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Short Annals of Tuam.

By M. T. KELLY.

[A Fore Word.—In a *Journal* solely devoted to the history and archæology of Cork and Munster an essay upon an old cathedral town in the sister province of Connaught must seem very much out of place. The excuse, however, may be offered, that in these "Short Annals of Tuam" mention has been made of one of its archbishops, Maurice O'Fihily, a most distinguished Munster man. Slight as is this golden link with the Southern province of Ireland, it is hoped that its existence may be deemed sufficient for this insertion of an historical and archæological account of a place so far away as is Tuam from the richer and more beautiful counties that constitute the province of Munster.]

LTHOUGH the Irish peasants only allude to the fairies in a respectful manner, as "the good people," they entertain no such scruples with regard to the devil, who, according to their tales, appears to have taken a very lively interest in the Emerald Isle, especially in those ages when Christianity was unknown to its inhabitants. Among these legends is one where it is said, that one day St. Patrick sat down on the hill of Knockma, now Castle Hackett, underneath which a Tuatha da Danaan fairy prince was supposed to have his subterranean palace. From this eminence the saint looked first at the Connemara mountains, as they appeared through the mists floating across their jagged peaks, and then turning from this beautiful scenery he viewed with much disfavour the wide flat plains of Galway, at that period interspersed by gloomy forests and lakes, that lay on the other side of Knockma. Perceiving the demon prowling about near the hill, he called out, "Behold, O Satan, these mountains of glorious form and colour are henceforth mine, and may yonder dark bog be thine."

As St. Patrick generally spoke in excellent Latin, the dreary plain was known as "Tuam" [thine], while "Meum," corrupted into Ma'am was bestowed upon some of the finest mountains in the range of Connemara.

To judge by subsequent events, the devil made no objection to this division, although he must have been sorely hampered in his projects by a holy and learned man who had been a pupil of St. Benignus, archbishop of Armagh. This monk, Jarlath or Hierlath, son of Loga, was a member of a family possessing territory in the northern part of Galway, and on his return from Armagh he founded a school or college

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at Cluanfois, afterwards remarkable for its celebrated scholars, such as St. Fursey, whose foundation at Lagny has been described in Miss Stokes' interesting work, *Three Months in the Forests of France.* This saint before leaving Ireland established two monasteries, one on Inisquin Island, Lough Corrib, his birthplace, and the other at Killoursa or Kilfursa, situated on the Ower estate. His pupil, St. Dicuil, who also taught mathematics at Cluanfois, was far in advance of his age in the science of astronomy, being, says Mr. Burke, "aware of the rotundity of the world long centuries before the times of Copernicus and Galileo." A learned work on the measurement of the earth, written by this monk, was discovered after a thousand years lying in the great National Library at Paris.

When St. Brendan, who had been educated at Cluanfois, was at the head of the great monastery of Clonfert, St. Jarlath paid him a visit, during which, in answer to an inquiry as to the place of his death, the saint advised his master, Jarlath, to drive as far as he could in his chariot, until the horses could go no further, when he should dismount and found on that spot a church and monastery in which he should eventually end his life.

St. Jarlath set forth, and drove for miles over the bogs and through the forests, until a wheel came off his chariot within two miles of Cluanfois; and, unable to proceed further, St. Jarlath began to build his new church on a low piece of land near the little river Corcha; and he is said to have been made the first bishop of this place, called, from the accident to his chariot, Tuaim da Ghualanne.(1) There seems, however, to be some doubt as to the real signification of this name, which was thought by some to be of Pagan origin,(2) though Canon Ulick Bourke was of opinion that it meant "the mound of the two altar tombs." Be this correct or not, it is certain that St. Jarlath settled here, where he taught and prayed and composed curious prophecies concerning the prelates who should hereafter hold his See.(3) He also exercised hospitality and almsgiving, and he died at an advanced age, either before or about 540.

After his canonization the relics of St. Jarlath were placed in a silver

(1) It is supposed that this spot was in a garden of John Costelloe, a merchant, living in Shop Street, 1838, and that here also was the Chair of Tuam, in which every member of Parliament for the town was obliged to sit after his election; however, I have been told that a stone at present in Mr. Cloran's garden is the real chair of St. Jarlath.

(2) *Antiquities of Galway*, compiled for Irish Ordnance Survey Library, Royal Irish Academy.

(3) Colgan would not vouch for the antiquity or genuineness of these predictions, of which he had a copy, and Ware considered them "fictions of a much later date."—*Lives of Irish Saints*, vol. iii.; Canon O'Hanlon.

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shrine, which gave the name of *Teampul na Scrin*, or "the Church or the Shrine," to the oratory in which it was kept. A street called by the old Irish inhabitants *Bothar-na-Scrin*, or "the Street of the Shrine,' is now known as Bishop Street, and it is thought that the present diocesan college of St. Jarlath occupies the site of the oratory out of which the silver shrine was carried away by the Danes of Limerick and Cork, when they made a raid upon Tuam.

The town owed its foundation to the fact of the school established there by St. Jarlath, although the Rev. Mervyn Archdall wrote that an Abbey of the Blessed Virgin was in existence at this place about 487, and that the saint turned it into a cathedral in the sixth century.(4)

After his death there is only mention for some time of abbots of Tuam, though it is likely they were bishops who were also superiors of monasteries in the neighbourhood.

Ware mentions a bishop of Tuam, Maurice O'Duffy, "the Senior of Erin," at whose death, on St. Brendan's Day, the old annalists poetically declared "that in him Ireland died;" and a request to pray for his soul was engraved on the golden cross of Cong, which had been made by his predecessor, Donald O'Duffy, surnamed from this circumstance "of the yellow staff."(5)

Edan O'Hoisin, who had been an abbot, was first named bishop and then archbishop of Tuam (1152), and he received the pallium, which

(4) Canon Bourke thought that the See of Tuam was founded as early as 450, but Canon O'Hanlon is inclined to adopt Sir James Ware's assertion, that the more probable date was 550. Ussher also considered that the tower was built in honour of St. Jarlath.—Appendix to *Life and Times of Dr. McHale, Archbishop of Tuam*, by Canon Bourke; *Lives of Irish Saints*, vol. iii., by Canon O'Hanlon.

(5) This golden cross of Cong is now in the National Museum, Kildare Street, and the following description of it was given by the late Mr. Oliver Burke:—"The cross is thirty inches in height, and the breadth of the arms nineteen inches. It is made of oak covered with plates of bronze and silver, washed in many places with a thick layer of gold, and having interspersed golden filigree work of the most minute character around its centre. All the front and back plates are elaborately carved with an intertwined pattern or strap work with grotesque animals. Supported upon a raised boss, decorated with nielle, in the centre there is a large polished crystal, under which was placed originally the relique sent thither from Rome to Turlough O'Conor, in 1123, as appears from the *Annals of Innisfallen*. Around its sides in the Irish characters are a series of Latin and Irish inscriptions, the letters of which are punched into the silver plate, apparently by dyes or types, so deeply that the metal plate beneath is indented with almost equal sharpness, which enables us to read uninterruptedly, even where the external plate has been injured. The foot of the cross springs from a highly decorated dog's head, which rises out of a globe, the workmanship of which is, in truth, a marvel. Beneath this globe is a decorated socket, into which was inserted a staff or pole, with which the cross was carried."

The following is the inscription in the Irish character:—*Hac cruce tegetur qua pasus* (passus) *conditor orbis.*" "In this cross is preserved (or covered) the cross on which the founder of the world suffered." One of the inscriptions is "a prayer for Donnell MacFlannacan O'Dubdaig (O'Duffy) bishop of Connaught and Coharb of (Saints) Chommon and Chairn, under whose superintendence this shrine was made."—*History of the Catholic Archbishops of Tuam*, vol. i., pages 10, 11.

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says Archdall, greatly annoyed the clergy of Armagh, who considered it should only be given to the Sees of Armagh and Cashel. Archbishop O'Hoisin very probably rebuilt St. Jarlath's church, burnt in 1128, and of this building there remains only the chancel with its fine arch, the description of which is given by Dr. Petrie,(6) who also thought that this part of the old church must have been erected by this prelate, as there is a very considerable resemblance between the sculptured stone work and that upon the archbishop's crozier, and on two stone crosses, one of which, now the market cross of Tuam, bears this inscription, 'Pray for O'Hoisin, the abbot, by whom it was made;" while on the second cross are the words, "Pray for the successor of Jarlath, for Aid O'Hoisin, by whom this cross was made." There are also requests to pray for Turlough O'Conor, King of Connaught, who assisted O'Hoisin in the work, and "for the artizan (saor) Gillachrist descendant of Tuathal.(7)

The crosses out of sandstone are fine specimens of Irish stone carving, especially the market cross, which Dr. Petrie considered "of greater magnificence than that of Cashel, and may rank as the finest monument of its class and age remaining in Ireland."(8)

In the year of Archbishop O'Hoisin's death, Roderic O'Conor, the

(6) "This chancel," writes Dr. Petrie, "is a square of 26 feet 6 inches in external measurement, and the walls are four feet in thickness; the east end is perforated by three circular headed windows, each five feet in height, and 18 inches in width, but splaying on the inside to the width of five feet. These windows are ornamented with the zig zag and other mouldings, both externally and internally, and they are connected with each other by label or string course mouldings, of which the external is enriched with pateræ. In the south wall there is a window similarly ornamented, but of smaller size. But the great feature of this chancel is its triumphal arch, now erroneously supposed to have been a doorway, which is, perhaps, the most magnificent specimen of its kind remaining in Ireland. It is composed externally of six semi-circular concentric and recessed arches, of which the outer is 26 feet 6 inches in width at its base, and 19 feet 5 inches in height; and the inner 15 feet 8 inches in width, and 16 feet in height. The shafts of the columns which, with the exception of the outermost at each side, are semi-circular, are unornamented, but their capitals, which are rectangular on a semi-circular torus, are very richly sculptured, chiefly with a variety of interlaced traceries similar to those on the base of the stone cross; and in two instances—those of the jambs, with grotesque human heads. The imposts are at one side very richly sculptured with a scroll and other ornaments, and at the other side present a kind of inverted ogive; and these imposts are carried along the face of the wall as tablets. The bases are unornamented, and consist of a torus and double plinth. The arch mouldings consist of the nebule, diamond frette, and varieties of the chevron, the execution of which is remarkable for its beauty. I have only to add that all the ornamental parts of this chancel are executed in red sandstone."—*Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland*, vol. i., 309-13: Dr. George Petrie.

(7) Dr. Healy thinks Gillachrist "came from Clonmacnoise, if he were not one of the itinerant craftsmen who, at that period, migrated from place to place as they do still for a job. One thing is clear, he was a native Celt, and a skilful workman in his craft, which was that of master sculptor or stone cutter."—*Irish Ancient Schools and Scholars*, ch. 22, sec. ii.

(8) *Notes on Irish Architecture*, by Edwin, Earl of Dunraven, vol. ii.

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last Ardrigh or supreme monarch of Ireland, built a stone fortress at Tuam, which was known as the Wonderful Castle, being very uncommon in the eyes of the Irish accustomed to their duns, defended by ramparts of beaten earth and stones, palisades and ditches. The foundations even of this castle are no longer existing, as Shop Street runs across its site, and the walls of its bawn or courtyard now form part of two public houses. However, in the first volume of the *Dublin Penny Journal*, published in 1832-3, a description is given of the few remains extant at that date, which were "erected in the Norman fashion of the time. It consisted of a strong keep with an extensive courtyard, surrounded by outworks, with towers at the angles, and protected by a deep fosse, into which the water of the adjacent river was forced to flow." Roderic O'Conor also founded the priory of St. John the Baptist, at Tuam, for the Canons Regular of St. Austin, which has completely disappeared, though the houses since built on its site, and on that of its cemetery, go by the name of John's Abbey.(9)

At a later date one of the powerful Norman family De Burgo generously erected at Tuam the monastery of the Holy Trinity, called the Buill, for the Premonstratensian Canons, a branch of the Augustinian Order, and an abbot of this house, Gillachrist O'Louglin, was drowned in the Irish Sea, 1257. At the Reformation this abbey and its lands were first granted to the burgesses of Athenry or Galway, at the rent of £26, Irish money. Much of the building situated on the road to Galway from Tuam was destroyed by Archdeacon Burton (an ancestor of the well-known Oriental scholar and explorer, the late Sir Richard Burton), who coolly employed the stones of the ancient pile in the erection of a commonplace modern house. A good engraving of the ruins of this abbey, as it appeared in 1792, is given in the first volume of Grose's *Antiquities of Ireland*, in which is a view of a fine window with three lancets, half mantled with ivy.

There were many remarkable men archbishops of the See of Tuam during the Middle Ages. It was Catholicus O'Duffy, archbishop of Tuam, who, with the archbishop of Dublin, St. Laurence O'Toole, was sent by King Roderic O'Conor to make his submission to Henry II. Later on both prelates were at the Lateran Council, and they were only allowed to pass through England on their oath that they would not act in any way against the English sovereign or his subjects. During O'Duffy's episcopacy an accidental fire destroyed Tuam, which at that period was probably built of wattles and mud-beaten walls, thatched with reeds or rushes.

Antiquities of Galway, Ordnance Survey of Ireland.

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In the 13th century, the archbishop of Tuam, Stephen de Fulburn, had already been twice Lord Justice of Ireland, and he had also occupied several high posts in the State. His coinage during his vice-royalty, of groats, half-pence and farthings, were considered good enough currency on both sides of the Irish channel. Among these prelates remarkable for piety and learning we should not omit Archbishop O'Fihily, known as Mauritius de Portu, from his birthplace at the well known port of Baltimore, county Cork. He was for years a renowned professor in the University of Padua, and among his great friends were Matthew Zane, patriarch of Venice, and Pope Julius II., who consecrated Maurice archbishop of Tuam. His extensive knowledge and his sanctity caused him to be called "Flos Mundi" by his friends on the Continent. Dying in Galway, 1573, on his journey to his diocese, he was buried in the Franciscan abbey [10] of that old town.

The *Annals of Lough Cé* state that in 1177 Tuam and the churches of the country were destroyed by the Irish through hatred to the foreigners (Anglo Normans). In 1210 O'Brien and Geoffry Mareis combined their forces with those of Hugh O'Conor and O'Flaherty, to raid the land as far as Tuam, which they plundered. Fifteen years later another O'Conor, son of King Charles of the Red Hand, favoured Tuam with a visit, having been ordered to form an escort for "the Lord Justiciary and a few chiefs of the foreigners, for he liked not the Connacht men excepting a few." Another mishap occurred in 1236, when the rebellious de Burgo, who had assumed the Irish name McWilliam, plundered the entire district round Tuam, taking every stack of seed and corn from "the religious cemeteries of Michael Archangel, and the three or four score of baskets out of the churches,"[11] until he left Tuam and Connaught in general "without food or clothing in church or territory, without peace or quiet or prosperity, but each man attacking his fellow." *(Annals Lough Cé.)* How often Tuam was raided and burnt it would be tedious to enumerate, but it always seems to have been less fortified than the borough of Athenry, portions of whose town walls are still existing. These repeated misfortunes naturally kept down the population of Tuam, and in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI., the once large and populous town fell into great decay, and its fortifications, such as they were, became mere ruins. As for the cathedral, the following description was

[10] In this tomb were also interred two of his successors, Thomas O'Mullaly, and Christopher Bodkin. *Rise and Fall of Franciscan Monasteries in Ireland:* Rev. C. P. Meehan.

[11] These baskets usually contained the tithes paid in kind to the clergy, and the people often, for the sake of more security, put their property under the protection of the churches; which were respected, as a rule, excepting by vagabonds and robber chiefs of McWilliam's type, who were numerous enough in that stirring period.

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written of it by a Jesuit, Dr. David Wolfe, Papal Delegate to the Cardinal Protector of Ireland :—" The cathedral of Tuam was for three hundred years used as a fortress by the gentry, without the mass or other divine office, where horses and other animals were formerly kept." The delegate then observed that this disgraceful condition of affairs had been remedied at much "peril of his person" by Christopher Bodkin, the archbishop, who restored the edifice to its original purpose, and attended choir there every day. This archbishop, already appointed by the Pope bishop of Kilmacduagh, was chosen by Henry VIII. to fill the See of Tuam in 1536-7, but the king having then entered into opposition to the Church, the Sovereign Pontiff nominated Arthur O'Frizel as archbishop. Though Christopher Bodkin's nomination did not receive the Papal sanction, it appears that he was "a stern defender of orthodoxy, and an enemy of the heretics, and more through fear than depravity of intention contracted the guilt of schism.[12] It is certain that in the reign of Queen Mary, after an inquiry by Cardinal Pole into the vexed subject of the conflicting claims of the two archbishops of Tuam, the Holy See at length recognised Christopher Bodkin, on account of the excellent report given of his really saintly life. For eighteen years after his death, in 1572, there were no Catholic prelates at Tuam, owing to the severity of the persecution of the Catholics in Ireland. Then were appointed two archbishops; the Protestant, nominated by the English government, who was in possession of all the revenues of the diocese, the old cathedral, and the consideration of those in high places; while the Catholic prelates for long years could scarcely keep themselves alive, tracked as they were by priest hunters, thrown into jail, or living in the rudest and wildest of hiding places known only to their devoted flocks; saying mass and administering the sacraments in sandpits lighted by rush candles, which were called *Clash-en-Afrin*, or "the mass sandpit," one of which is to be seen at Sylane, near Tuam.[13]

During the great Irish insurrection in the seventeenth century, Tuam being occupied by the confederated Catholics, John de Burgo, the Catholic archbishop, not only decorated the cathedral, but he also repaired the oratory of St. Jarlath, and provided Tuam with an excellent library So prominent a figure was this archbishop that after the downfall of the confederated Catholics he was obliged to conceal himself at Kilclooney for two years until 1654, when he was seized and conveyed to the over-

(12) Evidence of the Rev. Peter Wall, in inquiry held by Cardinal Pole into the state of Tuam diocese, at Lambeth Palace, 1555."—*Catholic Archbishops of Tuam:* Oliver Burke.

13) *Archbishops of Tuam :* Oliver Burke.

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crowded jail in Galway, where his health was speedily destroyed. On being exiled in the following year, he contrived, before his departure for France, to leave the relics of St. Jarlath in the care of some Malachy O'Conor, in whose family they have been preserved to this day.

Eventually the old archbishop was permitted to return to his diocese, where he lived in various hiding places until his death in 1667, which was happier than that of his predecessor, Malachy O'Queely, who was cut to pieces at Ballysodare, county Sligo, where the English under Sir Charles Coote had surprised the Irish camp.

The persecution relaxed sufficiently in 1773 to allow of the Catholics opening a new chapel at Tuam, and their archbishops henceforth were gradually given more liberty than they had enjoyed since the uprising of the Confederated Catholics. More human and civilised ideas becoming more predominant concerning the natural rights so long withheld from Irish Catholics, Archbishop Dillon found no difficulty in obtaining leave to open a school at Tuam from the Protestant Archbishop Beresford, an enlightened and noble man, tolerant of the belief of others, and charitable to both Protestants and Catholics.

The arrival of the French in Killala Bay, 1798, caused some commotion in Tuam, whose inhabitants were greatly amazed one day to see the British cavalry galloping through their streets on their flight to Athlone, shouting that the French were close behind them coming to set Tuam on fire, a prediction that remained unfulfilled, as the foreign soldiers never came near the town, though they penetrated the country as far as county Longford, where they were surrounded by the troops of Lord Cornwallis.

Under the episcopacy of Dr. Oliver Kelly was laid the foundation stone of the Catholic Cathedral, which, considering the limited means at their disposal, is a credit to the builders. When Dr. Kelly died on the Continent he was succeeded by the very remarkable man known as "The Lion of Judah," who for many years wore the mitre of Tuam. The life of Dr. McHale cannot be entered upon in this paper, devoted to the history of the town in which he lived and died, but we may venture the remark that in the cause of religion and liberty no Irish prelate has been more distinguished than the brilliant and learned "John of Tuam."

During the great famine of 1847-8, when the people died like flies in spite of all efforts made to relieve them, Tuam suffered as much as any other Irish town, and when the visitation of starvation and fever passed away numbers emigrated in search of the livelihood no longer possible in the almost ruined country.

At present Tuam is a thriving country town under the care of its commissioners and the clerk, who are survivors of the Mayor and

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burgesses with their officials, the sergeants at mace, treasurers, and scrivener, granted to Tuam by a charter in the reign of James I. The railway runs over the site of St. Jarlath's Well, which was drained during the construction of the line. In the market place is the old cross of Hugh O'Hoisin, archbishop and abbot, while the modern Protestant cathedral, in pointed Gothic style, with which has been incorporated the ancient stone-roofed chancel and arch of the twelfth century, has replaced the old cathedral, which is now used as a synod hall by the Protestant clergy. In this old edifice are beautiful choir stalls of walnut inlaid with ivory upon ebony, which formerly belonged to a Piedmontese monastery ruined in the Italian campaigns of the first Napoleon. These stalls, forty-eight in number, were kept in Nice until 1839, when they were purchased and sent to Ireland, to be presented later to Tuam Cathedral by the Coopers of Markree Castle. They are richly decorated with representations of the ascension of Jesus Christ, the triumph of the cross, and allegorical designs of Christian virtues, all carried out in beautiful marquetry. The figures of the angels surmounting each stall are all carved differently one from the other in walnut; and over the doorway into the choir is the crucifixion, also inlaid ivory upon ebony. A fine library is preserved in the synod hall, as well as portions of one of the old Irish crosses already described in this article.

Some of the stained glass windows in the modern cathedral were presented by the Archbishop Beresford, afterward Lord Decies, and there are also other interesting memorial windows erected in remembrance of various Anglican prelates and laity of this diocese.

Such are the annals of this small town situated on the brown bogs of Galway; which, having survived the troubled period of its early and mediæval existence, now ranks among those Irish towns, obscure in all but their names and a few architectural remains that serve to testify how in those far off days they had been places of no mean importance—generally seminaries of learning and piety, whose teachings were spread over the continent of Europe by zealous Irish missionaries trained in these celebrated "ancient schools of Ireland."

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