

SOME ASSOCIATIONS---PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN---OF A SEA-SIDE PARISH.

A Signorance of modern Irish hinders the efforts of those who would build up our nation, so the lack of a thorough and ready knowledge of old Irish hampers the students of its history. It renders to some extent the written records of our country obscure, and divests the monuments of our past civilisation—its unwritten records—of the memories for which they were celebrated; as a consequence many historic localities and remains have dropped out of the memory of our people along with the language in which they were enshrined. To rescue one such locality from this danger, and to restore it to rightful place in the public mind, is the object of this paper.

The place claiming our attention is commonly called in bardic history Ardladhran, or Ardladhru, and from the stretch of riverside pasture dominated by the height, Innisladhran, or Innisladhru. The last component of the word is commonly pronounced (English speakers will be glad to know) **lawron**, or **lawru**. The name carries back the mind beyond the days of Patrick—beyond the days of Cuchullainn and the Red Branch Knights—into Ireland's remotest past, where fable and history meet in a scarcely distinguishable guise. To interest our readers in the subject it will be useful to give some extracts—for what they are worth—from Keating's History of Ireland: "The White Book, which in Irish is called Leabhar Droma Sneachta, informs us that the eldest of these sisters (daughters of Cain) was called Banba, who gave a name to the whole of the kingdom. After them, we are told, three men and fifty women arrived in the island; one of them was Ladhra, from

whom was derived the name of Ardladhran. These people lived forty years in the country, and at last they all died of a certain distemper in a week's time." In the next page a different account taken from the "manuscripts of Ireland, though not credited by the antiquaries," is given of Ireland's first colonists. "When Noah was building the Ark to preserve himself and his family from the Deluge, Bith, the father of Ceasar, sent to him to desire an apartment for himself and his daughters to save them from the approaching danger. Noah, having no authority from Heaven to receive them into the Ark, denied this request. Upon this repulse, Bith, Fiontan, the husband of Ceasar, and Ladhra, her brother, consulted among themselves what measures they should take in their extremity, but coming to no resolution Ceasar thought it proper to apply to an idol and know how they could secure themselves and their families from the flood, which by the preaching of Noah they found would drown the whole world. They consented unanimously to the advice and (as the devil ever attempted to ape and imitate the Almighty God) the oracle enjoined them to build a ship in the form of the Ark that Noah was preparing, and that when they had laid in provisions for a long voyage they should commit themselves to the mercy of the waves. On board the vessel they fitted out went Bith and Ladhra and Fiontan² and their wives, Ceasar, Barran and Balhba, and 50 others of the most beautiful women that would venture along with them. These raw sailors for want of skill in navigation were tossed and driven from sea to sea for the space of seven years and a quarter, till they arrived at last upon the western shores of Ireland, and landed at a place called Dun na mBarae. These new inhabitants . . . travelled together till they came to the fountain-head of the rivers Siuir, Feoir and Berbha; here it was the three men agreed to divide the fifty women between them. Fiontan, besides his wife, Ceasar, had seventeen for his share: Bith had his wife, Barran, and seventeen more, and Ladhra had his wife, Babha, and was satisfied with the sixteen that remained. After this Ladhra set out with his share of the women, and came to Ardladhran, where he settled and died."^{2a}

The place, which is the object of our search, is connected not only with the earliest history, mythical or real, of our island, but also with its destiny. According to bardic traditions three great ocean waves stood sentinel on our shores, and raised a cry of warning whenever Erin or her kings were threatened with danger. There was the "tonn,"³ or wave of

1.—Edition of 1841, p. 78 (translated by Dermot O'Connor).

2.—c.f. *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, edited by Fr. D. Murphy, S.J., p. 11.—(Editor.)

2a.—Keating, p. 79.

3.—In a map published in 1788 a rock called the Tunns is indicated as situated in Bannow Bay, between the Saltees and the Black Rock. The name seems common to many marine rocks.

Inverladhru (Portladhru), the "tonn" of Buaille, somewhere about the north of Ireland; and the "tonn" of Inverclidhna (**Cleena**) off the coast of Cork. The latter "tonn" is given a place in modern literature by Sir Samuel Ferguson, who introduces the legend into "The Tain Quest," and describes the attack of the enraged Fergus Mac Roy on King Conor Mac Nessa, protected though he was by his magic shield, Eochain.

"And as hawk that strikes on pigeons, sped on wrath's unswerving wing.

Though the tyrant's leaguering legions, smiting chief and smiting king,

Smote he full on Conor's gorget, till the waves of welded steel

Round the monarch's magic target rang their loudest larum peal.

"Rang the disc where wizard hammers mingling in the wavy field;

Tempest wail and breaker clamours, forged the wond'rous Eochain shield

Answering to whose stormy noises, oft as clanged by deadly blows,

All the echoing kindred voices of the seas of Erin rose.

"Moaned each sea-chafed promontory; soared and wailed white Cleena's wave;

Rose the Tonn of Inverrory, and through column'd chasm and cave

Reaching deep with roll of anger till Dunseverick's dungeons reeled,

Roar'd responsive to the clangour struck from Conor's magic shield."

We may be sure that the "tonn" of Inverladhru joined "the echoing kindred voices of the seas of Erin," and as guardian of the royal race raised the cry of alarm along its own shores.

The situation of this celebrated place has given rise to much speculation on the part of students of Ireland's ancient history. Father Power, in his notes on the "Life of St. Declan," thinks it is somewhere in the County Wexford. Halliday, in his "War of Gaedhil with the Gaill," inclines to the opinion that Innisladhru is an island off the coast of Iveragh in Kerry. O'Donovan regards Inverladhru as situated at the mouth of the river Labhraine, in Kerry, but suggests that "perhaps" Ardladhran is identical with Ardamine. In this Hogan thinks O'Donovan might have omitted "perhaps," and gives us in his "Onamasticon," a description of Ardamine taken from the "Parliamentary Gazeteer": "On the road from Gorey to Riverchapel is one of the most per-

fect raths in Ireland; it consists of a cupola of clay surmounting a platform about half an acre in area of an artificial mound, and on the north side of the platform is a rude cemetery of Ardamine; local tradition says this mound contains a stone chamber."⁴

These eminent antiquaries—in other cases so worthy of credence—are at fault here. Innisladhru is identical with Inch, in the parish of Blackwater, and the townland supports its claim to its famous heritage by its very name, curtailed though it is by the passage of the years. Near its western extremity, about a mile from Inverladhru—the **port** of Blackwater—and about one-sixth that distance from the village rises Ardladhru. The height is rendered remarkable among its compeers by the monument by which it is crowned, the moat of Ladhru, the leader of the first colonists. The Dun, elliptical in shape, measures about 45 yards⁵ across the top at its broadest part, and about 30 yards at its narrowest width. It rears itself above the ground about 40 or 50 feet, but how much of this height is the work of nature, how much the work of man, cannot be exactly determined by ordinary observation. It attracts but little notice from the villagers, who live almost under its shadow, but it arrests the attention of all visitors to the locality by its huge mass and its unusual contour.⁵

Ardladhru has been more fortunate than many other historic places: the name still lives in the nomenclature of the neighbourhood. A cross-roads on the plateau above the Dun and but a quarter of a mile away from it is called Crosstaghroe. That this is but a corruption of Crossladhru becomes evident from Larcome's map of 1841 Survey, in which this place is set down as Crosslaghroe—an anglicised form of Crossladhru.⁶

To render the identification more complete the "tonn" of Inverladhru⁵ still raises its warning voice off the coast, though its ancient glory is vanished. At the mouth of the Blackwater harbour nearby, opposite Killancooly South, about four miles from land, lies a shoal, or ridge, between the Rush and Blackwater banks. It is known as the **Money-weight Bank**.⁷ The name is so inconsistent with the capabilities of a marine bank that it suggests verbal corruption of

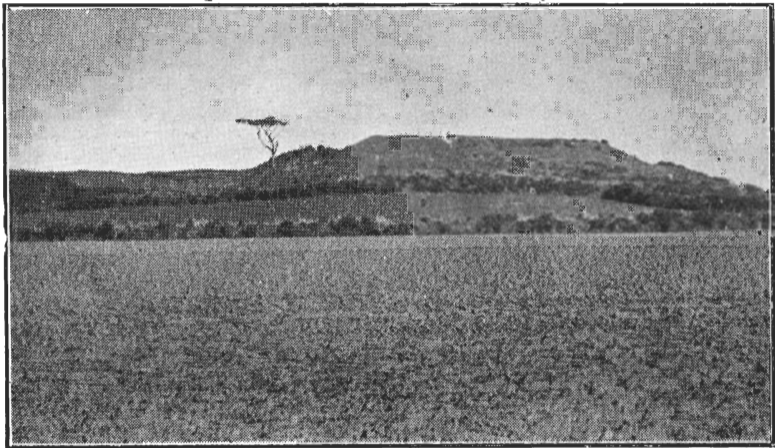
4.—It is almost certain that the moat at Ardamine is the *Dion Latha* of *Dubtach Mac Lugair*, who stood up to honour St. Patrick at Tara.

4a.—In O'Flaherty's *Ogygia*, part III., chapter I., we find:—"Ardladrann, in the County of Wexford, was denominated from Ladhra."—(Editor.)

5a.—Part of moat has been carted away for topdressing, and its width is given only approximately; it is worthy of remark that *Din Righ*, alias *Duma Slainge*, "dun of the first Firbolg, who died in Erin" is also 45 yards in diameter at top.—O'Donovan.

6.—O'Hanlon quotes an old life of St. Aidan, saying:—"100 miles intervened between Inverladhra and Ferns." No place along the coast from Carnsore to Kilmichael is one-third this distance from Ferns. Evidently the author knew little about the topography of this diocese. Is there a like inaccuracy as regards St. Patrick's journey to the port of escape? It is probable that *Crisstaghroe*, a crossroads in the locality, is responsible for the present corrupt form of *Crosslaghru*.

7.—The **Moneyweight Bank** is marked on the Ordinance, as on page 5.



The Dún at Inch, Blackwater, Co. Wexford.

the worst kind. Analysed this unintelligible word resolves itself into two Irish words—**munadh**, an omen, and **uath**, fear, or dread. In this mis-shapen form, after centuries of change in the language, we have with us still—in deep disguise, indeed—the “tonn” of Inverladhru.

Omen and Dun and Cross-roads assist one another in the identification of this historic place. It might be said that it was only a matter of chance that there is a dun in Inch, or that there is a cross-roads called Crosslaghru within a few perches of the dun; or again that the name, Moneyweight, should be resolvable into that of an oracle of national repute. But that there should be in the same neighbourhood a conjunction of Dun and Omen and Oracle and Inch in proof of the contention this paper upholds seems outside the possibilities of chance, and may be accepted by the most sceptical as sufficient to prove the validity of this identification.

The Dun is sometimes called in our annals Leachladhru, the burial mound of Ladhru. We must not regard it as a mere monument of the dead. It seems to have been the centre of important national events, as they are given in the half fabulous and tangled narratives of our annals. Long after the death of Ladhru, and after successive invasions from Partolans, Nemidians, Firbolgs and Tuatha de Danaans, Ith, son of Milesius, leads a colony into Ireland. He is slain by the Tuatha de Danaus at the battle of Meig Ith,⁷ or Moy Itha. His body is brought back to Spain, the country of his origin, and his relatives and countrymen organise a new expedition to revenge his death and conquer the island. The invading Milesians attempt to land upon the coast of Leinster, at a place then called Inver Slainge, but now known by the name of Wexford Harbour.⁸ Baffled in their first endeavour by the magic of the Tuatha de Danaans, they land at Inversceane—purely a creation according to Professor MacNeil—and after some fierce fighting become masters of the country. The conquerors quarrel among themselves about the partition of the territory, and the two sons of Herimon, great-grandson of Milesius, are slain by their kinsman, the son of Hebar Fionn, at the battle of **Ardladhran**.⁹ After six generations the place again comes into prominence in connection with King Fiach. He “reigned monarch of Ireland twenty-four years, though some of our antiquaries assert that he reigned twenty-seven years.”^{9a} He “engaged the family of Heber Fionn in four battles, they were called the battle of Fairge, the battle of Galling, the battle of Claire, the battle of Bealgaddin, in which he

8.—Keating, p. 136.

9.—Keating, p. 148.

9a.—c.f. Annals of Clonmacnoise, p. 30. Cambrensis Eversus, Lynch, p. 423.—(Editor.)

10.—Keating, p. 171.

fell by the hands of Eochaidh Numho." He was called Fiach Ladhruinne—no doubt from royal dun from which he ruled his people.

Two places stand out prominently in ancient legends as centres of national movements, Ardladhrau and Moy Itha. Companions in the drama of national life they seem associates in situation. Magh Itha, the scene of the Milesian defeat, and Inver Slainge, the bay where they attempted to land to avenge themselves on their enemies, must have been in the same neighbourhood. This inference is borne out by an examination of the place names in the vicinity of Ardladh-ran. On the road from Blackwater to Enniscorthy are found two places whose names, taken in conjunction, are of much import for our contention. One is the bog of Ithy, lying between the Ballagh and Glenbrien. Ithy, anyone may see, is the English equivalent for Itha. Three miles or so nearer Enniscorthy we have branching from the highest point in the most considerable plain in, perhaps, all Hy-Kinsella the cross of Myyâ. The cross is called by the old people of the district, not My, but Myyâ, the last syllable being given the shortest and faintest possible sound. In the name, Ithy, English asserts itself, and disregards the aspirate sound of the letter *t*; in Myyâ, Irish predominates, and shortening Magh into My and retaining the native pronunciation of Itha;¹⁰ (**Eeya**) gives us the name Myyâ. The name taken by itself affords but scant proof of the identity of Myyâ with Magh Itha, but the relationship between the two names—if not proved—is at least strongly suggested by the conjunction of the places they designate.

For proof of their identity we have recourse, strange to say, to Christianity, or rather to its records. Father Hogan, S.J., the highest authority we have on ancient topography, sets down in his work three places called Magh Itha.¹¹ That in Leinster was in the Fotharta of Magh Itha—a district embracing the south eastern part of Wicklow and eastern part of Wexford, as far as Begerin. If the plain gave its name to the Fotharta, as it did, it must lie somewhere midway in the district.¹² This conclusion is supported by the history of our diocese. St. Finnian, of Clonard, wishing to visit Lon and other saints,¹³ who lived in Wexford, landed at the mouth of the river **Douglais** in Magh Itha. Now Douglais—badly translated—is Blackwater, and **glais**, the last

11.—An instance of the same fusion of sounds may be found in the words Myshall and Killyshall, in which Magh and the *i* sound in *iscat* are fused into the *i* sound of *my*.

12.—See the "Onamastion" and its Addenda on Magh Itha, Fotharta Maige Itha and Innisfall.

13.—This St. Lon, or Lonau, was the founder of Cill-Uailleah, now Killilla, near the village of Blackwater. See "Loca Patriciana," p. 84, in which Colgan and The Martyrology of Donegal are quoted.

syllable in Douglais, shows itself even still in Ballinaclash, or Ballinaglash, the townland at mouth of the Blackwater stream. If we assume that St. Finnian knew his way to Magh Ita—which is an assumption that credits the saint with no more than ordinary intelligence—we have in his visit a convincing proof of the identity of Magh Itha with the district around the cross of Myyâ and the Ballagh. Paganism gave us but probability to this contention, but Christianity helps us into certainty.

The identification of this theatre of pagan life and active effort throws light upon the history of this diocese. It is stated that St. Aidan, returning from his studies under St. David, in Wales, landed at Innisladhru. He received a tract of country from the local chief and there built his first church. A few perches from the Dun of Ladhru is a field called the Killeen—which was probably the site of ancient church—and a mile further inland there is a height with an old graveyard adjoining, called Killahard. This may have been that church of which the existence is implied in **Killeen**—the small church, and it must have been a sanctuary of much account inasmuch as it gathered to its bosom the Christian dead for many centuries—almost to the present day—and gave its name to the locality. From the non-existence, too, of any other height characteristically sacred, in the immediate neighbourhood, we may, without much rashness, conclude that Killahard is in title the Christian namesake of the pagan Ardladhru, and is the site of the first church which the first bishop of this diocese built in his zeal for the propagation of Christianity. His endeavour seemed to have been crowned with success. A monastery arose in Inverladhrau, and grew into an important centre of religion. It attracted the attention of the Danes, and it was plundered about 818, as was Begerin soon after by these enemies of Christianity. Begerin rose from its ashes, and is again heard of in monastic history. Inverladhrau seems never to have had a “second spring.”

The monastery is not without witnesses to its existence. Between the Dun and the seashore, on a patch of dry ground rising above the surrounding bog, stands a rath crowned with gorse and fern. It measures around the base about 100 yards and rises about 12 or 14 feet above the present level of the ground. A deep trench—which was filled in by the father of the present owner of the land—surrounded the enclosure and could be easily flooded in an emergency, and the same protection against marauders could be given to the whole elevation on which the rath stands. In the absence of any other similar structure in the immediate neighbourhood, it

may, with great probability, be regarded as the remains of the old-time monastery of Inverladhran.

It must be admitted that time has dealt severely with this locality, and that it no longer holds in the national life the place it seems to have occupied. Perhaps this contribution to the pages of "The Past" may do something to give it its proper position among the historic scenes of our island. It may be said, with much truth, that few spots present associations more ancient and more opposed: they carry us back to the infancy of paganism and Christianity in this country. Standing on the height above the village of Blackwater we see the surf that tossed the rude barks of the pioneers of Christianity in this diocese, and we hear, perhaps, if a storm is blowing from the north, the hoarse roar of the Money Weight, the guardian omen of pagan Ireland. At our feet rises the vast bulk of the old Dun, which perpetuates the memory of Ladhra, and witnessed among his successors many a fierce struggle for the mastery; and half a mile further towards the shore may be seen the old monastic circle, once a home of Christian love and learning. Both remains bring us back to a long-forgotten time, but one represents the senility of a dying civilization, and the other, the birth of a vigorous and victorious rival. It is seldom that the memorials of paganism and Christianity stand so sharply contrasted.

Our readers must not think that this paper is but an attempt to lend interest to a picturesque but neglected locality, or to give reality to a bardic tale. No doubt many of the legends of ancient Ireland are myths unworthy of serious notice, but many of them may hide an important historical event under a very unhistorical dress. These tales must have been told at many a fireside and many a camp fire, pagan and Christian, and must have suffered much corruption from the imagination of the Celt. But making allowance for the operation of corrupting agencies, on such legends, it would be as uncritical to reject all as to accept all. Those that centre around Ardladhran are a case to the point. How can we account for the position it holds in the legendary world? We can easily trace the fables that have grown up about Cruachan, Armagh and Dunseverick to their genesis—the desire on the part of the local rulers to give importance and prestige to the royal race. But no such explanation holds good in the case of Ardladhran: it owes nothing to the chroniclers of Cruachan or Tara, and was the subject of story long before these seats of royalty came into existence. Either Ardladhran was a place of national importance in past ages or Ardladhran held the sole right of manufacturing fables for its own glorification. Of those alternatives, the

former seems much more in accordance with reason and fact and much more worthy of credence from the students of Irish history.⁽¹⁴⁾

SENEX P.

Note.—The writer is much obliged to the Editor for the valuable references he has supplied.—S.P.

14.—This contention receives support from several quarters. Gann and Sengann, the first Firlolgs “landed at Ard na Caerach on Inver Dubglaiiss,” and “the first battle fought in Eire” took place in Sliab Naibh in Magh n-Itha: so Father Hogan who gives authorities. Sliab Niabh and Knocknefy, a hill in The Ballagh district, may reasonably claim kinship, and Ardna Caerach may be but another name for Ardladhru, the burial mound of Ladhru. A tribe called the Cobhthaig, (this may interest students of Church history) dwelt in the Ardladhru district; the name of this tribe probably exists—in a corrupt form—in **Kilcotty**, and also in **Sil Cot's** Castle, lately mentioned in Miss Brown's interesting contributions to the “Free Press.”