

THE TREASURE-FINDING LEGEND OF SKAGHVICKINCROW, Co. CLARE. (1)

BY DR. GEORGE U. MACNAMARA, M.R.S.A.I.

The following is a translation from the Gaelic of still another version of the above legend, printed in a former number of this Journal. (2) It is entitled, "*Droichead Lundain*" (London Bridge), and appeared in the *Irish Daily Independent* of March 5th, 1902, signed "*Risteard O'Seaghdha*," (Richard O'Shea).

This time its *provenance* happens to be Waterford, yet, on comparing it with the County Clare version, and also with that connected with "*Torthorald Castle*," told in a subsequent number, (3) it will be found to be essentially the same story. It is, no doubt, not confined to these localities, but has a much wider range than one at first sight might expect. In the interests of that fascinating pursuit, the study of our national folk-lore, it would be well, if possible, to discover the exact limits of its distribution—which may, perhaps, extend to continental lands—and so, as it were, track the legend to its original source.

LONDON BRIDGE.

There was once upon a time a poor man in Ireland (according to what I heard the old people say), and he was promised in a dream that he had his fortune to get on London Bridge if he went there for it. He had the same dream every night, and, on account of that, he was confident of the truth of the vision, and he determined to go to London the first time he had as much money as would bring him there. He had a small calf, and as soon as it grew up to be a yearling, he brought it to the fair and sold it, and off he went to London.

The first day he was in London he stayed on the bridge from morn

(1) I have learned recently that the correct Irish equivalent of the surname, Crowe, is *Mac-Concro*, not *Mac-Enchro*. They were a small sept.

(2) Vol. i, No. 4, p. 42.

(3) Vol. ii, No. 5, p. 57.

till night, looking at every person who was passing by, and scrutinizing every inch of the bridge with the expectation of finding a purse of gold, or a costly jewel of some kind, going astray. But he found nothing, and at the fall of night he turned to his lodging.

The following morning he searched the bridge again, and spent the day on it the same as before, but that was all he had by it. He was very bitter with himself that night on account of his putting any faith in the dream at all.

"I shall go home to-morrow, with the help of God," said he, "for it is no good for me to stay here any longer, and it is a fine sell, indeed, I've got for paying heed to a dream or putting faith in it, and priests and friars ever warning us against them. God forgive me my sins, there's no fear I'll believe in dreams again."

He was deliberating for a while. "Sure," said he to himself again, "it is as well for me not to go home until after to-morrow. As I spent the candle, I will spend the inch. May be to God, luck will turn in my way the third day."

He was on the bridge the day after that, walking from side to side as he was the two days before. At the end of the day, when he was tired from walking, and miserable and heavy hearted, thinking of the folly that had brought him to London, he was walking fair and easy, with his head bent, muttering sadly to himself, when up came a man to him and saluted him. The poor man stood and looked at the stranger.

"I beg your pardon, honest man," said the stranger, "but would you tell me are you an Irishman?"

"I am, indeed, an Irishman," said the other man.

"I thought so," said the stranger, "and were you ever in Waterford?"

"Indeed I often was," said the Irishman.

"I was once in the town of Waterford myself for a week," said the stranger, "and the thing I do dream of almost every night this long time is very curious. I have a vision in my dream that I was in Waterford, and that I went out by night with a pick and shovel on my shoulder, and walked ten miles or so out into the country until I came as far as a little thatched house, situated at the foot of a hill, a little distance in, in the fields. I went round the back of the house and into a small haggard where there was a stack of corn and a rick of hay.

There were whitethorns (*Sgeacha*) growing on the ditch of the haggard, and a single elder tree in the centre of the ditch, between the whitethorns. There was a large stone at the foot of this elder, and I commenced rooting around it until I loosened it and turned it aside. Then I dug in the place where the stone was, and, after I had worked for about an hour of the clock, I found a little box of iron. I took it up and opened it, and it was full of gold. I do have that dream almost every night, and I don't say but I shall go to Waterford and see if there is a place there of that description, for if there is, without any doubt in the world, the gold is there as well."

The other man was listening intently (4) to every word of this narrative. He himself lived about ten miles from Waterford, and he felt certain it was his own house that appeared to the stranger in his dream, as the description suited in every particular. His house was a thatched one at the foot of a hill, and a stack of oats and a rick of hay in the haggard, and an elder tree growing among the bushes on the ditch with a large stone at its foot.

To make a short story of it, he went home and rooted under the stone, and it was full of yellow gold. He never was in want of anything from that forth.

(4) Literally, "with an ear on him."