

A LEGEND OF SKAGHVICKINCROW, CO. CLARE.

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SKAGHVICKINCROW* is a townland in Inagh parish, Barony of Inchiquin, and lies north-east of Mount Callan. Connected with it is the following curious legend, which, I think, must have had some foundation in fact:—

Once upon a time, a very poor man named Flann MacDonnchaidh (MacDonough?) lived just near the white-thorn, from which the townland derives its name. He was happy enough in his poverty, but his peace of mind was much upset by constantly dreaming that if he went to the *Droichiod maol na Luimneaigh*† (the Bald Bridge of Limerick) he would of a certainty find a lot of money, and make his fortune. At last, under pressure of his dream, he started one fine day for Limerick, and, on his arrival in the city, commenced to walk backwards and forwards on Ball's Bridge, awaiting his good fate, until at last he got so tired and worn out that he cursed the folly which induced him to leave his snug cabin near Mount Callan on such a ridiculous and fruitless quest. He was just on the point of leaving the bridge for home, when he was accosted by a cobbler who had his stall close by, and whose curiosity was excited by the peculiar movements of the countryman.

“What in the world, may I ask, are you walking up and down that

* *Seeach-mhic-Enchro*, or MacEnchroe's Hawthorn. The surname MacEnchroe was changed to Crowe in last half of 18th century.

† This, I have no doubt, is the true origin of the name “Ball's Bridge.” The old bridge is called in White's Mss. “Pons Calvus,” which is an exact translation of *Droichiod maol* and *Bald Bridge*, and was probably so called because originally built without battlements. The “tradition” that it was erected by one Baal, a convert of St. Patrick, is simple nonsense, and must have been invented in late times to account for its name.—*Vide* Len. Hist. Lim., p. 475.

bridge for all this day, honest man?" said the cobbler. "I am watching you this long time, and, for the life of me, I can't make out at all what you mean."

"Well, to tell you the truth," said MacDonough, after some hesitation, "'tis a foolish story, sure enough; but I have been dreaming for many a day that if I came to this bridge I should make my fortune, and never be a poor man again."

"Ah, you unfortunate man, is that what brought you here?" said the cobbler. "Why, you foolish fellow, I myself do be dreaming almost every night that if I went to a place in the County Clare that I never yet set eyes on, called 'Skaghvickincrow,' I should find a lot of money near a white-thorn bush, and all I had to do was to dig for it. Go home, man, and don't be wasting your time here—dreams are only foolishness."

MacDonough returned home without more ado, and, being struck with the remarkable statement of the cobbler, who had never been in his life west of the Fergus, he got up at the dawn on the morning after his return, and dug away for all he was worth at one side of the hawthorn. He was not long at the work when his spade struck something like a flag, and he was in high hopes that the long-dreamt-of treasure at last was found. When he raised the stone, however, he discovered nothing under it but the soil, and, utterly disappointed and chagrined, he carried it home to his cabin and placed it on the hob. The flag had some letters of an unusual kind cut upon it, and it remained for many a day, in its place by the hearth, a complete puzzle to the *literati* of Inagh. In course of time MacDonough nearly forgot its very existence, and ceased to lament over his foolish escapade, in search of an Eldorado, to the *Droichiod maol* of Limerick.

One evening, however, a travelling schoolmaster (an individual common enough in those days) entered his hut, and asked for shelter and food for the night, which, according to invariable custom, was freely granted. While sitting to the fire with his host, the schoolmaster noticed, by the light of the turf, the queer-looking stone on the hob, and asked MacDonough what it was. The latter said he had it in his possession for a long time, and that, of all the people who saw it not one was able to read the writing upon it. The schoolmaster, who happened

to be a learned man, then examined it more closely, and read out the following words for MacDonough :—

“ *Nios sonadh an taobh na an taobh eile,*”

which means in English :—“ *One side is more lucky than the other side.*”

MacDonough said nothing, and kept his mind to himself; but after his guest left next morning he lost no time in digging at the *other* side of the hawthorn bush, where, sure enough, he unearthed as much money and treasure as made wealthy men of him and his descendants.

This is the story of Skaghvickincrow. It is well known and often told in the district between Corofin and Miltown-Malbay, but until very recently I could get no one to tell me the man's name (Flann MacDonnchaidh) who found the money. No descendant of the fortunate Mac Donough lived in Inagh during the recollection of any person in the parish, which, I think, argues for the legend a pretty respectable antiquity, all the more so if we assume that the name of the townland, Sceach-mhic-Enchro, was originally derived from some incident like the foregoing, and that the hero's full name was Flann MacDonnchaidh MacEnchro.
