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CAPPERCULLEN - AND A ROMANTIC TALE

The townland of Cappercullen is in the parish of Murroe and is adjacent to Garranbane in which is located Glenstal Abbey. Here the Mulryans had a castle since the 12th century. After the Cromwellian plantation the estate at Cappercullen passed to a Sir Richard Lawrence. He in turn sold the lands to George Evans. Evans came to live at Cappercullen around 1680 and established a park of "red and fallow deer" in the estate. The Evans family continued to live at Cappercullen until 1759. The estate was then leased to a Mr. Standish O'Grady, about whom W.R. Le Fanu tells a remarkable tale.

Mr. O'Grady, a widower, lived at Cappercullen with his only daughter Mary. Mary it seems was the "prettiest and merriest little maid in all that countryside". She loved to sit on a bough of an old oak tree which still stands in the grounds of Glenstal Abbey. At seventeen years old she attended her first dance, a Limerick Race Ball. Here she fell in love at first sight with the young Lord Stavordale, eldest son of Lord Ilchester, Stavordale was just as love struck and in the following weeks he frequented Cappercullen, walked with Mary through the old deer park and spent hours swinging on the bough of the old oak tree. O'Grady liked this young man, but fearing that Lord Ilchester would not stand for his son marrying the daughter of a poor Irish farmer and fearing that his daughter would become deeply involved, decided to write to Lord Ilchester in the following manner:

"My lord, I hope you will pardon the liberty I take in writing to you about your son. My only excuse is the great interest I take in the young man, and my fear that if he remains in Limerick he is likely to be involved in an unpleasant scrape. I would therefore, most strongly advise you to have him moved elsewhere as soon as possible and I trust to your honour that you will not tell him that I have written to you, or mention to him the subject of this letter".

In a short time young Stavordale disappeared from Limerick and O'Grady received a letter of thanks from Ilchester, in which he promised to send a Colonel Prendergast to Cappercullen to convey his gratitude personally.

Many months passed by and O'Grady noticed his daughter becoming paler and paler. Her spirits were low and he feared for her health. After some months he received a letter from Colonel Prendergast, saying that he would call to Cappercullen, to express the thanks of Lord Ilchester. Grady duly welcomed Prendergast to his home and the Colonel quickly struck up a friendship with Mary. Quickly realising that the girl was not well, he mentioned it to O'Grady. O'Grady after some persuasion, confided the whole story of Stavordale to Prendergast. He explained how well he liked the young lad, but that he knew Lord Ilchester would not allow his son to marry Mary and how he acted in his daughters best interest. Suddenly Prendergast grinned and said that he was sure Ilchester

would be delighted to have Mary as a daughter-in-law, and informed O'Grady that he in fact was Lord Ilchester himself.

Soon arrangements were made, the young Lord Stavordale returned to Cappercullen. The young couple were wed and the old oak tree still stands just inside the main entrance to Glenstal Abbey. Le Fanu says that although he cannot vouch for the details of this story, he believes the main facts to be absolutely true.

On the same Cappercullen estate (nowdays the grounds of Glenstal) was found a mass rock. This is a reminder of the days when Catholics were not allowed to practice their religion and priests who said mass were punished by death. Masses were held in secluded areas such as the Glen at Cappercullen. Lookouts were posted to warn the priests and the congregation of any interruptions by the soldiers. This area at Cappercullen is to this day known as "An Seipen".

JOHN BOURKE - BARON OF BRITTAS

After the Norman Invasion, King John granted the fortification of Gunaing in Castleconnell to William De Burgho, along with extensive possession of land in North east Limerick. This clan ruled the area for five hundred years. One branch of this family built a large castle at Brittas, four miles from Glenstal, on the banks of the Mulkear, and carried the title Baron of Brittas. This was an impressive looking castle surrounded by a deep moat.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, John Bourke was the Baron of Brittas. John was a devout Catholic and he kept a priest in his castle and had mass there regularly. However, this was in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and Catholics were persecuted throughout the country. John refused to change his religion, unlike the other branch of his family, Theobald Burke of Castleconnell. Theobald now informed the forces of John's "treachery" and troops marched on the castle and demanded that the priest he was harbouring be handed over. John refused and the castle was laid under siege. The siege lasted for fifteen days. Both John and the priest managed to escape dressed as old women. John now fled to Waterford, where he intended to get a ship for Spain. However, he was captured at Clonmel, sent back to Limerick, where he was tried for high treason, sentenced to death and was hanged, drawn and quartered in Limerick in 1607.