlar-luacáir i mbruač
 šac coille,

1r oc, ocón !

LAMENT FOR PATRICK FLEMING.

[TRANSLATION.]

I.

Arise, ye women, from every *art* in
Ireland
And take your share without delay
With clapping of hands, and screams
of woe,
In weeping the death of Patrick
Fleming,

Och, ochone !

II.

O Patrick Fleming, heart of generosity,
Son of James of Sydden, and heir to
his patrimony,
Without sword or pistol or powder shot
You could humble and smite the Galls
with a stick,

Och, ochone !

III.

I'll not go to Miscash to-morrow,
To the house of Conn Fada where yon
slaughter was made :
(There) guns were wetted, and shots
were fired
And the hero that was brave, is the
cause of my grief—

Och, ochone !

IV.

In Miscash indeed was wrought this
slaughter,
Seven heads were cast into a turf-creel,
And the bright corpses that should be
put into coffins
Lay in dykes from Thursday till
Sunday,

Och, ochone !

V.

O Mary O Neill heavy is your sleep,
And Patrick Fleming after being
riddled [by shot]
By the unbaptised bodachs
Who came from Ardee of treachery,
Och, ochone !

VI.

Behold Mary (now) going by the mount-
ain slope,
The beads of sweat on her brow—
It would put grief on the women of
Ireland—
To see her coming to Patrick Fleming's
funeral—

Och, ochone !

VII.

When she had climbed up the stairs
Who should confront her but Patrick
Fleming :
She kissed his hands, she could not
find his mouth,
For a body without a head was he—
shocking the tale,

Och, ochone !

VIII.

O Patrick Fleming since you are dead
'Tis I myself will make your dress
(for the grave),
Silk to your feet, and satin to your
waist,
O kinsman of the earls who hailed
from London,

Och, ochone !

IX.

Patrick Fleming of the fair flaxen hair
'Tis my bitter woe that you did not
cross the water
To France, with your prowess of hand,
Or to assist in war the King of Spain,
Och, ochone !

X.

I have love for God and for Mary,
And also for the fourteen men of the
wood-kern,
And (particularly) for Patrick Fleming
of the bright locks—
Oft was their bed in the green rushes
of the wood,

Och, ochone !

XI. (22)

Δ πάτοραις φλέαμονν βα μόρ αν
 ουινε tú,
 Σαοιλεαρ φέιν ζυρ μαρκαδ μιρε tú,
 βα claiðeasñ óir i nðórn ζαδ ουινε
 tú,
 Ir ir μόρ α' beapna ap a ceiteapn
 coille tú,
 Ir oc, ocón !

XII. (23)

Ir μόρ αν rseal, ir ir μόρ αν
 beas (24) é,
 nac fá na bpaosail (25) a euair cum
 an trléibe,
 Zap-zaol na n-iarla, pátoραις
 φλέαμονν,
 Δετ fá rsnioasð parouin epúir oe
 na Saedelaib—
 Ir oc, ocón !

XIII. (26)

Tá baile Δt fíroia faoi eacraib bána,
 Ir ingean an plobapais as pōsluim
 lámair,
 Ir tá re fuar ap páipeirib bána, (27)
 "πάτοραις φλέαμονν as iapraib
 párouin"—
 Ir oc, ocón !

XIV. (28)

Δ plobapais lúbapais, (29) a uoðais
 zan eolar,
 Ir copamail nac 'ran tír ro puasð
 nó tōsasð tú,

Do leit-ceann muice ap beas an
 zuair, (30)
 Ir nap fa fasð so bfeicfeap an puais
 op—
 Ir oc, ocón !

XV. (31)

Δ plobapais liobapais, (32) loctais (33)
 bpeasais,
 Cá bfuil na mibiní nó na péarlai,
 Cap zas na ríouai uaoipe sneasas',
 Ná na fáinní oir a bí ap a méapa ?
 Ir oc, ocón !

XVI. (34)

So mba react, so mba hoct, ir so
 mba méapa i scionn na bliasna,
 Δ beap Cairtin Colla asur (35) Conn
 fasð an iapna, (36)
 Asur Cairtin seapn, ó rí minne a
 tioasbail,
 Δ cuir an t-uirge i ngunnáib an
 marpais fialmar;
 Ir oc, ocón !

XVII. (37)

Ap ionasð an áir bíoð trom-fpuet
 anróis,
 Áit ap tapasrað cupair le feil r
 ainceap;—
 Ir nár eisir na úair rin sorc nó
 apbar,
 Nó fú fepir ós a ú' iopas samna—
 Ir oc, ocón !

XI.

O Patrick Fleming, you were truly
 great,
 I regarded you as a wondrous horse-
 man,
 Your presence was as a golden sword
 in the hands of every one (of us),
 Your death will cause a great gap in
 the ranks of the wood-kern,
 Och, ochone !

XII.

'Tis a terrible tale, and a terrible
 calamity,
 Though you did not go to the mountain
 (on your keeping) for the sake of
 thieving,
 You kinsman of earls, Patrick Fleming,
 But for writing a pardon for three
 Gaels,
 Och, ochone !

XIII.

The town of Ardee is under (the sway
 of) a troop of white horse,
 And the murderer's daughter is learning
 to shoot :
 It is posted up on white papers that
 " Patrick Fleming seeks his pardon "—
 Och, Ochone !

XIV.

O deceitful villian, you ignorant churl,
 It seems you were not born or reared
 in this land,

(With) your pig's cheek sparsely covered
 with bristles,
 And may it not be long till you are
 swept away—
 Och, ochone !

XV.

O thick-lipped traitor, malicious and
 lying,
 Where are the ribbons and pearls ?
 Whence disappeared the dear beautiful
 silk ?
 Or the gold rings that were on his
 (Fleming's) fingers ?
 Och, ochone !

XVI.

Seven times, eight times worse at the
 end of the year
 May Captain Colla be and Conn Fada
 of the hanks,
 And Catherine Gearr, 'tis she did the
 evil deed,
 Put water in the guns of the generous
 horsemen :
 Och, ochone !

XVII.

On the scene of the slaughter may there
 be a heavy stream of ill-fortune,
 The place where heroes were cut down
 by treachery and injustice :
 Crop or corn may it never grow there,
 Nor even short grass that calves might
 eat :
 Och, ochone !

NOTES.

In these notes the three MSS. from which the poem is taken will be referred to as follows :—

The " Bardic Remains " = A.
O Kearneys's MS. = B.
The Belfast MS. = C.

- 1.—The victim's name is always spelled rléimíonn in A and B.
- 2.—This is verse 1 in C ; not found in A or B.
- 3.—The refrain is 'S ué ! ué ! Cuinn in A ; 'S oc onn ó in B, and tr ó co Cunn in C. This latter is a phonetic rendering of the correct form.
- 4.—This found only in C as verse 5. It resembles 3 in A.
- 5.—úire, liberality, generosity, from úr, noble, liberal, generous.
- 6.—Rúrsad, smiting, tearing, beating.
- 7.—This is verse 1 in A and B ; not found in C.
- 8.—This is 2 in A, 8 in B ; not in C.
- 9.— r ó-éiread in B.
- 10.—This 3 in A, 5 in B, and 2 in C.
- 11.— a éollad in A and B.
- 12.—Lines 3 and 4 are from C ; A and B give them thus :

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{áct muna b'é an t-uirge cuiréad 'rha sunnaib} \\ \text{bairéad ré urraim ar clannaib Salla.} \end{array}$$
- 13.—This is 4 in A, 7 in C ; absent in B.
- 14.— asoul in A. a teact is likely the correct form.
- 15.—Occurs as 5 in A, 6 in B, absent in C ; B puts this verse in the mouth of Fleming's wife.
- 16.—This is verse 6 in A, 7 in B, and 4 in C.
- 17.— má o'éas tú in B : $\text{ó o'éas an mairlíg}$ (= mairíó) in C.
- 18.— $\text{o'aitneocáinn réin}$ in A and B.
- 19.— Craill go lonróin in A and B.
- 20.—Occurs as 7 in A, 4 in B ; absent in C.
- 21.—This is 8 in A, 3 in B, not found in C.
- 22.—Only found in A as verse 10.
- 23.—Only found in B as verse 10.
- 24.— bead , bad news, injury.
- 25.— briogáil , act of thieving.
- 26.—This is verse 11 in A, 2 in B ; not found in C.
- 27.— $\text{tr é rghoéda ríor ar, \&c.,}$ in B.
- 28.—Only found in C as verse 3.
- 29.— lúbarac , evidently a variant of lúbarac , shifty, tricky, deceitful.
- 30.— suairé , rough hair, bristles.
- 31.—Only found in C as 6. It resembles 9 in A, and 12 in B, which runs thus :

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{nuair a cuair a ceann i láeari úrtur na héireann,} \\ \text{Sreao ré a bora ir minne ré éas-claoin,} \\ \text{" a briobarais briogais lúbais briogais} \\ \text{Cá nreacáir na mairí a bí ir na réaríalí ?"} \end{array}$$
- 32.— lúbarac , thick-lipped.
- 33.— loctais , " malicious " says a pencil note in MS.
- 34.—Only occurs in C as verse 8, but resembles 9 in B, which is

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Sé bain na tairp ar énoc an tríbín} \\ \text{Oo énap mo éuraid, mo éraoibín doibinn :} \\ \text{narb ceilg ir raionnt Coionn fáda na n-iarra,} \\ \text{ir cairenn Seairi ó rí minne an oiozbaí.} \end{array}$$
- 35.—This is plainly the Captain Coll MacMahon who erected in 1729, the cross still preserved in a wall at Inniskeen. He may have been a relative of Conn Fada's.
- 36.— iarra , hanks of yarn.
- 37.—Only found in B as verse 11. It is evidently a variant of verse 12 in A.