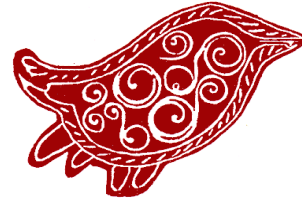


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Ceallach (Kelly), a distinguished lawyer and judge, who was also abbot of Cinnait. In the language of the old historians, "the white field was reddened by the blood of the men of Munster;" whose king, Cormac McCullinan, was killed by his horse slipping, and rolling over him down a steep bank. Some of the Ardrigh's savage soldiery found the bishop-king lying dead, and with shouts of joy they hacked off his head and brought it to Flann Siona, who severely rebuked their conduct, and bewailed the fate of the poor king, whose head he reverently kissed, with tears in his eyes. He then gave orders that the body should be taken from the field, and buried according to the directions left in the will of the bishop-king.

The impetuous Flahertach, the originator of this disastrous conflict, was made prisoner, and, in years of confinement, spent in penitential exercises, he acquired more humility and calmness of judgment. On his release he was again appointed chief counsellor to the kingdom of Munster, and eventually he wore the crown of the learned Cormac McCullinan, who among the Irish princes of the ninth and tenth centuries, was conspicuous as a royal scholar, a bishop, and a king.

Recollections of Castle Hyde.

By J. RODERICK O'FLANAGAN, B.L.

Author of "Historical and Picturesque Guide to the Blackwater in Munster."

PART I.—CASTLE HYDE AND THE HYDES.



ON the north bank of the "Irish Rhine," as the historic and picturesque Blackwater in Munster is justly called, stands the spacious and well-built mansion of Castle Hyde. A massive square centre is relieved by light and graceful wings, which do not detract from the substantial appearance of the mansion. They are four storeys in height, marked by stone dressing, and a broad flight of steps leads to the hall door. The ground slopes gently from the house to the swift-flowing river, and the front windows look from the grassy lawn on the opposite hills. There are trees of various kind, size, and age, from the potential oak to the newly-planted shrub. The rear of the mansion is sheltered from the north by giant cliffs. On the summit stands the ruined walls of the castle of Carrigansady, and the modern building tells of changed times. In early days

men selected, as the site for their dwelling, places inaccessible to foot, where the owner could mark the approach of his foe, and prepare for defence; while the enemy, having to scale the steep rock, was sometimes easily impeded. In latter times, when peace prevailed, and the difficulty of reaching the lofty dwelling was felt irksome, especially to the female occupants, the situation was changed, and the shelter of the valley preferred to the height.

When, in 1599, the distribution of the forfeited estates of the Earl of Desmond in Cork, Limerick, Kerry, Tipperary, and Waterford was made by Sir John Popham, the English Attorney General, and Sir Edward Phytot, six thousand acres were granted to Arthur Hyde, at one penny an acre, and twelve thousand acres, at the same rate, to Phane Becher. These lands were granted on the undertaking to plant them with English subjects—twenty-four on the Hyde lands and twelve on the Becher. These terms were often unfulfilled, and the old owner returned to cultivate the lands for the new proprietors. Here, for nearly three centuries, Hyde ruled—marrying, and giving in marriage, with some of the noblest Anglo-Norman, English, and great of the land. Ponsonby, Earl of Bessborough; Boyle, Earl of Shannon; O'Callaghan, Lord Lismore; MacCarties of Carrignavar. Held in high esteem for hospitality, sporting, and social qualities, they loved the land, and sat in the Irish Parliament; indeed, the late Mr. Hyde was offered the representation of the county of Cork, but in those days contested elections were of enormous expense, and having to provide fortunes for his sisters and interest on very heavy encumbrances, Mr. Hyde declined the flattering offer, and was content to avoid adding to an embarrassed fortune. Though never a forward horseman, he kept a pack of hounds, and kept a hospitable table for his friends.

His relations may be judged from the alliances recorded in Sir Bernard Burke's *Landed Gentry*. Jane, daughter of John Hyde, of Castle Hyde, in 1749 married the Hon. Richard Barry, son of the Earl of Barrymore. John Hyde, of Castle Hyde and Creg, married Sarah, daughter of Benjamin Burton, and Lady Anne Ponsonby, daughter of the Earl of Bessborough. His daughter Sarah married, in June, 1798, Henry, Earl of Shannon, and died in 1820. In 1809, Mr. Hyde married the Hon. Elizabeth O'Callaghan, second daughter of Lord Lismore, and by her, who died 18th August, 1824, had two sons and four daughters. Sarah married William Cooke Collis, of Castle Cooke. After his death she married J. P. Pierce, who died in 1866. Elizabeth, who died in 1868, married Robert MacCartie, esq., of Carrignavar, county Cork. Louisa married William Penrose, of Lehana; died 1857. The Misses DeCourcy MacCartie, who now reside at Creg, nieces of the late John Hyde, have

travelled much. One of these ladies informed me that while in Brussels their father became acquainted with the popular Irish novelist, Charles Lever, and told him some incidents of Irish life, which Lever noted and introduced into his works. I had much pleasure sending them my friend W. J. Fitzpatrick's biography of Lever, one of the best memoirs ever written. One of the Hydes being deformed, thereby acquired the nickname of "Humpy Hyde." While superintending some labourers, observing one indolently resting on his spade, while his fellow-workmen were busy, Mr. Hyde went to him, and in sharp words remonstrated with him for his laziness. "Oh! your honour," replied the man, in a tone which might have been meant for sarcastic, considering how the words applied, "would you not give a poor fellow time to *straighten his back.*" A member of the Hyde family, a lover of the turf, desirous of witnessing races, opened a course adjoining his demesne, and built the house known as the "Stand House." From the top storey a very good view can be had of the surrounding country. I am not aware if these races were confined to Mr. Hyde's own stud, or open to public competition, but I know that in the neighbouring race-course of Fermoy there used to be found many of the best horsemen and racers of Ireland from the year 1830 to 1840. When I name Tom Ferguson and "Hark-away," John Dennis and "Alhambra," the brothers MacDonogh, Richard Fitzgerald, the Dennehy's of Belview, and Doctor O'Neill, I have said enough. The Stand House is now the residence of a sportsman, Colonel Bell, whose celebrated race-horse, "Jovial," secured many a triumph at our country races.

Next to Castle Hyde is Creg, a well-built mansion, situated in a pleasant, well-planted lawn, also on the north bank of the Blackwater. It was formerly occupied by Colonel William Stewart, son of Sir Annesley Stewart, bart., of Fort Stewart, county Donegal, who married Anne Hyde. They lived in much retirement, and, after the death of the Colonel, Mrs. Stewart was fond of exercising kindness to animals. She purchased several old horses unfit for use, which she allowed to graze on the rich pasture of the lawn of Creg. It is related that while Creg Castle was garrisoned by soldiers in 1798, William Hyde was one evening walking in the ground when he heard two men expressing their determination of killing him. He noticed the pair. One was a tall, slight man, whose back was over the wall, while his companion, low and burly, was below. Being a strong man, Mr. Hyde resolved to secure, at least, one of his intended assassins, and before either had been aware of his presence he quickly drew the taller man over the wall, and clasping him so tight that he could make no resistance hurried him to the Castle, where the soldiers speedily relieved him of his prisoner. A drum-head court martial was

soon summoned, the evidence of Mr. Hyde taken, but the prisoner refused to inform who his companion was. The verdict now consigned him to exile, and he was quickly conveyed to Cork Gaol previous to his transportation.

While Castle Hyde had been in the Hyde family from the reign of Queen Elizabeth to that of Queen Victoria a change was now about being made. On the passing of the Encumbered Estates Court Act, enabling creditors to petition for the sale of lands to pay off encumbrances, many a lordly castle and mansion was destined to pass into new hands. One of the first petitions to the Court was for the sale by auction of the spacious mansion and well-planted demesne of Castle Hyde, near Fermoy, on the bank of the Blackwater, in the county of Cork. The late Baron Richard, Chief Commissioner, presided at the auction, when the bidding reached £18,000, and as there seemed no prospect of any increase Mr. Hyde, in person, applied for a postponement of the sale, on account of the gross inadequacy of the sum offered. He said, "My Lord, on the house alone my father expended £40,000." The Baron regretted "that owing to the large quantity of business pressing on the Court it was impossible to comply with Mr. Hyde's request." Thus Castle Hyde passed from the Hyde family. It was stated the purchaser was John D. Sadlier, M.P., but it was subsequently purchased by the late Sir Henry Wrixon Becher, bart., who left it to the occupation of his youngest brother and his family.

PART II.—CASTLE HYDE AND THE WRIXON BECHERS.

Though Castle Hyde had thus passed from the grand old family of Hyde it was now possessed by no unworthy race. The Bechers had a name in Irish history. They fought at the Boyne with William III., and received personal favours from that king. When the French fleet anchored in Bantry Bay they were among the first to assemble loyal troops to resist the invaders. The sons of the race were manly and brave, and the daughters fair and honoured. Sir Henry Wrixon Becher, bart., who became the owner of Castle Hyde, had been a lieutenant in the Rifle Brigade, but on succeeding to the title and family estates retired, and preferred a life on the ocean wave and a home on the briny deep to a land life. Meeting with a lady who possessed kindred tastes (Miss Walker, of Bath), he married her, and changing with his brother John, who with his family went to Ballygiblin, he and Lady Becher came to Castle Hyde. As we visited, when at my house Sir Henry narrated some hairbreadth escapes during his voyage. Once when surrounded by icebergs, so close and high that they actually towered over the masts of his yacht, it was with great difficulty they made

their way through. I enquired if he was ever wrecked. "Oh, yes," he replied, "we were in a steamer in the Bay of Biscay, and were run into by another and cut in two. We managed to escape, but Lady Becher's maid was drowned. Sir Henry had a place called Creg, near Baltimore, where he and Lady Becher spent some time each year for the yachting. He was very popular, and I am sure his death was sincerely regretted.

It is worthy of notice that the Bechers had their grant of Irish lands at the same time as the Hydes, and possibly had higher claim on the Government, for they obtained double the number of acres, and only required to plant half the number of English. The mother of the new proprietors of Castle Hyde deserves a place in these pages and in Irish history. Eliza O'Neill might be called the Irish Siddons. She was daughter of John O'Neill, esq., and born in 1789 or 1790. There was a number of brothers and sisters, but she alone seems to have earned distinction. Beautiful in face and graceful in figure, at an early age she obtained an engagement on the stage, and before long her great dramatic talents were described in columns of print. My space does not allow me to quote them, but I cannot resist giving two—one from a hard-headed Scot, afterwards Lord Chancellor, the other from an Englishman seldom moved to feelings of sentiment. In the life of Lord Campbell, by his daughter, Hon. Mrs. Hardcastle, the future Lord Chancellor, both of Ireland and England, wrote:—

"TEMPLE, *November 5th*, 1814.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"My chief amusement lately has been the theatre. A new actress, Miss O'Neill, has lately come out, the most exquisite creature that ever was beheld. I not only admire her enthusiastically as an actress, but I really think I am in love with her."

"TEMPLE, *January 4th*, 1815.

"I still continue a theatrical amateur, and to-morrow night I am going to see Miss O'Neill. After witnessing the performances of Madam George and Duchesney, I admire her more than ever. She is equal in tragedy to Madam Mars."

I had in my collection of rare autographs a letter written by Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, a judge not often credited for sentiment. In writing to the Marchioness of Donegal (his one friend), his Lordship apologises for leaving her abruptly the previous evening, "because he did not wish to allow his feelings, stirred by the splendid acting of Miss O'Neill, to be dispelled by the comedy of the afterpiece."

In 1814, "Adelaide, or the Emigrants," written by Richard Lalor Shiel, was acted at Crow Street Theatre, Dublin. For this play the talents of Miss O'Neill, more than the merits of the drama, secured it a success.

Anxious to serve Shiel, and make her appearance in a new play in London, in 1816 she procured the representation of "Adelaide" at Covent Garden. The two principal parts next to hers was performed by Young and Charles Kemble. The result was not favourable. In 1817, the "Apostate," also written by Shiel, was performed at Covent Garden. Florinda was Miss O'Neill. Other parts were taken by Charles Kemble, Young, Macready, and Egroton, the leading actors on the stage. Miss O'Neill played with an intensity of power and feeling, that no one who did not witness her perform could have an idea. In 1819, "Evadne, or the Statue," was acted for thirty nights to crowded houses. Five months later Miss O'Neill retired from the London stage. Her last appearance in public is believed to have been on the 11th December, 1819, when she had an overflowing house for her benefit at the Theatre Royal, Dublin. It is related that this celebrated actress was possessed of a natural resolve to profit by her success. While at Bristol, awaiting an engagement, the close-fisted manager invited her to see the fine scenery of Clifton. When they reached the summit of the hill, and he heard her expressing delight at the fine view before her for the first time, he was taken aback by her assurance—"Remember, sir, my decision to accept nothing less than a hundred pounds a night for my performances." He secured the Irish Siddons without delay.

After her retirement from the London stage the celebrated actress was induced to revisit the scenes of former triumphs in her native land, and she performed at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, in 1819, when she had a benefit. Having amassed a very large fortune, she, perhaps intent to aid charities by her dramatic talents, and some time after 1819, was at the city where it is said is found—

"Water without mud,
Air without fog,
Fire without smoke,
And streets paved with marble."

Kilkenny was much celebrated for its amateur dramatic performances, and an anecdote relating to a witty decision of Chief Justice Bushe deserves to be recounted. While on a visit to friend, who had a number of guests taking part in a play, they were desirous of obtaining the opinion of the Chief Justice as to the best performer. Feeling the difficulty of giving praise to one over another, Bushe called them together, and declared his willingness to act as requested, provided no one felt disappointed by his preference. All, jointly and severally, having declared their readiness to abide by his opinion, he said, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I give the highest meed of praise to the prompter, for I heard the most and saw the least of him."

At Kilkenny she had many friends, who were glad to entertain her ; and at Kilfunne, about the year 1820, we find Mr. Wrixon married Elizabeth, daughter of John O'Neill, esq. William Wrixon, esq., of Ballygiblin, county Cork, possessed considerable property, and it was reported he obtained with Miss O'Neill a fortune of £30,000. She stipulated on her husband allowing her mother an annuity of £500, which he, of course, consented to. Having succeeded to the Becher estates, he added that name to his parental one, and on the coronation of her Majesty (while in Parliament he was a staunch Liberal and upholder of the Whigs) was created a baronet, and became Sir William Wrixon Becher.

There were three sons and three daughters issue of this marriage, all born at Ballygiblin. Sir William died in 1850, and Lady Wrixon Becher survived until the year 1872, when she died at Ballygiblin at the advanced age of 80. Sir Henry, the eldest son, succeeded his father. Born in 1826, he served as a lieutenant in the Rifle Brigade. He succeeded his father as baronet in October, 1850. His next brother, John, married in 1857 Lady Emily Hare, second daughter of the Earl of Listowel, and is now the Baronet, having succeeded Sir Henry in 1894. The youngest, Sir William, was born in 1831. He served as lieutenant in the 62nd Foot.

A sad accident took place in the year 1882, during the occupancy of Mr. and Lady Emily, which cast a gloom over the neighbourhood. A bright and engaging boy, desirous of having some fishing, ran from the hall doors to the bank of the river, where a boat was secure. It is supposed, having incautiously placed his foot on the gunwale, the boat swerved, and losing his balance the boy sank beneath the boat, for he never rose again. When the child was missed search was made everywhere, the river was dragged, but without discovering there any trace of the body. Lady Emily's grief was widely shared, for all felt much for her.

Subsequently the body of little drowned Charles Henry Wrixon Becher, born in 1871, was found under the boat, and he was interred in the churchyard of Castle Hyde, and a neat tombstone records his memory. In 1881 Sir Henry Wrixon Becher, as stated before, finding a lady possessed of kindred tastes, liking the dash and breeze on board a yacht, Florence Elizabeth Hannah, the eldest daughter of Henry Walker, esq., of the Priory, Bath, made her Lady Wrixon Becher. When not at sea they resided at Ballygiblin, near Mallow, the ancient seat of the Wrixons, but after some years they changed to Castle Hyde, while Mr. John Hyde and Lady Emily and their children went to Ballygiblin. While residing in Castle Hyde Lady Becher gave some garden parties

to a large number of the county families, throwing open the gardens, conservatories, and drawing room, with family portraits, among them one of Sir Henry's mother, the celebrated Miss O'Neill. It would appear these large parties were not to Sir Henry's taste, and he was never seen at any. They went to the meets of fox-hounds in the neighbourhood, and Lady Becher, being an excellent horsewoman and whip, drove her carriage to all the houses of her visitors, and usually had members of her own family at Castle Hyde. In 1894 failing health required Sir Henry to go abroad, but Madeira failed to restore him, and he died sincerely regretted. He is succeeded in his title and estates by his brother, now Sir John Wrixon Becher, baronet.

Biographical Sketches of Persons Remarkable in Local History.

XIV.—JOHN HOGAN, THE SCULPTOR.⁽¹⁾



ALTHOUGH neither born nor buried in our county, yet having spent the first two decades of his life in Cork, where his talents received their earliest development, and in which city some of the finest efforts of his chisel are still to be seen, our local Valhalla could hardly be considered complete if a niche in it were not assigned to that gifted son of Erin who is so emphatically designated as John Hogan, the Irish Sculptor. *The Irish Sculptor* he well deserved to be termed; for not only was he born in the land, but he was the first Irishman who had specially distinguished himself in his noble art; and, more than that, his best works were executed for Ireland—to beautify her churches, personify her nationality, and perpetuate in marble the forms and features of her leaders, poets, men of learning, and citizens of worth.

His father, a very worthy man, a builder by trade, who was descended from an old Tipperary tribe mentioned in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, removed from Tallow, in the county Waterford, to Cork, soon after the birth, in October, 1800, of his eldest and subsequently distinguished son,

⁽¹⁾ Condensed for the most part from Mrs. Atkinson's volume of *Essays* (Dublin: Gill), 1895; a couple of paragraphs have been copied from Maguire's *Irish Industrial Movement* (quoted from the Dublin *University Magazine*); and others have been taken from the *Dictionary of National Biography*.