LIMERICK BRIDGES

Sarsfield And Athlunkard Structures

PRAISES OF BISHOP BUTLER

A correspondent writes:

There has just come into my hands a poem, entitled “Athlunkard Bridge, Corbally.” As its appearance in print locally is doubtful, perhaps you may be able to find room for its reproduction in your esteemed journal.

Of the six bridges that cross the river Shannon, Limerick Athlunkard Bridge has the distinction of having its praises sung in verse, if we except the reference to Thomond Bridge in “Drunken Thady” (“Lays and Legends of Thomond”).

In 1823, the five-arched Wellesley Bridge Act was passed. It is described as one of the noblest structures in the kingdom. The plans were drawn by Mr. Alexander Nimmo, engineer, on the plan exactly of the beautiful Pont Neulli over the Seine above Paris, the contractors being Messrs. Clements & Son. The bridge, now named Sarsfield Bridge, on which a toll was levied— the toll gates stood at the Clare end— was freed from that imposition on Easter Monday, March 28th, 1833. An inscription to that effect was subsequently cut in one of the stone panels of the bridge.

NEAR WHERE THE WILLIAMITES CROSSED

In 1825, a Bill was passed for the erection of a bridge across the Shannon at Athlunkard. The place selected for the erection of the bridge is near the historical spot where the army of William III crossed in 1690 and 1691. The inscriptions on the five-arched Athlunkard Bridge are—“James and George Richard Paine, architects. Commenced, June, 1826. Finished, December, 1830. This bridge was erected by Commissioners under an Act of the IV. of George the IV. Thomas Spring Rice, Esq., M.P. for the City of Limerick; James and G. R. Paine, architects, 1830.”

The borough stone bears the inscription:—“Borough of Limerick. Henry Watson, Mayor; Joseph H. Murphy, Town Clerk, 1850.” The bridge had a toll gate at the City side. On April 22nd, 1854, the bridge was declared free of toll. But unlike the Sarsfield Bridge it bears no inscription to that effect. Perhaps our Mayor, Alderman Bourke, T.D., will have the necessary inscription affixed to this historic bridge.

Here is the poem I have mentioned above:

ATHLUNKARD BRIDGE, CORBALLY.
(Respectfully inscribed to the Most Rev. George Butler, D.D., Bishop of Limerick).
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