

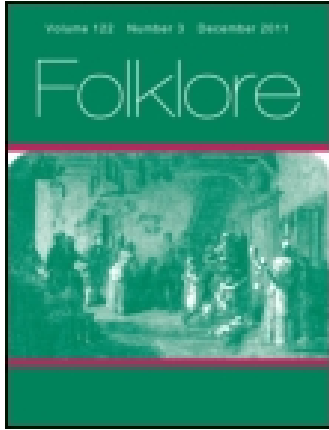
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County Clare Folk-Tales and Myths, III. (With Plate VII.).

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COUNTY CLARE FOLK-TALES AND MYTHS, III. (*continued from*
p. 212).

(With Plate VII.).

6. *The Danish Wars and King Brian.*

IN the district that produced *The Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gall* as a pæan on the winning of its hard-won independence one would expect a mass of stories relating to the Danes and Norse. But this is so far from being the case that the very phrase "Danish forts" is rarely used among the peasantry, though common in the mouths of "half-read" persons. The "forts," in fact, are traditionally the homes of the Dé Danann, of the contemporaries of Fergus and Diarmuid, and of the early Dalcassians. Rarely indeed do we meet the term Caher Lochlannach or "Norse fort," (*not* Danish), nor have I found the name in any Clare record before the *Book of Distribution and Survey* in 1655 (if, even there, "Caherloglin" be not some such name as "Cathair lochlain"). I found the name in use only near Lisdoonvarna, where it was unmistakably Caherlochlannach. At Kiltumper the base of a little kerbed cairn called "Tumpers Grave," between Kilmihil and Doolough, was reputed in 1839 to be the grave of a Danish chief chased by a Dalcassian army from the stone ring fort of Cahermurraha (or Cahermurphy) to the Kiltumper ridge, slain, and buried there.¹ The "heathen Danes" or "black Danes" appear vaguely enough; they were "great druids" (magicians), "made the heather into beer,"² and smoked the "Danes' pipes."³ I hardly like to repeat a legend at Attyflin, before 1870, that "they (the Danes) rode eight-legged horses," yet where could the peasantry of County Limerick at that date have heard of Sleipnir? Even the gentry, I believe, were unacquainted with tales from the Edda, which I first heard of in 1878; at the earlier date I was also told about the Danes that "they used to swim in the ditches round the forts." In 1877 a retainer of the Morelands of Raheen on Lough Derg, and an old fisherman, on my first visit to Iniscaltra (Holy Island) in that great lake, told me of the Danes. No one would

¹ *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare) (Ms. Royal Irish Acad.), vol. ii., p. 46.

² So at Lough Graney in 1893. ³ Really seventeenth-century tobacco pipes.

injure the fences at the churches "for the Danes made them"; the people were less afraid to injure the churches themselves, for "the saints are in heaven and will not come back, but who knows where the Danes are?" "They put the forts to mark their estates, and maybe they'll come back to claim them." "They killed all the clergy in the churches and the (round) tower, and burned them (the churches) all." The Danes were reputed to have tails, as I heard widely about 1870. The stone fort of Caherscrebeen, near Lemaneagh Castle, Inchiquin, had amongst its treasure caves and cells one "full of Danes' beer, *beor lochlannach*, the best of all drinks." The old divisions on the hills were made by the Danes to mark out their heather meadows.

Such appear to be all the impressions that remain, upon the mind of the folk a thousand years later, of the two terrible half-centuries 810-50 and 900-70.

So far I can write with little hesitation, but in the legends of the great deliverer Brian, son of Cennedigh, the collector of folklore is in constant danger of deception. How far any of the legends are really old and independent of books, and how far apparently independent versions were derived from books in the early years of the last century, I cannot pretend to decide. Now the corruption is unquestionable; the popular press and many excellent little books, besides tourists and others who make enquiries not always judicious and even supply information directly, have in the last ten years overlaid nearly all the folk-tales.

The tale of King Brian best attested as traditional relates to the dam built by him across the outflow of Lough Derg to drown out his enemies living up the river, and to the fort of Ballyboru constructed by him to defend the end of it. The Halls and Windele found the tale existing over seventy years ago,⁴ and I found it among the peasantry of Counties Clare and Tipperary near the fort, among the fishermen on Lough Derg, and among the old folk and gentry, never varied, from 1889-1906. Mrs. Hall was told by an old woman in 1843 that Balboruma was King Brian Boru's dining room. Windele about 1839 heard that there were two

⁴Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, *Ireland*, vol. iii., p. 420. J. Windele, *Topographical Ms.* (Royal Irish Academy, 12. c. 3), pp. 614-27, calls Balboru "the circular rath of Kincora."

sunken ways from Kincora to it,—along one of which the dinner was carried, the servants returning by the other,—but I always found Balboruma identified with Kincora. De Latocnaye in 1797⁵ heard that the fort where the Shannon issues from the lake was “O’ Bryan Borhom’s palace.” O’Donovan was told that the walls of Kincora were of dry stone, but when he subsequently visited Killaloe in 1839 he found that no old person remembered the building as still standing; so it was evident that his earlier informant regarded Balboruma as Kincora.⁶ There was said to be a passage under the river from the fort to County Tipperary, and on Craglea the precipice and well were still connected with the banshee. In 1893 the Grianan Lachtna fort was said to be a house of King Brian, the Parc-an-each his horse paddock, and the Clochaniona (*cloch an fhiona*) his wine cellar.⁷ The last named is a late-looking ivied ruin across the river, in Tipperary. Thanks to Mr. Robert White of Kincora House, and the Parkers of Ballyvalley, I was put on the track of many local stories in 1892-4, before modern changes had affected them.

One of the chief localized tales was about the “Graves of the Leinster Men” and Lachtrelyon on the flank of Thoutinna mountain in Co. Tipperary to the north-east of Killaloe. At the former were some low standing stones and an old avenue, and at the latter a huge rock behind which were traces of a cairn. The latter was called in English “The Leinster Man’s Grave” and “The Leinster King’s Grave,” or, in Irish, Knockaunrelyon and Lachtrelyon (*cnocán* or *leacht-righ laighean*). When the cairn was partly removed, a large human skeleton and rusted iron weapons were found. These were given or sold to a Mr. Molloy, but I could not trace their ownership in 1892. The tale then ran that

⁵ *Promenade d’un François en Irlande*, p. 153.

⁶ It was probably the revival of the name at the modern house that led the people of the neighbourhood to separate Kincora from Balboruma; it had arisen in 1843, for in Hall, *loc. cit.*, we find that “his kitchen was at Kincora where the steamboat station now is.”

⁷ The *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Tipperary), vol. ii., p. 28 (1840), render it “stone of the wine,” but *cloch* is very common for a castle, and sometimes used for a church; e.g. Cloghnarold, Harold’s Castle (Co. Limerick), Cloghansavaun (Co. Clare), CloghJordan (Co. Tipperary), and many more.

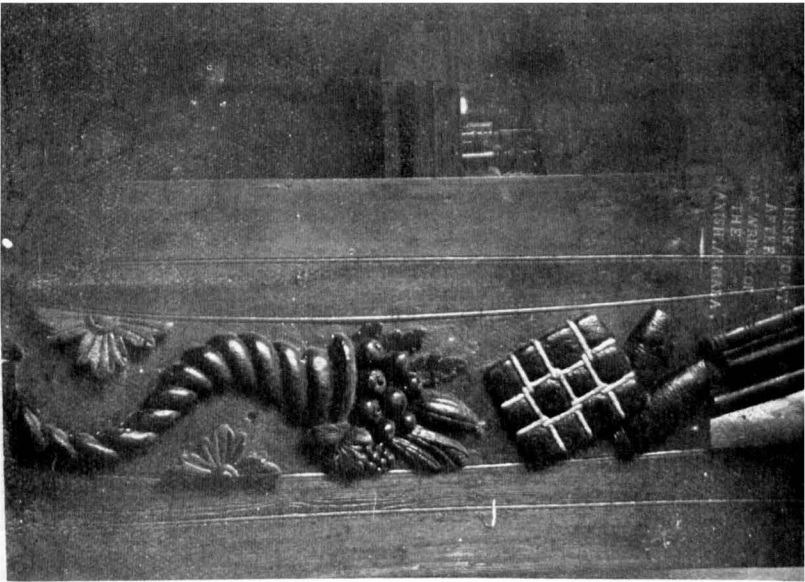
King Brian Boru engaged his daughter to the King of Leinster, who came to fetch her. But Brian's wife did not like the match, and sent soldiers to hide on the hill. They attacked the Leinster Prince, and after "a big fight" several of his men were slain and he was mortally wounded. He entreated his men to carry him to the head of the pass so that he might die in sight of Leinster, and they did so, and buried him there, facing Leinster. They also buried their slain comrades down the hillside under the stones called "The Graves of the Leinster Men" (see Plate VII.).

Such was the older story, evidently not derived from a book, but now there is an altered version. In 1906 I heard that the King of Leinster came to pay his rent to Brian Boru, and brought a "maypole" as a present. When he came to Kin-cora, "Brian's bad wife" called him "a sneak" for paying taxes and sent him away, and then told her husband that the King would pay no rent. Brian, in a passion, went with all his men by the short cut under the river from Ballyboru to Rine Innish, and caught and beat the Leinster men. And when their King fell, "badly hurt," "Brian came to abuse him and heard all, and he was very sorry and carried him up to where he could see Leinster," and "set by him till he died, and buried him there." The tales vary on the mountain as to Brian's subsequent meeting with his wife; "he ran and broke her head," says one, and "she ran off to the Danes when he offered to bate her," says another. My uncle's gamekeeper at Townlough said that old people told how "they" dug behind the Knockaun "and got big bones there." As will be seen, the early story is free from all those details from *The Wars of the Gaedhil* with which the later version is amplified and overlaid.⁸ Possibly the original tale did not refer to King Brian at all, as the cairn burial seems to date it long before 1014.⁹

In 1889 it was related at Killaloe and O'Brien's Bridge that Brian Boru broke down the curious half-rebuilt O'Brien's Bridge to escape from the hot pursuit of a great Danish army from Limerick. The stone-vaulted romanesque church beside the Cathedral of St. Flannan was said to be "Brian Boru's vault," and the far later richly-carved doorway of the older Cathedral was said

⁸ *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxix., pp. 210-1.

⁹ However, cairns may have been made even later in some cases.



1. THE GRAVES OF THE LEINSTER MEN (TIPPERARY).
2. ARMADA CARVING AT SPANISH POINT (CLARE).

To face p. 368.

to have been made for him as a door for his palace, and some said that he was buried under the early Celtic tombstone in its recess. He was, of course, actually buried at Armagh Cathedral, in accordance with his will.

I got a doubtful story, from a suspected source near Broadford, that Brian hid his cattle from the Danes in the fort called Lisnagry ("cattle fort") near the pass of Formoyle. I learn from Dr. G. U. MacNamara that Brian Boru's well at Elmvale near Inchiquin Lake is locally said to be named from a red cow (*bo-ruadh*) and not from the King. The modern story that "Brian Boru was made King of County Clare" at the mound of Magh Adhair did not exist there in 1891, and I forced the old man who told it to me to confess that he had "got it from a knowledgeable man, a sapper" on the Ordnance Survey, about 1895. Much history, spread during this survey, is becoming bogus antique tradition.¹⁰

7. *Other Traditions up to A.D. 1270.*

The *Annals* tell how, in 1086, three named Connaught chiefs fell in a raid into Corcomroe. Two curious stories, evidently genuine folk versions of the raid, are attached to the great cairn of Cairn Connachtagh in the marshy fields at Ballydeely between Ennistymon and Lisdoonvarna. I was told in 1878 (and Dr. W. H. Stacpoole Westropp remembered the legend as extant long before then) that the King of Connacht went to Loop Head and returned "with lots of men and cows chained together," and the Clare men (some said "under the O'Briens," comparatively late settlers in that district), attacked the Connaught men and killed all except three chiefs, and buried the dead (or the chiefs) under the big cairn. Others said only that a king was killed in a battle there and buried under it.¹¹ In 1839, and long after, it was told how a Connaught army hunted a big serpent to the spot and killed

¹⁰ Mr. P. J. Lynch gives a still later "antique" tradition, told to him on the spot, that an old tree grew there and an Orangeman came from Ulster and cut it down,—an obvious modernization of the *Bili Maigh Adhair*, a venerated tree, felled by the Ulstermen in 976, or of its successor cut by Aedh O'Connell of Connacht in 1051.

¹¹ So the late Professor Brian O'Looney.

it, and buried it under the cairn.¹² The first story is probably to be connected with the tales of the raids of the three brothers of Loop Head against the plunderers of their flocks,¹³ as all the three opposing chiefs came from a few miles away. The cairn is almost certainly Carn mic Tail, the inauguration place of the Corca-Modruadh tribes.¹⁴

The Norman invasion has left in County Clare no traditions known to me. It hardly affected Clare in the time of King Donaldmore, while his two sons, and especially Donchadh Cairbreach, had more or less friendly relations with the foreigners. He was remembered as the builder of Limerick Cathedral, and a slab near the west door, with an encircled cross between four fantastic animals, was (at least in later tradition)¹⁵ believed to mark his grave. None of his numerous Clare foundations,—Killone, Canon's Island, Inchicronan, Clare Abbey, and Corcomroe,—was attributed to him, and the last named was definitely assigned to his grandson Conor. Donchadh Cairbreach was also forgotten as the founder of Ennis "Abbey."

Croohoore na Siudaine.—Conchobar Ruadh succeeded Donchadh in 1242. He was an able prince who forced the Normans to recognize him, and, aided by his gifted son Tadhg Caoluisge na Briain, expelled them from all their settlements in Clare. He fell in quelling a rebellion in 1269 at a place called Siudaine near Corcomroe Abbey,¹⁶ and was buried in the chancel of that monastery, where his effigy still remains. He is locally remem-

¹² *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 309. Serpents and the Black Pig are frequently associated with famous meeting places of pagan times. See De Vismes Kane, *Proceedings of Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxvii., p. 301.

¹³ Cf. *supra*, p. 104.

¹⁴ Cf. *Life of St. Maccrecius and Annals of the Four Masters*.

¹⁵ It is not mentioned by Dyneley in his description of the Cathedral, in Harris' *Ware's Bishops*, or in any authority known older than 1860, such as the *Historical Memoirs of the O'Briens*. Lenihan describes it in *Limerick: its history etc.* (1866), adding that lions are the arms of the O'Briens, but not hinting that the slab was connected with Donaldmore. The late Dean O'Brien had it moved to the steps of the monument of the Earls of Thomond, resting it in a handsome base.

¹⁶ Not behind Ballyvaughan, as marked on the Ordnance Survey maps, but near the Castles of Muckinish.

bered as "Croohoore na Sudany," and is reputed to have built the noble early fortress of Dun Conor or "Doon Croohoore," on the middle Isle of Aran. He may have repaired it, or added a late-seeming bastion to its outer wall, but the place is evidently of very early origin. In a poem by Mac Liac, King Brian's bard, about 1000, the island was assigned to Concraid, son of Umor, a Firbolg chief at the beginning of our era. Probably the names Concraid and Conchobhar were confused in the popular mind,¹⁷ and the close connection between Aran and Corcomroe familiarised the Aran men with Conor's monument and history. Hugh Brigdall in 1695 notes "a monument or statue of ye O'Bryens in this Abbey nicknamed Concuba na Siudne."¹⁸ Local tradition in the middle of the nineteenth century said that he fell in battle and was buried where he fell, and the Abbey built over him.¹⁹ A cruder story about 1849 said that he fell smoking, and was buried with his pipe in his mouth! This was still told at the Abbey in 1878, but it is hard to tell how it originated, as the face is clean shaven and unbroken. I found no trace of the pipe story in 1885, but by 1900 it had been revived among young men "guides," falsely so called, for the benefit of tourists.

A tale existed before 1870 which was curiously like the tales of Solomon putting Hiram and the temple-builders to death, the Strasburg clock, and so on. Conor got five skilled masons to build the Abbey of Corcomroe, and as soon as they had finished the chancel and east chapels he killed them, lest they should build similar structures elsewhere; this explains the rude, bald ugliness of the rest of the ruin and its beautiful east end. In recent years

¹⁷ *Revue Celtique*, vol. xv., p. 478, from the Rennes *Dindsenchas*, sec. 78, ed. by W. Stokes. Roderic O'Flaherty says "Chonquovar" (*Ogygia* and *A Chorographical Description of West or H-Iar Connaught*).

¹⁸ Ms. Trinity Coll., Dublin, i. 1. 2, pp. 332 (*Commonplace Book relating to Ireland*).

¹⁹ *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 156, collected by John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry. A very inaccurate view of the monument is given in the *Dublin Penny Journal*, vol. ii. (1834), p. 341, and in Canon Dwyer's *Handbook to Lisdoonvarna* (1876), p. 81. The account in the former says wrongly that the monument is of "Donchadh" O'Brien, slain in "1267." Donchadh also fell in battle and was buried in the Abbey (in 1317), but the monument is for Conchobhar, whose powerful son reigned for many years later.

Donaldmore has taken Conor's place as the slayer, because he is now known to be the actual founder.²⁰

Torloughmore is remembered as the "founder" (*i.e.* restorer) of Ennis Abbey. Strange to say, a few generations after his death an unflattering tale is told of this special favourite of Clare historians in the Appendix to a *Life* of St. Senan. Theodoric, son of Tatheus, enraged by the monks of Iniscathaigh permitting a husbandman to take sanctuary, invaded St. Senan's *termon* at Cill mic an dubhain (Kilmacduan), and dragged forth the refugee. On the second night after the sacrilege, the saint appeared to the prior of Iniscathaigh, and said that he was going to punish Theodoric. The Prince saw that same night in a vision St. Senan, who rebuked him and struck his leg with the crozier. No doctor could 'cure the wound, which mortified, and Theodoric died.²¹ No definite folk-tale seems to refer to "Torlough's war."²² The second war is, however, well represented.

Claraghmore.—It is wonderful how deep has been the impression made in tradition by the war of Murchad, Prince of Thomond, (Torlough's son) with Sir Richard de Clare in 1310-18. But it is confused and is centred on the Norman leader, locally known as "Claraghmore" (the great De Clare), bearing no trace until recent years of deriving anything from the records. The second prose epic of Thomond, the *Cathreim Thoirdehalbhaigh* ("Triumphs of Torlough"), a bombastic but very reliable history (usually assigned to 1459 on the sole authority of a late eighteenth-century copy, but from internal evidence earlier than 1360),²³ has made no impression on the folk-tales down at least to 1891. A very vague memory of a battle near Clare Abbey is believed to refer to the fierce fight there in 1276, but the tradition gives no data. An

²⁰[The tale of the slaying of a great architect by his jealous employer is found throughout the Old World; see, for examples, the Roumanian ballad of *Manoli*, and note by W. A. Clouston in *N. & Q.*, 7th S. vol. iv. (1887), p. 141.—Ed.]

²¹J. Colgan, *Acta Sanctorum etc.* (1645), Tom i., March 8th, sec. xiv.

²²Unless a vague fight "where the English were beaten" near Ballycarr be Torlough's victory in Tradree.

²³*Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxxii., Sec. C, Pt. ii., pp. 139-40.

equally vague tale²⁴ at Mortyclough has been referred to the decisive battle of Corcomroe in 1317, which, however, was certainly fought on the ridge close to the Abbey, between it and Bealaclogga creek, and not at Mortyclough. It is probable that the name Mothar tigh cloice ("fort of the stone house," and in its phonetic form Mortyclough), suggested to someone the meaning Mortough's tombstone, and was explained by the slaying of "Mortough Garbh O'Brien" in the battle. He was a rather obscure adherent of Prince Donchad, and seems unlikely to have remained in popular remembrance.

In 1695 Hugh Brigidall records the local tradition near Dysert O'Dea that De Clare fell at Dromcavan.²⁵ At the stream bounding that townland and Dysert, old folk told in 1839 a tale, not found in the histories but evidently old, that when Claraghmore was coming to Dysert²⁶ a certain Conor more Hiomhair (locally "Howard") advised O'Dea to lay a trap. He loosened the timber side beam of a wicker bridge over the stream, and hid in a recess on the bank under it, armed with his axe. As Claraghmore rode across, Hiomhair pushed out a prop and the structure collapsed, and as De Clare and his horse were struggling in the stream the Irishman split his skull.²⁷ The history makes it clear that De Clare had crossed the stream and fell in an ambush of the O'Deas in a wood towards Dysert. There was actually a contemporary Conchobhar na Hiomhair, who fought on the Irish side at the battle of Corcomroe Abbey in the year preceding (1317), but was too obscure to render his intrusion into local tradition probable, and hence may have been the real slayer of the Norman. The night before Claraghmore died, says tradition at Scool, about a mile and a half from Dysert, twenty-five banshees washed blood-stained clothes in the lake. This was told to Prof. Brian O'Looney before 1870, and Dr. G. U. MacNamara found it still extant some

²⁴ First given in *Dublin Penny Journal*, *loc. cit.*, and the *Ordnance Survey Letters*.

²⁵ *Commonplace Book*, p. 224.

²⁶ As the Castle was far later, O'Dea's residence may well have been the fort not far from Dromcavan in the intervening townland now called Ballycullinan. The old townlands have been greatly subdivided, even since 1655.

²⁷ *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 156.

five years ago. In the history a banshee appears to De Clare.²⁸ A story preserved in an Appendix to the *Life* of St. Senan tells how the saint, to punish a violation of his sanctuary, drove Richard De Clare mad, so that the latter rushed heedlessly into a battle in which he lost his life; this story probably dates back to the later fourteenth century.²⁹

There are some extremely unreliable De Clare traditions. Clare Castle and Clarisford near Killaloe were said to be named after "Clarence," for De Clare, in certain late English histories, had been transformed into a good "Duke of Clarence" who "introduced civility" into Clare, building market towns and castles and governing the country well; but the Irish were under no such delusions about the civilizing career of Norman conquest in Thomond.

The late sixteenth-century "court" (possibly that of the Deans of Kilsenora), on the Fergus near Inchiquin Lake was called Cobhail³⁰ an Claraighmore ("Great De Clare's ruin") in 1859.³¹ At my earlier visits the old folk denied that it ever bore the map name "De Clare's House," or had anything to do with Claraghmore, with whose name and fate they were familiar.

The north-east tower of Bunratty Castle was named "De Clare's Tower" by the Studderts; it is clearly of the late fifteenth century.³² The name De Clare was used in late times by the Studderts, who have of course no connection with the extinct Lords of Bunratty, and probably first applied the name to the tower with no better foundation than the recent "bathroom" story possesses.

Conor O'Hiomhair figures in a second tale at Dysert Castle, in which a guest of O'Dea politely wishes the castle full of gold,

²⁸ Cf. vol. xxi., pp. 188-9.

²⁹ Colgan, *op. cit.*, March 8th, sec. xxxvi. [*sic*].

³⁰ Cobhal, pronounced locally "Cowl," is used, even by English speakers, near Corofin and Tulla for a ruined house or even cabin. Coul na brawher ("the friar's ruin") is still shown, not far north from "De Clare's House."

³¹ *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol i., p. 51. It was also called "O'Quin's ruin"; v. *ibid.* pp. 61-3.

³² This tallies with the statement in the "Castle founders' list." So far as I can judge, no portion of any earlier building is left.

and the chief in reply wishes it full of O'Hiomhairs.³³ A very modern and ill-attested story, which I did not find at Dysert in 1885 or 1895, says that O'Dea lured the English into a bog by setting bulrushes in the mire, so that De Clare, "knowing that such plants always grew in firm soil," rode in with his knights and became a prey to the Irish.

The tale of a great battle at Dysert Castle, and the human bones turned up round it, probably concern the battle fought there in 1562, but have been used by some to locate the decisive battle of May, 1318. The "stone of broken bones" near Quin (where a Domnall O'Brien was taken by his enemies and his bones broken on the rock),³⁴ has been also asserted to refer to Domnall O'Brien, brother of King Torlough, who was slain by a Norman soldier, or mason, when peaceably buying wine at the Castle. I cannot trace the tale before 1860-70, when the history of the *Four Masters* was well known, and, if the tale be genuine or even taken from some "knowledgeable person," it more probably relates to Domnall beg O'Brien, whose bones were broken with the back of an axe and he, still alive, hung in ropes to the belfry of Quin Abbey in 1584, by order of Sir John Perrot.

A very remarkable story, certainly genuine and evidently referring to the period of the Norman wars, attaches to a low hill with traces of entrenchment and, formerly, a deep straight ditch, between Loughs Bridget (Breeda) and Anilloon (Alinoon) between Tulla and Bodyke. It is called Kilconnell, and in 1839 Irish-speakers called it Cladh na 'n gall ("Foreigners' trench," or "defeat," said some). An English army encamped there and was destroyed by an Irish army from Tomgraney. Most of the English soldiers were slain and buried on the hill top, within the Cladh, where human bones have been found.³⁵ In 1891 the late Captain Charles George O'Callaghan, of Ballinahinch near Kilconnell (from whom I carefully concealed the 1839 tale and the history, although he said "tell me the story I'm to look for"!)

³³ *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. i., p. 157.

³⁴ So Prof. Brian O'Looney. The tale is also alluded to in *Revue Celtique*, vol. xiii. (1892), p. 67.

³⁵ *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. ii., p. 297.

gave me two tales to the same effect. Mr. Whelan of Kilconnell, and an old labourer at Ballinahinch, gave a version like that of 1639, but added that the English first drove back the Irish into the swamp at Lough Anilloon below the hill, where many were lost. No period was fixed by the tale, but it tallies only with an event in 1315. Richard De Clare set out to fight with Edward Bruce, possibly intending to march by Scariff, Portumna, and Athlone. He entered Hy Ronghaile, camped in the very middle of it, and sent his Irish allies past Tomgraney to drive prince Murchad O'Brien from the ford of Scariff; but they got the worst of it, and were driven back in great confusion upon De Clare's army, which fell into panic and retreated hastily to Bunnratty. Kilconnell is "in the very middle of Hy Ronghaile."

8. *Period 1318-1500.*

Popular guide-books always follow the *Four Masters*⁸⁶ in attributing the Franciscan convent of Quin to Sioda MacNamara in 1402. It was certainly largely rebuilt and ornamented at that time, but the many earlier features show that Wadding is right in placing its foundation before 1350. The fact that it was built on and out of the ruins of a great castle was noted by Sir Thomas Deane in 1884.⁸⁷ I first identified the castle,—which he attributed to Brian Boru, but which is an unmistakably Norman court, with great circular turrets at three angles,—with the "round-towery, strong castle" built by Thomas De Clare in 1280 at Cuinche. It is likely that the MacNamaras, after the fall of Bunnratty in 1334 and before 1350, gave its site, as a thankoffering for their victory, to God and the monks of St. Francis, so I shall place the legends of the "Abbey" in this period. Tradition near Tulla points to some enclosures, a little over a mile from the village and in low ground at the foot of "Abbey Hill," as the place where "the MacNamaras began to build Quin Abbey." The quarry from which its stones were drawn is shown on the hillside.

⁸⁶ O'Donovan's enthusiastic belief in this late history has affected all Irish archaeology. "No other authority is heard, once the Four Masters have spoken!" seems still operative.

⁸⁷ *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. ii., Ser. II. (P.L.A.), p. 201.

At Quin it is said to have been built by the Gobbán saor, the famous legendary Master Builder, to whom so many Round Towers, churches, castles, and abbeys of the ninth to the fifteenth centuries are attributed. He twisted the spiral pillars in its beautiful cloister with his own hands. One of the builders fell from the roof and was killed, where an ancient tombstone, with an axe incised on it, marks the place of his burial. Several traditions are told about Sioda, near Kilkishen. He was said to have caught a water horse, and, after being ridden for many years, it ran away with him one day, dinting a rock with its hoofs as it sprang, with the chieftain on its back, into Cullaunyheeda Lake, thence called after his name "Heeda."³⁸ Another tale says that Sioda was not drowned, but sleeps beneath the waters, not to waken until summoned to the final battle for the independence of Ireland.

The peel towers rising so numerous in the country mostly date from about 1430 to 1480. Tradition attributes Rossroe Castle to Sioda MacNamara, who built Quin Abbey in 1402. Danganbrack and Ballymarkahan are also rightly assigned to the MacNamaras, after Quin Abbey was erected, as I was told about Ballymarkahan in 1906. Near Clonlara seven brothers built "seven" castles "against each other," and were "all" killed by their brothers. I heard the story first in 1868, when a mere child, and think that there was a princess or a beautiful lady in it about whom the brothers quarrelled, but I barely recollect it, and in 1889 could not recover more than "the seven brothers who killed each other."

Perhaps to this period should be attributed the tale of a certain monk of Ennis "Abbey" trying to cross the Fergus during a flood. The current being too strong, he called to some men to help him over, but they refused, and he cursed Ennis that no man of Ennis should ever be able to do any good for the place.³⁹

The monks of Ennis told in the seventeenth century how Conor "Nasatus" (*i.e.* Conchobhar na Srona) O'Brien, Prince of Thomond from 1466, was on his death in 1496 seized by devils. Brother Fergal O'Trean, a man of holy life, when he saw them carrying off

³⁸ More probably after the O'Sheedy, a branch of his house.

³⁹ This story was told as a well-established one at a public meeting at Ennis about 1895.

the prince, prayed earnestly for him, and that very hour a holy hermit at Lismore, where no one had heard of Conor's death, announced that the prince's soul was saved by the prayers of a holy monk at Ennis.⁴⁰

O'Quin and the Swan-Maiden.—The fullest and most beautiful of the Clare folk-tales is connected in its most popular versions with Tyge Ahood (*i.e.* Tadgh an Comhad) O'Brien, Prince of Thomond, who reigned from 1461-6. But it is not of his time, nor indeed of any historic time, but a local version of a world-wide myth.⁴¹ The Inchiquin legend was first published by Dr. G. Petrie in 1840, and then in *Memorials of Adare* by Lord Dunraven, who claimed descent from the O'Quins of Inchiquin.⁴² The best and fullest modern version is given by Dr. G. U. MacNamara, whose fields run down to the lake and have in view the castle of Inchiquin and the church of Coad. The *Ordnance Survey Letters* give a recension of the same date as Petrie's. I may add that the power of the O'Quins as a tribe was really broken long before 1460, in the opinion of some several generations before the Norman invasion, and in that of others as late as 1180. But at any rate the O'Quins were of good standing down to the Norman invasion. Edaom, daughter of O'Quin and Queen of Munster, died on a pilgrimage to Derry in 1188. The *Cathreim Thoirdhealbhaigh* barely mentions the family as fighting at Corcomroe in 1317, when Mathgamhan O'Brien held Inchiquin and its island castle.

In 1839 the tale was located at the rock platform, at the upper end of the lake, called Doonaun, or, at that time, Duneán ui chuinn ("O'Quin's rock fort").⁴³ Conor O'Quin, the chief, walking by the lake, saw a lovely woman on the south shore, combing her hair. She vanished on his approach. This happened three times. O'Quin was consumed with love for her, and at last, seeing her

⁴⁰ L. Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, vol. vii., p. 574.

⁴¹ Cf. E. S. Hartland, *The Science of Fairy Tales*, pp. 255-32, 337-52.

⁴² See also *Irish Penny Journal*, 1840-1, pp. 122-3; *Antiquities of the Northern portion of Co. Clare*, p. 66 (republished by the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland in 1900 as *Antiquarian Handbook No. V.*).

⁴³ Dunán (Doonaun) is a rather rare component (Dun, Dunádh, and Duneen being more common), but occurs attached to two actual promontory forts at Doonaunroe and Doonaunmore in the county.

take off a dark hood, he succeeded in stealing upon her and catching up the hood so that she could not escape. He seized her "without even saying 'your servant, ma'am!' or any other decent good-morrow," and asked her to be his wife. She consented, and they were married and lived most happily for several years. At last O'Brien of Lemeneagh and others got up races at Coad, and O'Quin went to them, after promising his wife not to invite any guest nor to accept any man's invitation. He forgot his promise, asked O'Brien back to a sumptuous feast, and played cards with him. His wife took her hood, stole out, and disappeared. O'Quin staked all he had on the cards, and lost. He lived on, a lonely and miserable man, as a dependent of O'Brien, who allowed him to dwell in "De Clare's Court" or "O'Quin's Ruin" on the Fergus just above the lake.⁴⁴

Petrie tells how a young chief of the O'Quins saw a number of lovely swans sporting on the western shore of the lake. He caught one and brought it to his home, where to his amazement it threw off its downy covering and appeared as a maid of the greatest beauty. Madly in love he proposed marriage, and she accepted him on the three conditions that (1) the marriage should be kept a secret, (2) he should never ask O'Brien to his house, and (3) he should avoid all games of chance. Some happy years passed by, and brought two children. Then there were races at Coad, O'Quin asked some O'Briens to his house, and his wife after preparing the feast resumed her swan dress, wept over her children, and plunged into the lake. O'Quin, ignorant of his loss, commenced gambling, and lost all his property to "Tiege an cood O'Brien," the most distinguished of his guests. Petrie is inclined to rationalize the tale, and to suppose that, in consequence of the chief's concealed and probably lowly marriage, the tribe repudiated him, pointing out that the O'Quin pedigree given by MacFirbis breaks off about 1460. But the widespread occurrence of the tale does not favour a local source, although it may have been locally adapted with that love for definite topographical and historic setting so characteristic of the Irish.

Dr. MacNamara took pains to get the best modern recension, so I give this in preference to my own scanty notes made in 1884

⁴⁴ *Ordnance Survey Letters* (Co. Clare), vol. i., pp. 61-3.

at Kilnaboy.⁴⁵ The young chief of Clan Ifearnain was hunting deer on Keentlae, and in his eager pursuit of a stag got parted from his companions. As he wandered along the shore of the lake he saw five beautiful swans playing in the water. They came ashore, took off their plumage, and became maidens of exquisite beauty. After a moment's amazement he ran out. They threw on their feathered robes,—all save one,—and flew away. O'Quin had seized one dress, and the four other swans, with plaintive cries, disappeared, leaving their sister weeping. O'Quin led her back to his castle, comforted her, and won her love. But she asked two pledges before her marriage,—that it should be kept a secret, and that no O'Brien should be admitted under their roof. Seven years passed by, the pair and their two beautiful children living in ever-increasing happiness. Then, one fatal day, there were races at Coad, and O'Quin met Teigue an chomad O'Brien, brought him home, drank freely, commenced gambling, and lost all his lands and property. The ruined man rushed to his only remaining possessions, his wife and children, but to his horror found his wife in her swan dress with a cygnet held under each wing. She gave him one look of sorrowful reproach, flew out over the misty lake, and disappeared for ever.

Lord and Lady Dunraven have published an artificial-seeming story of the O'Quin's ruin, but neither Dr. MacNamara nor I ever found any trace of it among the people of Inchiquin.⁴⁶ According to this story, Rory the Black, son of Donal O'Quin, gets into the wilds while hunting, meets Merulan the wizard and revives him after a bad fall, and is given a magic jewel (a golden butterfly). He saves a girl from drowning, and finds that she is Enna, daughter of a wood kern but of rarest beauty. He marries her secretly, and then finds that his father has betrothed him to Maud, daughter of O'Brien, King of Thomond. He refuses the princess, and is imprisoned until weary of his dungeon, although the jewel lights it brilliantly. He yields, and determines to repudiate his

⁴⁵ "A young man found seven wild swans, and caught one on the lake. It became a girl and he married her, and when he was false to her she flew away again." I got a similar story at Lemaneagh, in the same visit.

⁴⁶ *Memorials of Adare* (1865), pp. 170-7; the tale in the *Irish Penny Journal* is also reproduced, p. 168.

low-born bride. As he rides to O'Brien's Court, he gets benighted, but no ray shines from the jewel; this awakes his conscience, and as he repents the light returns. He puts off his visit until his old father dies, and, as chief, avows his marriage. O'Brien hurls an army against him and seizes his territory, and the hapless chief flies with no other possessions than his talisman and the love of his wife. This tale seems to have been either invented, or recast from "a forgotten memory" of the real folk-tale, probably by Lady Dunraven.

In the versions which I heard of the genuine story in 1884 the number of the swans was seven, but, as will have been seen above, the older versions mention one and "a number," while Dr. MacNamara heard of five. The lake actually abounds in these beautiful birds. I have myself often seen more than forty wild swans at one time sailing or playing on the waters.

THOS. J. WESTROPP.

(To be concluded.)
