

A BOHAREEN OF IRISH BOTANY.

BY HELEN LAIRD.

Any Irish Botanist who gets caught into the swirl of the Irish Revival which is flowing so rapidly round us, and finds himself face to face with the subject of Irish plant names, and plant lore, has a field of research before him truly fascinating to the Celtic mind, strewn as it is with infinite possibilities. For the Celt was ever a close observer and lover of nature, and we can trace this characteristic even in the earliest history and literature. Fiacra, an Irish monarch who reigned before the time of OLLAMH FODLA, was surnamed Finscothach, or Fiacra of the white blossoms; and he received this name because, according to the bards, every plain in Ireland abounded with white flowers and shamrocks in his reign, and these flowers were found full of wine, which was pressed from them into bright vessels. In a poem of a very early date, ascribed to Finn MacCool, the author speaks of the "wavy tresses of the heather," and in a later one, an address to Ben Edar, or Howth Head, which St. Columbkille wrote during his banishment in Iona, are references to many plants which the Dublin botanist still finds growing on the Hill of Howth. In a later but still early poem, called "King and Hermit," attributed to the tenth century, translated from the old Irish by Professor Kuno Meyer, the hermit describes his forest abode to the king, naming the beautiful plants which adorn it, making it far more beautiful than the king's dun.

"Two heath-clad doorposts for support,
And a lintel of honeysuckle.
The bravest band makes music for me,
Who have not been hired.
In the eyes of Christ the ever-young
I am no worse off than thou art."

But even the ordinary student of Irish is soon introduced to Irish plants, for the 17 letters of the Irish alphabet are called by the names of indigenous trees, thus the letter A is represented by *Áit*, usually translated palm tree, but probably a fir tree; B is *Beit*, the birch tree;

C is *Coll*, the hazel : D is *Ḍuir*, the Oak ; E is *Ḃáda*, the aspen ; F is *Ḃearn*, the alder ; G is *Ḃort*, the ivy ; H is *Uat*, the white-thorn ; I is *Ḃóda*, the yew tree ; L is *Ḃuir*, the quicken tree ; M is *Muin*, the vine ; N is *Nuin*, the ash tree ; O is *Oir*, the spindle tree ; P is *Ḃeic-bog*, a soft b ; R is *Ruir*, the elder ; S is *Sae*, the willow ; T is *Ḃeme*, the furze, and U, *Uir*, the yew tree ; and in accordance with this, the ancient Irish called their writings *Ḃeada*, or groves of trees. This custom arose from the Ogham writing, the Ogham letters in earliest times being cut on the bark of trees, and later on the pillar stones which still exist all over Ireland.

Nor has the subject of plant names been neglected by the staid lexicographers, who are not usually credited with a love for nature. In O'Reilly's Irish-English dictionary, published in 1821, several hundreds of names of plants are to be found, and De Vere Coney, probably following O'Reilly's example, gives many more in the dictionary he published in 1849. Lately, the subject has been taken up by Cameron, who published his book, "Gaelic Plant Names," in 1883, dealing with both Highland and Irish Names, and Father Hogan's "*Luibteadharan*," published in 1900, is a very extensive collection.

In the eighteenth century two Irish herbals appeared, giving the Irish names of the plants side by side with the English and Latin ones. Keogh's "*Botanica Hibernica*" was published in Cork, by George Harrison, at the corner of Meeting House Lane, in 1735 (printed, I presume, on Irish-made paper), and the "*Synopsis Stirpium Hibernicarum*, a short treatise on native plants, especially such as grow in the vicinity of Dublin, with their Latin, English and Irish names, and an abridgment of their virtues, by Caleb Threlkeld, M.D.," was published in Dublin in 1727, eight years before Keogh's book ; Threlkeld called his book "the first essay of this kind published in Ireland." Both of these writers, Keogh and Threlkeld, copied from an old manuscript, which, to quote Threlkeld, "bears great authority with me, and seems to have been written before the civil wars of 1641, and probably by that Rev. Irish Divine, Mr. Heaton." This manuscript is now unfortunately lost.

It is amusing to notice that these two men of nearly two hundred years ago, belong to two distinct types, both of which are very common in our day. Keogh was a fine specimen of the common or garden

West-Briton, and has anglicised the spelling of the Irish names as much as possible, in a way that is very irritating to anyone who is trying to study them. In fact he apologises for giving them at all, but he says it is convenient for the herbalist to know them, for if he is searching for any herb, he has only to say the Irish name to any peasant, and they will bring him a specimen presently ; so that it saves trouble in the long run. Threlkeld, whose book is far the more interesting of the two, was, curiously enough, an Englishman, from Cumberland, a utilitarian whose contempt for Irish history and superstitions is quaintly shown in his book. He says in his preface—" Although we are not the same nation of men who dwelt here a thousand years ago, yet the spontaneous plants are the same as they were in the time of the Danes and Bryan Boru, and in my opinion it had been more benefit to mankind to have made stricter inquires into the natural growth of the soil (the beauty of which, whilst it allures our eyes and even captivates our senses, raises in us the most exalted idea of the great Creator) than to have trifled away pains and time, in amusing us with fabulous stories concerning the generations of men preceding us, whose almost endless genealogies are often fallacious and dubious, and where they are certain, of very little importance to us in civil affairs ; not that I blame laudable searches into antiquity, but I give preference to these durable and succouring studies." Some of the theories he advances are curious, showing that he occasionally wavers from the durable and succouring studies : for example, when he accounts for the great quantity of wood found in Irish bogs, he says that " the Fir tree, in Irish *Cumann Suidhair*, was planted by the Danes, and after their expulsion cut down and left to be buried in the earth by the natives, to extinguish the badges of their servitude." And again when we find him going down to the Custom House Quay to gather moss from dead men's skulls, which were imported in large butts from Aughrim, as it was supposed to possess special virtues. He says that " this moss is frequent in Ireland, where the poor people who are naturally hospitable, being misled by restless companions, run into war, foolishly thinking to throw off the blessing of the English government."

His remarks on the shamrock show that, perhaps unfortunately, customs have not changed much since his time. " This plant," he says, " is worn by the people in their hats on the 17th day of March yearly

(which is called St. Patrick's Day), it being a current tradition that by this three-leaved grass he emblematically set forth to them the mystery of the Holy Trinity. However that be, when they do wet their *Seamaroge*, they do often commit excess in liquor, which is not a right keeping of a day to the Lord. Error generally leading to debauchery."

Perhaps the people who honoured this custom resented Threlkeld's references to it, for his book did not meet with a very favourable reception. His subscribers only amounted to 99. Keogh's book was more favourably received, the number of his subscribers reaching 340.

The rich vein of poetic fancy in the Irish mind gives us a correspondingly rich nomenclature for the herbs and trees which flourish in "St. Patrick's Park." In my own limited collection I have, in several cases, as many as six totally different names for the same plant. In general the names fall into four classes, those derived from (*a*) the uses of the plants, (*b*) their appearance or peculiarities, (*c*) their habitats, (*d*) their religious or superstitious associations. As examples of names derived from the uses of the plants we have *SLÁN LUR*, the healing plant, for the Plantain. *CAIR-TRÉARBÁIN*, or bitter root, for the Dandelion. The White Poppy is called *COTTARÓIN*, from *COTLAD*, sleep. The mucilaginous extract of the Comfrey root was considered a valuable specific for fractures, and the plant was therefore called *LUR NA SCONÁIN BUIRTE*, the plant of the broken bones. The Woad plant, which was esteemed for its blue colouring matter, was called *SOIRMÍN*, from *SORM*, blue; and the Teasel, being used in the manufacture of cloth for raising the nap, or, as it is called, fulling it, is *LUR AN FÚCAODÓIR*, the fuller's plant.

The names in the second group, derived from the appearance or peculiarities of the plant, are difficult to translate, as many of them contain old Irish words and roots. Of course the same difficulty occurs in the other cases, but not to such an extent. However the following are obvious: *CÓTA BHEARAC*, the pleated mantle, is one of the names for the Lady's Mantle. *MULLAC DUB*, or black top, at once suggests the Knapweed. The Dandelion rejoices in a particularly appropriate name, *BHEARNÁN BHEARNAC*; *bhearnán* is a gap or notch, and *bhearnac* is the corresponding adjective, so that we may translate the name "the gapped gap," or "the notched notch," an exact description of the edge of the dandelion leaf. The general name for the *Polygonums* is

Σύμεαδ, from *Σύν*, a knee, evidently suggested by their jointed stems. The Daffodil is daintily termed *Λύρ αν έρωμ-έριν*, the plant of the bent head. The Figwort, with its curious little square-topped flowers is *Λύρ να ζεναράν*, the plant of the knobs. The Meadow-sweet, displaying its white blossoms in sedgy banks is *Διηζεαυ Λιαέρια*, the money of the rushes. The Colts-foot is called *Αθάαν*, or that which kindles, a name which may be derived from the fact that its broad leaves were sometimes dried with saltpetre and used as tinder, but anyone seeing the plant in flower, in February, on a rubbish heap, cannot but notice how the little golden blossom, flowering before the leaves appear, suggest a smothered fire just kindling up again. The plant has also its summer name, for use later on when the leaves are grown, *Θυλλεός Λιατ*, the grey leaf, and *Θυλλεός αν Σποινε*, the spurred leaf. The faculty of the Duckweed for appearing from nowhere and spreading rapidly apparently without the effort of producing flowers, caused it to be aptly termed *Μαε ζαν Ατάιη*, the son without a father, and *Λύρ ζαν Ατάιη ζαν Μάτάιη*, the plant without a father or mother.

From the habitats we get such names as *Τονν αν Έλαοαιζ*, or the shore wave, for the Sea Pink ; *Σεανναθάν Μόνα*, or white head of the bog, for the Bog Cotton ; *Σαρ-ρά-Έρμανν*, wreathed over tree, is a suitable name for the Woodbine ; and the Water Lily is called *Θυλλεός Όάιρτε*, the drowned leaf.

There is a beautiful name for the Water Ranunculus, but I have never been able to get it in the original Irish. The person who told it to me did not know any Irish and only remembered the translation of the name in English. This Ranunculus spreads a sheet of white blossoms over the surface of streams in the summer, and in a district in Kerry, where the soil is gravelly so that many of the smaller streams dry in the hot weather, the people call the plant which clothes the dying stream, "the brooklet's shroud."

Among the plants of the fourth group, named from superstitious associations, we get many of the possessions of the fairies. The Ragweed is well known as a fairy plant and is often called the fairy-horses ; but as well as their steed we have their cabbage, *Σαβάιρτε να ηρωοιμε μαιτ*, the good people's cabbage, in that exquisite little denizen of the Kerry hillsides which we call London Pride ; the material for their clothes in the *Linum Catharticum*, or Fairy Flax, *Λιον να μνά-ριζε* ; their

spinning apparatus in the Reed-mace, *Coigeal na mbean riġe*, the fairy woman's distaff; while the Foxglove, *Méaracán na mná-riġe*, is the fairy woman's thimble. The Harebell has a similar name, *Méaracán púca*, the pooka's thimble, but I have not yet discovered where the fairies and pookas keep their needles and threads.

May Eve was the beginning of one of the great festivals among the ancient Irish, known as the feast of Bealteine, and the month of May is still called Bealteine from this feast. Parts of the ritual connected with this festival have been handed down to us, such as the lighting of great fires, which we are now reminded of by "a penny for the bon-fire, if you please," and the custom still kept up in parts of the North and West of strewing the doorsteps and window sills with the flowers of the Marsh Marigold, which is called in Irish *Lur Buidé Bealteine*. Because on May Eve the fairies have great power, and can steal away mortals to *Cír na nÓg*, or the land of youth, they cannot, however, carry them across a barrier of these bright blossoms; Yeats has treated this custom exquisitely in his play, "The Land of Heart's Desire," though he strews his doorstep with primroses instead of *Lur Buidé Bealteine*.

The Yellow Loosestrife has an analogous name in Irish, *Lur na Síotcána*, the plant of peace; the Ground Ivy is curiously termed *Ácáir Lur*, the father of herbs, and the Yarrow is *Ácáir Talmán*, the father of earth, while the name given to the Liverwort suggests some story I have not been able to find, *Óuilleóg na gCruiteáda*, or the leaf of the Picts.

Judging by plant names St. Patrick does not seem to have been such a favourite among the early Irish Christians as St. Bridget or St. Columbkille. I have only found one plant called after him. One of the names of the Plantain is *Cruac pádraic*. The Burdock is called after St. Bridget, *Óuilleóg Buidé*, Bridget's leaf; and the *Potamogeton* or Pond Weed is her spoon, *Liac Buidé*. The flower most connected with St. Columbkille is the St. John's Wort, called variously *Caoth Cúitmicille*, which may mean either the greeting of Columbkille or the tear of Columbkille; *Séan Colummicille*, the charm of Columbkille, and *Achlásan Chaluimchille*, the armpit package of Columbkille. The name arises from the story that St. Columbkille always carried a piece of the plant under his arm in honour of his favourite apostle, St. John.

But the atmosphere of poetry that hangs around the name of the Blessed Virgin appealed specially to the mind of the Gael, and the plants called after her are manifold. The buttercup is beautifully termed *Σηυαδς Μυιρε*, Mary's tresses; and the name for Lady's Mantle is *Θεαρινα Μυιρε*, the palm of her hand. The Cinquefoil, *Potentilla reptans*, is *Κυις μεαρα Μυιρε*, Mary's five fingers; the Mullein is *Coimneat Μυιρε*, Mary's candle, but for mere sound the most beautiful name of all is that given to the Lesser Centaury, *Θρεμιρε Μυιρε*, Mary's ladder.

As strength of faith varies as the simplicity of the people, it was commonly believed that wherever a disease prevailed there was a remedy at hand in the form of some herb. The usual method employed, however, to make sure of using the right plant, was to prepare a bath containing as many of the plants of the district as possible. In the story of the Battle of Moytura, which was fought between the Tuatha de Danaan and the Fomorians, O'Curry tells us that "the chief physician prepared a healing bath with the essences of the principal herbs of Erin, gathered chiefly at *Λυρ Μαδς*, the plain of herbs, and on this bath they continued to pronounce incantations during the battle. Such of the men as happened to be wounded in the fight were immediately plunged into the bath, and they were instantly refreshed and made whole, so that they were able to return to fight the enemy again and again." An incantation nearly always formed part of the cure. Here is a translation of one used at the battle of Culloden :

" I'll make the incantation that Peter made for Paul,
With the herbs that grew on the ground.
Seven Paternosters in the name of priest and pope
Applied like a plaster round."

A disease might arise from two causes, natural or supernatural, hence the necessity for the double remedy. The herbs alone might cure a disease of a purely physical origin, but would be useless without the incantation, if the trouble were caused by enchantment. I know of a case treated by a fairy doctor in the West of Ireland. A man, who is well known in literary circles, consulted this doctor about his eyes. The first step in the diagnosis of the case was to find out whether the defective eyesight was caused by the influence of the "others." The fairy doctor retired to a corner of a bog where some fairy plants grew, and

recited a charm calling on the "others" to give him a sign. Then with his eyes shut, he stretched out his hand, and grasped the first thing that came in contact with it. It was only a tuft of grass, and by this he knew that the disease was physical. If he had grasped the fairy plant it would have been a sign of the influence of the "others."

In the mind of the Celt the world of these mysterious "others" is near the foreground, and often more real to him than the world of material things, and the plants and trees which belong to it or influence it are many. Among them are the Ivy, the Woodbine, the Yarrow, the Mountain Ash, the St. John's Wort and the Figwort. And as the people who hold these beliefs are largely pastoral, we find these plants often used to protect the source on which they depend for a livelihood, their flocks and herds. Ivy was protective for milk and milk products, and a triple *cuach*, or ring, of ivy, woodbine and mountain ash was hung over the lintel of a cowhouse. A similar *cuach* of milkwort, butterwort and dandelion or marigold, bound with a triple cord of lint "in the name of the Trinity," was placed under the churn. When there was little butter it was supposed that the *toradh*, or substance, was taken out of the milk by occult agency. The watercress was used as a charm to facilitate milk stealing. There is a case related of an old woman who was found beside a stream on a May morning, muttering mysterious words, with the names of certain persons, and the saying, "ἵ ἡ ἴομ-ῖα ἑατ ῶο ἑῖο-ῖα," (half thine is mine.) As she pronounced the words she cut a sprig of watercress, which represented the person she wished to rob of his milk or cream.

For a plant to retain its occult properties it was necessary to pluck it in a particular way, or at a particular time. The vervain was gathered at the rising of the dog-star, the bog cotton when a north wind was blowing, and the yarrow had to be cut in the moonlight with a black-handled knife. A charm was repeated on cutting the plant. There is a translation of the one used for cutting the yarrow :

" I will pluck the yarrow fair,
 That more brave shall be my arm,
 That more warm shall be my lips,
 That more swift shall be my foot.
 May I an island be at sea,
 May I a rock be on land,
 That I may afflict any man,
 No man can afflict me."

(Of course these verses lose all their beautiful assonance on translation, and I may add that these are taken from the Highland Gaelic. I have never heard of a collection of these charms being made among the Irish speaking population, but I hope one will come in time).

The St. John's wort kept away enchantment, the evil eye and death, but had no efficacy unless accidentally found. The lucky finder gathered the plant, and, after the example of St. Columbkille, placed it under the left arm, and apostrophized it thus :

“ Plantlet of Columba,
 Without seeking, without searching,
 Plantlet of Columba,
 Under my arm for ever.
 For luck of men,
 For luck of means,
 For luck of wish,
 For luck of produce and kine,
 For luck of progeny and people,
 For luck of battle and victory,
 On land, on sea, on water,
 Through the Three on high,
 Through the Three anigh,
 Through the Three eternal,
 Plantlet of Columba,
 I cull thee now,
 I cull thee now.”

The tree to be avoided, however, was the Aspen, which shows that it is cursed by its guilty trembling. Alexander Carmichael, in his *Carmina Gadelica*, translates the story of the curse as told him by an old man in one of the Western Hebrides. “The aspen is cursed three times,” he said ; “it is banned the first time because it haughtily held up its head when all the other trees of the forest bowed their heads lowly when the King of all created things was being led to Calvary. The aspen is banned the second time because it was chosen by the enemies of Christ for a cross on which to crucify the Saviour of mankind. The aspen is banned the the third time ” (but here the reciter's memory failed him). No crofter would use the aspen in his plow or harrow, or fisherman about his boat or creels or fishing tackle, and they often curse the tree and fling stones at it as they pass it. On the other hand a fisherman always likes to have a piece of the lucky mountain ash in his boat, and a twig of it is often tied to a cow's tail to preserve her from enchantment.

What's in a name? we may say, and receive the unexpected answer—a whole history, if we read it aright; and in taking up such a book as Joyce's *Irish Names of Places*, we find a great deal of the history, folklore and character of the Celt in Ireland enshrined in the names given to towns, villages, baronies and parishes. To take one example, *Daire* means an oak wood, and in the old pagan times there was a place called *Daire Calgaich*, that is, the oak wood of the fierce warriors; later on the name was changed to *Daire Columbcille*, the oak wood of St. Columbcille; but in these days, when we have forgotten our fierce warriors, and rejected our Irish saints, and erected factory chimneys in place of our oak trees, we call the oak wood of warriors and saints by the noble name of Londonderry.

Local names taken from plants and flowers exist in great numbers all over Ireland, but I have chosen the examples I cite as much as possible from Munster.

The Ivy, in Irish *Érðean*, has left its name on a river in Clare, the Inagh, meaning a river abounding in Ivy. The river Laune, which drains the Lakes of Killarney, takes its name from *Uamham*, the Irish for the Elm tree. Nettles seem to have been abundant in County Limerick, for we find several places called from them. Knockananty, the hill of the nettles, and Nantinan, a diminutive form meaning a place abounding in nettles. The Fern, in Irish *Raitneac*, or *Raitcam*, is noticed in the name Ardrahan, the ferny height. As one might expect, a great many places have taken their name from the heather. One of these has been made famous by W. B. Yeats, in his beautiful poem, *The Isle of Inishfree*. Inishfree is an island in Lough Gill. Free is the genitive of fraoch, heather, so Inish-free is the island of heather.

It is generally supposed that the cultivation of flax was introduced into Ireland in the reign of Charles I, by Sir Thomas Wentworth, afterwards Lord Strafford. As a set-off to the measures he took to destroy the Irish woollen trade, he certainly assisted and consolidated the linen trade in the north, by introducing new seed and workmen from Holland. But flax had been cultivated in Ireland from the time when the Milesian landed on these shores. We have evidence of the cultivation of it in this county in several names. In the parish of Killeedy there is a place called Cool-a-leen, the flax corner, and Monaleen on the Castleconnell road, meaning flax bog, was the place where our forefathers used to steep, or as it is called "ret" the flax.

The Arbutus, it is curious to notice, though so often mentioned in Irish stories and songs, and in spite of the fact that it is wide spread in Ireland, has not been much used in place names. We have an example in County Clare, however ; the name of Quin has come from the Irish *Caírne*, an arbutus tree

Apples are often mentioned in the old stories, and this country was once celebrated for its apples. This county in particular, too, even if we had no other evidence of the fact than the name Oola, from *Uball*, an apple, meaning a place abounding in apples.

Names taken from particular trees are very numerous. I have given one, Derry, taken from the oak, but nearer home we have Adare, or more correctly *Δε-Όαρμας*, the ford of the oak, *Όαρμας* being the genitive of *Όαιρ*, an oak.

The hazel was held in high esteem in pagan Ireland, and regarded as the tree of the poets. A favourite way among the bards for describing a prosperous year or reign was : "In those days the hazel trees bent under the weight of the nuts." The Irish name for hazel is *Cott*, and we get it in Barnakyle, near Mungret, the gap of the hazel, and in Dromcollihier, meaning the ridge of the hazel wood. This is derived from the three words *Όριμ*, a back or ridge, *cott*, the hazel tree, and *cott*, a wood, and was originally pronounced *Όριμcottcott*, but the final "l" sound has been altered to "r."

On the beech at Youghal a buried forest is sometimes exposed at low tide, and it consists mostly of yew trees. There was once an extensive forest of these trees at Youghal, and in the garden of Myrtle Grove, Sir Walter Raleigh's house, stands a cluster of yews, old enough to belong to the ancient wood, which survives also in the name Youghal, *Εόδαλλ*, meaning the wood of yew trees.

The alder, *Ψεαρμ*, gives the name to Ferns, in Wexford, and few of the Dublin cyclists who pass daily through Rathfarnham know that the name means the fort of the alder, though they laugh at the country people for calling it "Rafarnain," which is really the correct Irish pronunciation.

From *Όειρ*, the birch, we have Ballaghbehy, the town of the birch, and Coolabehy, the nook or corner of the birch, both townlands in County Limerick ; and the place where the City of Limerick now stands

is called in the story of the pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne, **ROS-DÁ-
FÁILEAC**, the glade or wood of the two willow trees. The word *Ros* has other meanings besides this of a wood, for example it sometimes means a rocky place, but in the cases of Roscommon and Roscrea, it means a wood; Roscrea, according to the Book of Leinster, being the wood of Crea, an old Irish divinity.

The name Ballingrane, or more correctly **DÁITE NA GCRAINN**, means the town of the trees; but there is another word for tree, which occurs more frequently in place names. The ceremony of the installation of a chief always took place under a tree, and each clan had for this ceremony some particular tree, which was looked upon as one of its most sacred possessions. No greater outrage could be committed by one clan on another than to cut down its inauguration tree. In one case we read of a long-continued and bloody feud which began by a hostile tribe rooting up and carrying away the sacred tree of the O'Neills, and another in which the O'Briens of Clare enforced a tribute of three thousand cows as a revenge for the destruction of their tree. The word used for any notable tree, such as these inauguration trees, was *bille*, pronounced in the genitive *villa*. This pronunciation often causes it to be confounded with that pretentious imported word, *villa*, and so disguises the home-manufactured look of many place names. An anglicised form of this word *bille* is frequently used by English speakers for old trees, which are called in different parts of Ireland, bellow trees. We get an example of the use of the word in Garnavilla, a place famed in song as the residence of a woman dear to the heart of the poet:

“Lovely Kate of Garnavilla.”

Garran is a shrubbery, so that the fair Kate dwelt in the shrubbery of the ancient tree.

But trees were once abundant in Ireland. Among the many beautiful old bardic names for our island, was there not one, *Inish-na-veeva*, the island of woods? and there are hundreds of places in it bearing names taken from different words for woods. And the evidence of the existence of these forests, given us by the linguist and philologist from place names, and by the historian from the ancient records, is corroborated by the bog-cutter, as he works among the half-fossilized vegetation of these forgotten ages.

The word *Ros* for wood I have already mentioned, and the word

Ἴῠῠ, as in *Inish-na-veeva*, occurs in County Tipperary in the places known respectively as Ἴῠῠῠῠῠ, the great wood, and Ἴῠῠῠῠῠῠ, the little wood; and the name of an island in the Shannon opposite the mouth of the Fergus, Feenish, or the woody island, derived from Ἴῠῠ, a wood and Ἴῠῠ, an island.

The prefix *Kill*, which is so common in place names, is usually understood to mean church, but there were not so many churches in ancient Ireland as the frequent occurrence of this word would lead us to suppose. In about one-fifth of the cases in which it occurs, *Kill* is the anglicised form of *Coillt*, a wood, and has no connection with *Cillt*, a church. It is sometimes written *Kyle*, and in the genitive *Cullia*. We have these three forms in *Kilmore*, the great wood, near Charleville; *Kyletaun*, the little wood, near Rathkeale; and *Lis-na-cullia*, the fort of the wood. The plural form is *Coillte*, which is to be found in the name of the fishing village on the coast of Clare, known as *Quilty*.

But this is only a small fraction of the amount of evidence which could be brought forward of the abundance of timber in the days when the three kings reigned in Munster, giving her the three crowns which adorn her banner. And the question at once arises, how can we account for the deforestation of Ireland? for instead of Ἴῠῠ ἢ ῠῠῠῠῠῠ, (*Inish-na-veeva*), the island of woods, a more appropriate name would now be Ἴῠῠ ἢ ῠῠῠῠῠῠ ῠῠῠῠῠ, the island of the bare plains. Increase of population does not account for it, as the soil was never so overburdened that the green population had to give way before the white. It is a long-standing evil, too, as nearly two hundred years ago Threlkeld, in his book, bewails the loss of the Irish forests, and says that the "oak for tanning had to be brought from England, as Ireland is miserably bereft of her woods." His account of the loss of the fir trees, saying that they were cut down by the people to destroy the sign of their servitude to the Danes, I have already mentioned, but he makes no attempt to account for the general scarcity of trees and woods. He was probably not aware that some of the noblest of the old woods were cut down wholesale by order of the English government, or he would hardly have called this rule "the greatest mercy the people of this kingdom ever enjoyed, for it united them to a powerful and just people," and recommend them "to praise Him by whom kings reign for our gracious sovereign King George." I hardly think the people followed his advice,

and, if we read the history of that time, we will probably agree that the quality of English justice was a trifle too subtle for the rough Irishry to appreciate fully. The English did cause plantations to be made in Ireland, and indeed one took place about eighty years before Threlkeld's time, but, alas ! it was not of trees.

I referred to the place Kilmore, the great wood, near Charleville ; and this name was taken from the great Munster Forest which stretched, from time immemorial, from the foot of the Galtees, far into County Cork. It was destroyed in 1581, under an order issued from Dublin Castle by the then Lord Deputy, in revenge for its having afforded shelter to the Earl of Desmond in the struggle of the previous year after which that family of the Geraldines was hunted down and killed almost to a man.

Miss Lawless has made the old forest live again in her beautiful poem, in which she identifies the spirit of the forest with the spirit of the nation, and makes it sing its own dirge.

DIRGE OF THE MUNSTER FOREST, 1581.

Bring out the hemlock, bring the funeral yew,
 The faithful ivy that doth all enfold,
 Heap high the rocks, the patient brown earth strew,
 To cover them against the numbing cold.

Marshal my retinue of bird and beast,
 Wren, titmouse, robin, birds of every hue :
 Let none keep back, no, not the very least ;
 Nor fox, nor deer, nor tiny nibbling crew.

Only bid one of all my forest clan
 Keep far from us on this our funeral day.
 On the grey wolf I lay my sovereign ban,
 The great grey wolf, who scrapes the earth away,
 Lest, with hooked claw and furious hunger, he
 Lay bare my dead who died, and died for me.

For I must shortly die, as they have died,
 And lo ! my doom stands yoked and linked with theirs.
 The axe is sharpened to cut down my pride ;
 I pass, I die, and leave no natural heirs.

Soon shall my sylvan coronals be cast,
 My hidden sanctuaries, my secret ways
 Naked must stand to the rebellious blast.
 No spring shall quicken what the autumn slays,

Therefore, while still I keep my russet crown,
 I summon all my lieges to the feast.
 Hither ye flutterers ! black, or pied, or brown !
 Hither ye furred ones ! hither every beast !

Only to one of all my forest clan
 I cry "Avaunt !" our mourning revels flee.
 On the grey wolf I lay my sovereign ban,
 The great grey wolf with scraping claws, lest he
 Lay bare my dead for gloating foes to see,
 Lay bare my dead who died, and died for me.

But, speaking of the plant lore of Ireland, I suppose we may include some of the blue books issued of late years by the Department of Agriculture for Ireland. And in reading the reports and suggestions of experts on forestry, the hope may arise in our hearts that the forests of *Ἰνιρ na ὑπιοῦδα* may wave aloft their green plumes again. The pamphlets on flax growing may call up a vision of blue fields varying the green of the banks of the Shannon, and in our imagination we may taste the glowing fruit of many an Oola, "abounding in apples." But speculations are out of place in this paper, and conclusions, as it leads nowhere, being only a stroll down a Bohareen of Irish Botany.
