The Spa Well.

Stradbally Church.

Old Church on Cloon Island.

Eel-Weir and Old Assembly Rooms.
Castleconnell And Its Spa

By ROBERT HERBERT.

ITS BEAUTIFUL SCENERY.

Mr. Henry Inglis, an early 19th century traveller and an otherwise rather pedestrian writer, fell into extacies on his journey from Limerick to Castleconnell, and under the influence of its magical scenery, has left us the best description extant of that popular 18th century pleasure resort: —

"The road," he says, "carries the traveller through as lovely a country as the imagination can well picture. In variety and wooded fertility it is not surpassed by the most celebrated of the English vales, no one of which can boast as an adjunct to its scenery so noble a river as the Shannon. Many fine seats lie on the left of the road towards the river, particularly Mount Shannon, the residence, at least the property, of the Earl of Clare; and glimpses are also caught of several other fine demesnes and villas, amongst others those belonging to the numerous family of Massey. On reaching the village of Castleconnell, my first feeling was admiration—my next, surprise that I should never have heard before of Castleconnell. It is surrounded by every kind of beauty; and after spending a day in its neighbourhood, I began to entertain doubts whether even Killarney itself greatly surpassed in beauty the scenery around Castleconnell. It is a little village of neat, clean country houses, situated close to the Shannon, and backed and flanked by noble demesnes and fine spreading woods. Just below the village commences the rapids of the Shannon. I do not at the moment recollect any example of more attractive river scenery. The wide, deep clear river is, for more than a quarter of a mile, almost a cataract; and this, to the English eye, must be particularly striking. It is only in the streams and rivulets of England that rapids are found; the larger rivers generally glide smoothly on without impediments from rocks; the Thames, Trent, Mersey and Severn, when they lose the character of streams and become rivers, hold a noiseless course; but the Shannon, larger than all the four, here pours that immense body of water, which above the rapids is 40 feet deep and 300 yards wide, through and above a congregation of stones and huge rocks which extend nearly half a mile; and offers not only an unusual scene, but a spectacle approaching much nearer to the sublime than any moderate sized stream can offer even its highest cascades. None of the Welsh waterfalls nor the Geisbach in Switzerland, can compare for a moment in grandeur and effect with the rapids of the Shannon. Nor is the river the only attractive object at Castleconnell; its adjuncts are all beautiful. The greenest of lawns rise from it; the finest timber fringes it; magnificent mansions tower above their surrounding woods; swelling knolls are dotted with cattle and sheep . . . ."

THE "RIVERFORD" PEOPLE.

To understand Castleconnell it is necessary to realise that the river made it, and that without the river it would never have developed as it did. In a short space of three miles there is a concentrated fall of 50 feet, dividing the river into a series of delightful pools and cascades, and making it a by-word throughout the world among the followers of the craft of Isaac Walton. This also was the reason why the "Riverford" people of the Stone Age, who lived mainly on fish and game, built an early settlement there. During the excavations carried out in connection with the O’Brien’s Bridge-Ardnacrusha.
Electric Scheme, thousands of their stone implements were found at Killaloe, and while little evidence remains of their settlements in the Castleconnell area, there is no doubt that they were also there. According to Mr. A. Killeen, B.E., these axes were used for the clearing of the woods on the foreshore and the preparation of the timber for eel-weirs, very little different in appearance from those which at present straggle across the pools of Castleconnell.

The river also, and its defensive possibilities was the reason why the first iron-clad Norman invaders made Castleconnell their chief castle in Eastern Limerick, an important stronghold on the main road from Dublin to Limerick.

**ITS ORIGINAL NAME.**

According to John O'Donovan (FM. 1213, note e), the original name of Castleconnell was Mur Mic an Duinn, and Professor John Ryan translates this as “The fortress of Donn's son.” The name Donn was a common one in Celtic mythology and in the “Cath Finntrega” no fewer than six of the chieftains of the Tuatha De are so named. One of these was Donn Fritgrine, i.e., of Knockfierna in Co. Limerick (P.R.I. A. 34). Westropp was of opinion that Donn Fritgrine was the son of Midir; and Professor Ryan, to whom I am indebted for all these references, throws out the suggestion that the *Mac an Duinn* could then be Eogabal, who was himself father to Fer Fi and Aine of Knockainey. And here we catch a glimpse of the forgotten gods of the Eoghanacht sept who mastered this district a generation or two before the coming of St. Patrick. The name of the sept, of their heroes, of the local rulers—Ui Fidgente—all imply the mysterious Yew-cult which led Eoin MacNeill to suggest that our race of Eoghan might derive from the Eburones, the Celtic Yew-folk whom Caesar listed in Gaul. Anyhow the river rapids at Castleconnell seem to have marked an important pagan sanctuary for the swirl of the waters was named Eas Danainne from Danann, mother of the Gods.

**THE GUNNINGS.**

When Eoghan's sept extended their sway across the Shannon the brunt of the fighting was borne by their Deis vassals. These Thomond Deis came to be known centuries later as the Dal Cais. During the Danish Wars they displaced Eoghan's race in the control of Munster and eventually a Dal Cais family, the Ui-Conaing, gave their name to the stretch of Shannonside from Caislean Ui Conaing to Carraig Ui Conaing.

It is not certain when the Gunnings were expelled from Castleconnell and the O'Briens took over the fortress, but the first record we have of their presence there is in the year 1174 when a terribly brutal crime was committed by Donal Mor O'Brien, King of Limerick. Donal was on his way home from a great victory over the English at Thurles and stayed a night with his uncle, Dermot, leaving his escort on the Clare side of the river as a mark of his trust. However, in the dead of night his attendants attacked and took the fort, and to prevent the danger of their succession to the Kingship, blinded Dermot and Mahon O'Brien. The former survived his mutilation for a few days only.

**THE DE BURGOS.**

In 1200 Cathal Crohderg O'Connor, in continuation presumably of his long feud with the O'Briens, who had driven the Connaughtmen out of Clare, attacked and burned the Bawn, and, in the following year, King John granted
the site to William de Burgh, who erected a Castle there. "If he fortify the castle," said John, "and we desire to have it, we will give him an exchange." That de Burgh established himself so easily in the district may well have been due to his marriage with Donal Mor's daughter. Although the Bourkes remained more or less permanently in possession of their kingly grant, the O'Briens did not give up their property easily, and, sixty years later, Conor na Siudaine O'Brien attacked and again destroyed it, slaying all the garrison in the usual merciless way of the times. As a result, Walter de Burgh, uncowed, enlarged and strengthened the fortress, which remained in their hands until the end of the seventeenth century.

During the Bruce invasion of Ireland the Scottish army came as far as Castleconnell and laid waste the territory around it, but did not attempt to take the Castle.

THE DESMOND WARS.

In the fourteenth century the Bourkes again allied themselves with the O'Briens of Thomond and became the most powerful family in eastern Limerick. Edmond, "Mac an Fhlaith," a younger brother of Richard de Burgh, "The Red Earl of Ulster," married Slainy, the daughter of Turlough O'Brien, Lord of Thomond. On Low Sunday, 1337, he was captured in a family feud and drowned in Lough Mask. His sons, with the help of the O'Briens, were successful in the struggle that followed and the eldest, William, succeeded in establishing himself at Castleconnell, and in being recognised as the chief of the Bourkes of Clanwilliam, which barony was called after himself. In furtherance of their alliance with the O'Briens, they adopted Irish ways and customs and were able to maintain their independence of England until the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Sir William Bourke married Catherine, the daughter of the "Great" Earl of Desmond, and suffered heavily for his part in the terribly devastating wars of 1569 and 1575. However, on the occasion of Sir Philip Sidney's visit to Limerick in that year, "Lord Castleconnell and his kinsmen made their submission and were confirmed in their estates."

THE KILLING OF JAMES FITZMAURICE.

Four years later, on the arrival of the Spaniards at Smerwick Harbour, the opportunity to test the new loyalty of the Bourkes was presented and they were not found wanting. Sir James Fitzmaurice, "The Arch-Traitor of Munster," endeavoured by every means in his power to seduce the allegiance of the Bourkes, but they refused to cast their lot with their old kinsmen, the Desmonds, and Fitzmaurice was compelled to resort to force to gain a passage into Connaught. He encountered the Bourkes in a wood near Barrington's Bridge and the following colourful account of the skirmish which followed has been preserved: —"James Fitzmaurice, having designed to go into Connaught to procure sufficient aid, and coming into the Bourke country, ordered his men to take the first horses they met for their use, which they did out of a plough belonging to Sir William Bourke. The ploughman thereupon set up a hue and cry, which Sir William and his sons hearing of, with some kerns, followed the track, and at last overtook his cousin Fitzmaurice in a wood, who, seeing Sir William's eldest son, addressed himself to him saying: —Cousin Theobald, the taking of garrons between you and me shall be no breach: If you knew the cause we have now in hand you would assist us; and then related to him the assistance he had from the Pope and the King of Spain.

To which Theobald Bourke replied, that he and his father and brethren had too much meddled that way already, and had cause to curse the day when
they first opposed the Queen’s authority; and that having sworn fidelity they were resolved never more to break it, which answer not being at all agreeable to Fitzmaurice, he refused to part with the garrisons he had taken; and thereupon happened an encounter wherein Theobald and his younger brother Richard were killed, and on the other side James Fitzmaurice and most of his followers had the same fortune."

The Annals of the Four Masters are even less charitable to Fitzmaurice who carried the Papal Standard, and who might have made a success of his revolt, with this first foreign aid to Ireland, had he left Sir William’s plough-horses to their task. They give the following account of the fight:—"James Fitzmaurice went through the middle of Clanwilliam and proceeded to plunder the country as they went along. The country began to assemble against them; and first of all the sons of William Bourke, son of Edmond, namely Theobald and Ulick; and Theobald despatched messengers to Tuath-aesa-Greine summoning Mac-I-Brien Aro to come and banish the traitor from the country. Mac-I-Brien sent a body of gallow-glasses and soldiers to Theobald. These then went in pursuit of these heroic bands, and overtook James, who had halted in a dense and solitary wood to await their approach. A battle was fought between both forces, in which James was shot with a ball in the hollow of his chest, which caused his death. Notwithstanding this, however, he defeated his lordly pursuers. In this conflict, a lamentable death took place, namely, that of Theobald Bourke, a young warrior who was a worthy heir to an earldom for his valour and military skill, and his knowledge of the English language and law."

The Bourkes cut off Fitzmaurice’s head and placed it over the Gate of Castleconnell, while they sent the rest of his body to the Lord President of Munster, who hung it over the Main Gate of Kilmallock. Elizabeth graciously rewarded them for their loyal conduct, sent a letter of condolence to Sir William on the death of his two brave sons, and, by letters patent, dated May 16th, 1580, created Sir William a peer with the title of Lord Baron Bourke of Castleconnell.

**MURDER OF LORD CASTLECONNELL IN LONDON.**

In 1584, Sir William died and was succeeded by his grandson, John, the eldest son of Theobald, who had been slain in the encounter with Fitzmaurice. There is no record of John’s presence in Clanwilliam, and he may have been a minor at the time of his grandfather’s death. While in London, in 1592, he fought a duel with Captain Arnold Cosby, an Elizabethan adventurer who had been granted lands in County Limerick after the Desmond confiscations. They were to fight on horseback, according to Irish custom, on Hounslow Heath, but at the last minute Cosby proposed to settle the argument on foot. Lord Castleconnell dismounted and was in the act of taking off his spurs when Cosby foully attacked him and ran him through. Cosby was tried for the treacherous deed, was found guilty of murder, and was hanged on the spot where Lord Castleconnell died. The rhyming annals of Limerick record the event:—

John Bourke, Lord Castleconnell, was basely slain
By Captain Arnold Cosby—for they twain
Resolved to fight; but Cosby stops, demurs,
Prays Castleconnell to take off his spurs;
And as he stooped, yielding to his request,
Cosby most basely stabbed him through the breast;
Gave twenty-one, all dreadful wounds—base act,
And Cosby only hanged for the horrid fact.
THE KILLING OF THE LORD PRESIDENT OF MUNSTER.

John's brother, Richard, succeeded as Third Lord of Castleconnell, but his continued loyalty to the Crown did not protect him from the wars which ravaged Limerick during the last years of the sixteenth century. A most peculiar and highly suspicious action took place while Castleconnell was patrolling his territory to protect it from possible attack by the troops of the "Sugan Earl," then in revolt. He saw what seemed to be a hostile force approaching, and without waiting to enquire further, charged on them shouting the war-cry of the Clan, Gareach-abu. When the fight was over and Bourke had won, he found, to his dismay, that he had killed Sir Thomas Norris, the Lord President of Munster, and routed his escort. Either Lord Castleconnell must have apologised most abjectly, or the death of Sir Thomas Norris was not altogether inopportune for the Crown, for no reprisals were made on Castleconnell by Sir George Carew, who succeeded as Lord President.

BOURKE VERSUS O'BRIEN.

Richard's next bloody encounter was in a dispute with the O'Briens over Portcrusha, lying along the Shannon and adjoining Castleconnell. The widow of the 4th Baron of Inchiquin claimed the land as her own and crossed the Shannon to cut the harvest on it and take it home. Castleconnell attacked the harvesters and drove them back into Clare, but they must have been well protected by soldiers for many gentlemen, including Ulick Bourke, the uncle of Lord Castleconnell, were slain in the conflict.

BOURKE VERSUS O'CONNOR.

Richard's last and greatest fight was against the O'Conors who had come south with 400 "bonoghs," and a strong body of horse, to join with the Sugan Earl of Desmond. Lord Castleconnell gathered his men and with the assistance of his neighbours and in-laws, the O'Ryans, kept up a running fight with O'Connor as he passed through their territory. O'Connor made a stand at the bridge of Bunbristy, now Grange on the old Limerick Cork road, and, with the help of the FitzGeralds of Lough Gur, inflicted a crushing defeat on the Bourkes. Lord Castleconnell and his younger brother, Thomas, were slain, "though young in years, manly in renown and noble in deeds." Theobald, the youngest brother, watched his opportunity, and shortly after, as O'Connor was retiring into Connaught, having been driven from the Desmond ranks as a traitor, Bourke attacked him and slew many of his followers. The revenge was more fully worked out in the following year when O'Connor was attacked by a kinsman of the Castleconnells in Connaught, Theobald na Longa Bourke, and slain, together with forty of his followers.

THE BOURKES OF BRITTAS.

We now switch temporarily to Brittas Castle, about eight miles south of Castleconnell, where Sir John Bourke of Brittas, commonly called the "Captain of Clanwilliam," a nephew of the first Lord Castleconnell, had established himself. By his father's marriage he was related to the O'Mulryans, chieftains of Owney, and to the de Lacy's of Bruff; but his own marriage to the daughter of Sir George Thornton kept him out of mischief till the Desmond wars had been brought to a close. Then, in the general clean-up which followed, he was called upon to submit to Queen Elizabeth, and, being a fervent Catholic, replied that he considered "it was sinful and damnable personally to submit to her
Majestie.” He was brought to heel but the intervention of his father-in-law saved his life and his estate.

SIR JOHN BOURKE, MARTYR.

When the religious persecutions began, Bourke of Brittas was soon again in trouble, by his open avowal of the Catholic faith, and by his protection of the persecuted and hunted clerics. During the short lull which followed the death of Elizabeth, he attended Divine Service in St. Mary’s Cathedral, which had been recovered by the Catholics, and was received, together with his family and retainers, into the Dominican Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. On the renewal of the persecutions, he was again imprisoned and again released and restored to his estates. But he was too stubborn in the avowal of his faith, and in October, 1606, while Mass was being celebrated in Brittas Castle, he was betrayed by his kinsman, Theobald Bourke of Castleconnell. A detachment of horse-soldiers arrived to arrest the priests but Sir John closed the gates against them and “with his casque on his head, his shield on his left arm and his sword in his right hand, burst out and made good his escape.” He arrived in Waterford on his way to Spain, but was again betrayed, returned to Limerick, tried and found guilty to be hanged, beheaded and quartered. He was hanged at Gallows Green in Limerick on 20th December, 1606, avowing that “he could acknowledge no king or queen against the King of Heaven and the Queen of Heaven . . . whoever would act otherwise was not a servant of God but a slave of the devil . . . .”

CASTLECONNELL VERSUS BRITNAS

After this judicial murder of Sir John Bourke of Brittas, the informer, Theobald of Castleconnell, was granted his estates, and later, having conformed to the Protestant Faith, he was created Lord Bourke, Baron Brittas, by letters patent, dated 28th January, 1618. In the meantime this shifty character had tried almost as dirty a trick on his own brother’s children in an endeavour to obtain the Castleconnell estates. He was the youngest brother of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Lords Castleconnell, and he assumed the title of Lord Castleconnell during the minority of Edmund, son to the 4th Lord and sat as a Peer in the Parliament of 1613. When his nephew, who had been educated in England, came of age, Theobald questioned his legitimacy, and on this being fully established, refused still to surrender the castle and the lands of Castleconnell. He was imprisoned in Dublin Castle and, having been brought to a more amenable state of mind, wrote the following petition from there in December, 1619:—“that he had now endured seven months’ imprisonment, and would now resign all claim to the title of Castleconnell and the Castle and Manor thereof, and also all lands belonging to the late Sir William, Richard and Thomas Bourke.” He was then forgiven and released, having given his security for £3,000 not to interfere any further with his nephew.

THE CONFEDERATE WARS.

When Edmund succeeded as 5th Lord Castleconnell times had quietened. Sir Thomas Wentworth, better know as Black Tom, Earl of Strafford, was appointed Lord Deputy and introduced a spirit of religious tolerance which was afterwards to lose him his head. Edmund lived an uneventful life and having married Tomasin, a daughter of Sir Thomas Brown, and later Margaret, daughter of Sir George Thornton and widow of Donogh O’Brien of Carrigogunnel, died quietly in the year 1635. He was succeeded by his son, William, who reverted to Catholicism.
About the same time, the wily old fox, Theobald Baron Brittas, thinking Catholicism was again in the ascendancy, again turned his coat, and the Civil Wars of 1641/2 found both Castleconnell and Brittas on the side of the Confederate Catholics. William played a prominent part, sitting among the Peers in the General Assembly which took place in Kilkenny in 1642 and raising a Regiment of cavalry for the Catholic cause. The Lieutenant-Colonel of his Regiment was William, son of Lord Brittas, who was captured by the Cromwellians near Cork in 1653 and immediately executed. On the defeat of the Royalists both families were attained and lost their estates. An examination of the transplantation certificates reveals the fact that minor families of the Bourkes were then in possession of Kilpeacon (Sir David and his four sons, Oliver, Edmund, Patrick and David); Ballynagarde (Theobald), Caherconlish (Richard), Luddenbeg (Walter), Ballysimon (Edmond), Kissyquirke and Lismolelane (John and his brother), Ludden Castle (John), Kileoolin (Richard), Carrigmartin (Edmond), Ballyvarra (Richard), Killonan (William), Ballyluskly (Thomas), and Cahernary (Thomas). In fact, the Civil Survey shows that the Bourkes were the principal owners of the land in and about the South Liberties from Monaleen, via Ballysimon and Cahernary to Donoughmore and Kilpeacon.

TRANSPLANTATION.

Those being transplanted were required to submit certificates of the persons transplanting, together with quantities of stock, etc., being taken by them; and Brittas's certificate gives a vivid picture of the times and the strait-ent circumstances to which the old Anglo-Irish families had now been reduced:—“The said Theobald, Lord Baron of Brittas, aged seventy-five years, red-gray hair, slender face. The Lady Margaret, his wife, aged sixty years, gray hair, slender face. Margaret and Mary, daughters to Sir John Bourke, under the age of twelve years. Thomas Bourke, his servant, aged twenty years, slender face, yellow hair. Daniel O'Brouder, aged forty years, slender face, yellow hair (his poet?) and lame of one leg. Robert Lenane, aged eighteen years. Shryllly na Brouder, aged forty, gray hair, middle stature. Catherine Grady, maid servant, aged thirty years, full face, middle stature, black hair. Any ny Mahony, aged thirty-six years, gray hair full face, middle stature. His substance—three cows, one gelding, two garrans (working horses), and six hogs, for which he payeth contribution. The substance whereof we believe to be true.”

Castleconnell fled to the continent and enlisted in the army of Charles. His mother, Margaret, Lady Dowager of Castleconnell, is described in her certificate as “aged seventy years, middle stature, flaxen hair... Her substance, twenty cows, twenty sheep, ten mares and garrans, and two riding nags; four sows, six acres of winter corn, out of which she pays contribution.” She had fared better, with her flaxen hair and her six acres of corn than the poor old turncoat, Brittas. Or was Lord Brittas's certificate just another example of his trickiness?

RESTORATION.

On the restoration, the estates of both Castleconnell and Brittas were restored by the Acts of Settlement. In the former's petition for justice he writes to Charles II to say he served “five or six years trailing a pike in the Duke of York's Regiment. He understood no misery, but now he has run in debt for food and raiment, and is at the end of his credit, in imminent hazard of imprisonment for his debts, and unable further to subsist if your Majestie relieve him not.” He further writes to his relative the Duke of Ormond:—“Therefore I humbly beg your Grace's pardon that I plainly open my unfortunate
grievance; for, on my word, my Lord, I was forced, as Captain Henessy can inform your Grace, to pawn the very clothes I had for to bring me out of Dublin, and ever since had a mind to wait on your Grace. I am not able to appear for want of clothes, my wife and children being ready to forsake house and home, and all the little stocke I had being taken for rent . . . " The poor man was indeed in straitened circumstances, but Ormond was able to get him a temporary pension of £1,000 a year, which, we trust, was sufficient to keep his wife and children at home.

**Williamite Wars.**

Again there was a short period of prosperity during which William, 8th Lord Castleconnell, was Lord Lieutenant of the County and City and sat in the Irish Parliament of 1687-9, where his kinsman, Lord Brittas, also sat. But with the arrival of King William in Ireland they both sided again with the Stewarts. Castleconnell became a Lieutenant-Colonel in Colonel Hugh Sutherland’s Regiment of Horse and fought at the battle of Aughrim. After the Treaty of Limerick he returned to France and died there, unmarried, when the Castleconnell title fell to John, 4th Lord Brittas. Brittas raised a cavalry regiment and fought through the Williamite campaign. He had a narrow escape when the cavalry camp of the Irish was surprised near Sixmilebridge and many prisoners were captured. However, Brittas escaped, fled into Limerick and, like Castleconnell, retired to France after the Treaty was signed. Both their estates were confiscated and the rest of their story is easily told. John the son of Theobald, 3rd Lord Brittas, became 5th Lord Brittas and 9th Lord Castleconnell. His son John, by Catherine, the daughter of Colonel Gordon O’Neill, succeeded his father in both titles but died unmarried, while his younger son, Thomas, became a General in the Sardinian Army and, according to Ferrar’s History of Limerick, was still alive in France in 1787. His son was a Captain in Rotech’s Irish Regiment and a Knight of St. Louis, and, dying unmarried, brought the direct line of the Bourkes of Clanwilliam to a close.

**The Destruction of Castleconnell.**

Castleconnell itself figured, but not with very much credit, during the Williamite sieges of Limerick. For August 1690 Dean Story, the Williamite historian, notes: — "On Tuesday the 12th, Brigadier Stuart, with detachment of his own and my Lord Meath’s men, went towards Castleconnell with four field pieces: the besieged submitted and were brought prisoners to the Camp, being 126 in number commanded by one Captain Barnwell . . . . Here we kept a garrison till the siege was raised and then it was blown up." During the second siege it fared little better as regards its garrison and Story notes for the month of August, 1691: "The 27th in the morning the Prince of Hesse with his own regiment, Colonel Tiffin’s and Colonel St. John’s, five pieces of cannon, and about 700 Horse and Dragoons, marched to Castleconnell, which he had not blown up effectually last year, and wherein the Irish had now a garrison of 250 men. They refused the Prince’s proffers to them at first, but after two days’ siege, were content to be all made Prisoners of war . . . . " No mistake was made this time, and the castle was blown sky high. Some of the huge blocks of masonry lie to-day as they fell, a distance away from the main buildings, but they give little idea of the one-time importance and magnificence of this great Anglo-Irish structure.

It was presumably granted to William Ford after the siege, and certainly by him transferred to Ralph Westropp of Carduggan, County Cork, in the year 1725.
FABRIC OF THE CASTLE.

The remains stand on a steep flat-topped rock beside the Shannon and traces remain of the south west and north-west towers, together with some fragments of walls and arches. The courtyard measures 160 feet by 100 feet, but Ginkle did his job so well that no feature of importance can now be seen. It is said to have had four corner towers originally but the view of it in the Down Survey maps show something more in the nature of a fortified house than a military stronghold.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY.

In contrast to its political and military history, the religious history of Castleconnell is of the scantiest. Athassel Priory was the favourite religious foundation of these Bourkes of Clanwilliam. They are also credited with endowing the Franciscan Friary in Limerick. On Cloon Island is the earliest remains, a small early mediaeval church (perhaps eleventh century) with two early cross-slabs set into its walls and a large stone with a peculiarly hollowed out hole in front of the west door. It is said to have been a friary but it cannot now be identified, and, in any case, there are no signs whatever of any conventional buildings, and nothing remains but the little church itself.

The parish Church is said to have stood on the site of the present Protestant Church (see Appendix) and, judging by the early date of some of the tomb-stones in the graveyard, this is likely. However, the view which Mr. Westropp reproduces as from the Down Survey, seems to me to be simply a view from another angle of the Castle. The sole historical references are that it was called Idumyn in 1302; Castleconnell, alias Stradbally, alias Capella de l’dum in 1615, that Donald O'Mullrny was Vicar of Castra Conayn in 1412, and that it was a rectory, inappropriate to the Earl of Ormond in 1633.

THE CASTLECONNELL SPA.

THE "GENTRY."

To understand the life of Castleconnell in the 18th century it is necessary to pause a moment and consider the type of people who contributed to it. After the siege of Limerick and the defeat of the Stuart cause the majority of the old Catholic aristocracy left the country. The few who remained were driven into the barren lands of Clare or renaged their faith for a miserable few acres of land. The newcomer was the most uncouth planter yet foisted on Ireland. Descended from Williamite soldiers, or, at the most, from the even more uncivilised Cromwellian troops, they were illiterate money-grubbers with little interest in anything but the retention of their ill-gotten estates and the assessment of wealth. Having fortified their positions, however, they began to look further afield and to send their sons on the "Grand Tour of Europe," and when the latter returned, they brought with them carvings from Greece and Rome, paintings from Spain, Italy and Holland, expensive tastes and new ideas from everywhere. The Grand Tour had civilised them and they now knew how to use their leisure time, and having little but leisure time, they had been badly in need of that knowledge. They had been particularly impressed by the neoclassicism on the continent and, as a result, beautiful Georgian mansions, with a lightness, a space and an airiness in strange contrast to the fortified house of the seventeenth century, began to spring up all over the county.
New Arrivals.

Castleconnell was no exception. Its spa had already become famous by the middle of the century and most of the "gentry" of the county and of County Clare began to build summer lodges there. Among the first of these houses to be erected were, Mountshannon, by Silver Oliver of Castle Oliver, near Kilfinane; Richill by Henry Brown of Rathkeale, Hermitage by William Ryves, the house now known as the "Hotel," by Vere Hunt of Curragh; Prospect by Thomas Lloyd of Beecmount, New Garden by Samuel Purdon, and Belmont by the Grady's. These people were the leaders of fashion in Limerick society at the time, and the smaller fry soon followed suit; and to cater for those anxious to take the waters or view the fashions and take part in the fun, and with not enough money to build a residence there, there was a good inn erected, besides one at Doonass and another at O'Brien's Bridge. The next step was the erection, in 1783, of a large and good Assembly Rooms, where dances could be held, public breakfasts given, and all other entertainments peculiar to that century.

The Spa.

About 1760 John Martin of Limerick wrote a short treatise on the curative properties of the spa. The pamphlet was published by Andrew Welsh of Limerick and the only copy of it I know to be in existence may now be seen in the Limerick Museum. According to Ferrar, Dr. Martin was an eminent and skilful physician, and if we are inclined to doubt the extravagant claims he makes for the cold mineral waters of Castleconnell we must lay the blame on the state of knowledge, or rather ignorance, among medical men of those days, rather than on Martin himself.

Having given a brief treatise on spas in general, he explains the reason why he was "desirous to dive into the nature of this spaw," and gives the results of his somewhat primitive experiments. "The situation of the spaw of Castleconnell being on low ground close to a great bog, does not at first appear so advantageous, as really it is, if it be but observed that it does not touch the Bog, but runs through the vein of clay and gravelly earth, and in all probability takes its rise from the mountains that are several miles from the Well: It is not, I think, reasonable to believe that it could be so clear and transparent, if it run'd so lately thro' the Bog; besides it is as light as any mineral water; I compared it to Pyrmont and German Spaw Waters, and as to this particular I could observe no difference." Martin proved to his own satisfaction that there were no acids in the water, that it ran through limestone and that there was not the least vestige of alum in it; that there was a small quantity of alkaline in it and that it contained "a great quantity of fixed particles of steel."

Its Curative Properties.

His conclusions were that the spa was "as light and as free from any heterogeneous body as any we know, that it contains a great quantity of mineral spirit which is the soul of all spaws, that it has an alkalious salt, which renders this water still more excellent and a greater anti-scourbutick." He makes the interesting observation that "there is scarce one in six in the whole island who is not more or less tainted with a "scourbutical habit of the body."

Method of Taking the Waters.

The method of taking the waters was as follows: — "... first to bleed if the person be plethoric; the next day to clean the Primae Viae by a proper
dose of physick of Epsom or Glaubert Salts dissolved in a pint or quart of the spaw; which dose may be repeated the next day if the Person has been a gross or great feeder. It is best to begin by drinking a pint or quart the first day, and to augment every day after a pint, whilst it can be done without difficulty or the least uneasiness, and then to remain to that quantity; some rise to 7, 8, 9 or 10 pints and some to more..." The person undergoing treatment should diet on young, fresh and tender meats, easy of digestion; and all kinds of fruits, sallets and roots, except Artichoaks and asparagus, should be avoided. He could take a moderate glass of wine, if used to it, and preferably "a good generous claret." Punch was not a proper drink for spa drinkers, and elder also was to be avoided.

**CURIOUS EFFECT OF WATERS ON AN EARTH WORM.**

Dr. Rutty, an eminent English authority, agrees in general with Dr. Martin's main conclusions, and adds the interesting fact that "an earth worm put into this water instantly dies, hence it is found effectual for worms in children. John Ferrar, the Limerick historian, quotes from both and agrees with both, but considers that if bathing be added to a drinking course, it will be attended with happy consequences: —"Bathing, therefore, though not one of the "sex res non naturales," yet it is almost as useful and wholesome as any of them, which is the reason the ancient Romans scarce ever passed a day without bathing; it exhilarates the spirits, strengthens the memory, and greatly contributes to produce the "Mens sana in corpore sano."

**18TH CENTURY GAIETY.**

To this health-giving fountain then, came the Limerick valetudinarians and in their wake the gay sparks and pretty eligible young ladies, with and without their "large fortunes." The beginning was modest for the countryside was still recovering from the effects of the Williamite wars. After the confiscation of the Bourke estates the land fell first to William Ford and then to a branch of the Westropp family, before reverting to the Bourkes; and when the history of the spa starts, the land about it was in possession of Sir Richard de Burgo, Bart. (App. 2). He erected a pleasing lime-stone arch over the well and having made the surroundings more attractive, paved the way for its great popularity later in the century.

**ITS FIRST POET LAUREATE.**

Dan Hayes, one of the wildest Bucks Limerick has ever produced, and of whom I have treated fully elsewhere, was also Castleconnell's first poet laureate. He sings: —

Propitious Naiad of that healing stream! 
Inspire my grateful breast thy praise to sing,
Thy cordial draughts restore the sickly frame,
And youthful vigour gushes from thy spring.

What though thy shore can boast no gay parade,
No circus regular, no splendid rooms;
Lovely simplicity adorns thy glade,
And lavish nature in perfection blooms.
Serene contentment, with unclouded brow,
    Sheds her soft influence, o'er thy flowery dale:
Secure delights in sweet succession flow,
    And health inspires the animating gale.

Chaste are thy damsels, as the virgin train,
    Which, thro' Thessalian groves, Diana guides,
Their hearts, their radiant eyes, untaught to feign,
    Whilst o'er each glance, fair Decency presides.

Recount their names! I might as well display,
    Each flower, that opens on the summer lawn;
Each shining gem, that decks yon starry way,
    E'er yet invidious morn begins to dawn.

ITS EARLY SIMPLICITY.

Of this early simplicity also in the life of the Spa, an anonymous poet, published by John Ferrar and who have been the historian himself, writes: —

**Hail Castleconnell, where incessantly**
The Shannon pours her rapid foaming stream
Impatient to find out her native sea... No gay parade contaminates thy shore,
No bright Rotunda—but simplicity
Adorns thy glade...
Happy the man who flies to Castleconnell,
And banishing each low and wordly thought,
Seeks in thy shade to tranquilize his mind.
Here many a sage and many a hero came,
To taste the spring—fountain of life and vigour!
Here many a generous social soul,
Drank the full cup of pleasures innocent!
Here Hayes with his Celinda strayed, while love
With every breeze was wafted to her ear,
While folly's sons sleep out their early hours
How pleasant to forsake the arms of sleep,
To view the rising sun purpling the skies,
To exhale the sweetness of the fragrant air,
And see all nature growing to perfection?

Now to the spring repair, where old and young,
In consultation meet, praising its virtues!
Maria's bloom impaired, while her fond swain,
Warmly invokes the Naiad of the stream,
To give her back to life renewed and love.

Then we ascend the Westropp's mount and view,
The Shannon winding through the verdant meads,
While Massy's bowers and groves enrich the prospect.

And the poet ends his fulsome eulogy with a brief reference to the salmon fishing, the first on record of that sport which was later to make Castleconnell famous all over the world.

The sportsman takes the opportunity,
To lure the finny brood to leave their beds,
They toss, they play, they rise to fall no more.
These are the scenes that give the zest to life,
These are the joys of Castleconnell.
A long poem on Castleconnell, which appeared in the Limerick Chronicle for the year 1771, purports to describe a Ball which took place there on the 1st of February of that year, and to describe the ladies at the Ball, the supper, the New Assembly House, the generosity and politeness of the Castle-Connell Club, the characters of the members, the author’s prayer, &c., but after some hundreds of lines on the graceful modesty, blushing cheeks, and soft charms of the ladies, in which the author completely exhausts both himself and the reader, the poem ends, and none of the other promised and far more to be desired descriptions are given. The names of the ladies are printed only with dashes and not given in full, but I have endeavoured to give, from a knowledge of the county families of Limerick and Clare of that period, the surnames of many of the beauties referred to. These are given in Appendix 3.

Visit of John O’Keeffe, Actor and Dramatist.

The first person of renown to visit Castleconnell Spa and record his impressions was John O’Keeffe, actor and dramatist, who married the daughter of Tottenham Heaphy, owner of the Limerick Theatre in Cornwallis Street. He writes: — “In 1770 I saw Colonel Burke and most of the other members of the Castleconnell Club, which was composed of the first persons of rank and fashion and landed property in the country. They were of the prime class of Bon Vivants and played high and drank deep; all, or most of them, having travelled, were of the chief order of high accomplishment, interior and exterior; they wore a uniform of scarlet with gilt buttons, green silk waistcoats and breeches, a green ribbon in the breast, with three C’s in gold, initials of the Castleconnell Club. They each had a pretty box at Castleconnell, close by the Spa, which is very cold, limpid and sparkling ... I had the pleasure of dining several times with the Club at MacManus’s. I never saw any quarrel among the members; which in those days of claret and swords, must otherwise have proved fatal. All was harmony and good humour. Colonel John MacMahon was a member of it.” I believe the tavern of MacManus, where they dined, was in Limerick and not at Castleconnell as one might suppose.

Public Breakfast.

In the Limerick Chronicle for the year 1782 we gain an interesting side-light on the entertainments of the period and learn how the “gentry” entertained two fools with the one rattle, the general public and themselves. The day began with a public breakfast at the “Long Room,” where a band played during the feast. Afterwards a regatta and boatrace was held and on land the “yokels” indulged in the following absurdities for the amusement of the gentlefolk and the enrichment of themselves. “A shift was run for by young women; tobacco was grinned for by old women; a hat was cudgelled for by young men, and they ran a race in sacks.” Charles Blackwell assured the public that he “would take care to have everything prepared in the genteelst manner for the reception of ladies and gentlemen. The festival was ended with a fancy dress ball in the night and the following fancy dress costumes might be seen there:— “A Dublin oyster wench and a Burren oyster man; a Dublin newsboy crying the list of runners; a curds and whey woman with pail as neat as her person; a large wet-nurse with a baby in her arms; muffin-fruit- and flower-girls and a fortune teller with a partly paralyzed body.”
Lady Portarlington in 1785 was impressed by the curative powers of the waters and the gaiety of the New Assembly Rooms. Dorothea Herbert, that poor love-orn maiden from Carrick-on-Sur, refers earlier to the manyfine people to be seen there, but remarks that they “quitted it, half pleased, half sick of this really beautiful village which is about a mile long.” Holmes, whoindustriously travelled through the south of Ireland in 1801—and travellingwas an industrious job in those days—is candidly sceptical of the health-seekingintentions of the habituées. He says:—“The houses in general are small butvery neat, conveying the idea more of the environs of a metropolis than a village. Here we encounter équipages and all the gay parade of fash-ionable dissipation. I met but few valetudinarians if I may judge by theirfaces, particularly amongst the females. All seemed healthful and animatedwith the same vivacity, apparently depending more on cheerfulness and societythan upon the celebrity of the mineral waters.”

MONSIEUR DE LATOCNAYE.

The most pains-taking of all the travellers to Castleconnell was Monsieurd de Latocnaye, a philosophizing Frenchman who, very sensibly, walked through Ireland in the summers of 1796 and 1797. He was charmed with Castleconnell, and must have been well received there, for even the Lord Chan-celler and the infamous Mr. Bruce, of whom more later, are highly praised for their kindness to their tenants. He wrote:—“Castleconnell is a charming spot, situated on the bank of the Shannon which here flows like a torrent through stones and rocks. The beauty of the place and the mineral watersdraw here a great number of Limerick’s idlers, who pass the summer in thevillage and drink, every morning of their stay, a glass of the water. The richstrangers attract beggars from afar, and there are already more here thanelsewhere in Ireland. It may seem a strange remark, but it is true, that the richer the country in Ireland, the poorer are the people and the lower the labourer’s daily wage... .

“Several persons near Castleconnell, among others the Lord Clare and Mr. Bruce, in multiplying industries have increased the rate of wages—therecan be no better way for a rich man to employ his money... . Mr. Bruce hasbuilt, at his own charges, a great number of comfortable houses for the peasantry, and these people, so often accused with injustice of defects whichreally do not belong to them, have proved very careful. When he has neededworkers he can always find them, even in times when his neighbours cannotget a sufficiency. I have been assured that his labourers do not wish to takefrom him the price they are willing to receive from others... . (To all of which,we can only say, knowing the character of Mr. George Evans Bruce in anotherdirection, in the words of the celebrated Mr. Croker of Ballynegarde as hegazed on his estate for the last time, and the clergyman told him he was goingto a far better land, “I doubt it!”). The inhabitants of Castleconnell wereassessed with a rate to provide means to build a Catholic Church. I do notknow what fault had been committed by the priest of the parish, but theCatholic Archbishop of Killaloel interdicted the work, and the church remainedhalf-built, and without a roof. Mass, however, was celebrated in a cornercovered by a few plants, and the people continued to come as before, but resolu-tely resolved not to finish the church unless and until the favourite priestshould be recalled.
THE BUCKS.

Castleconnell was now the rival of the famed Spa at Mallow for the patronage of the gentry of Munster—not only for the curative properties of its waters, but for the gaiety of its life and the rakery of its young bloods. The Leader of Society at the Spa was John Fitzgibbon, Lord Chancellor of the Exchequer, the first Lord Clare (See Appendix 4), and around him were gathered the Massys (Appendix 5), the Dawsons, the O’Gradys, Boyle Vandeleur of Ralahine, Vere Hunt of Curragh, William Ryves of New Garden, Tom Grady of Belmont, George Evans Bruce the banker, Crosbie M'Gill, erstwhile High-sheriff of the county; John Westrop, of Attynin, and many other full-blooded young scions of the families of Limerick and Clare. The stories of the excesses of these very foolish young men came to light in the court cases which resulted from two very famous scandals, the first an action for damages by the Rev. Massy for the seduction of his wife by the seventy year old Marquess of Headford (Appendix 6); the second and even more famous one, the libel action of George Evans Bruce, a thorough-going scoundrel against Tom Grady of Belmont, a bitter misanthropist with a genius for poetical satire which has never been equalled in Ireland (Appendix 7).

THE 19TH CENTURY.

With the turn of the century the spa as a pleasure and health resort began to decline, and although the gentry lived on in their mansions to the end of the century, the life and gaiety quickly disappeared from it. When the younger Earl of Clare came of age the Freeman’s Journal (June 15th, 1813) gives us a description of the celebrations (well subsidised with food and drink, to be sure) which took place on the Mount Shannon Estate:—“His numerous tenantry convenient to Mount Shannon assembled on the Demesne at an early hour, when dancing commenced, and was continued with great delight and good humour until a late hour. An entertainment of beef, mutton, porter, plum pudding, etc., in true Irish hospitality, was served up by his Lordship’s servants. Several bonfires were lighted, and the night terminated with the utmost festivity.” From then on the story is one of rapid decline. Of the travellers, Henry D. Inglis in 1834 simply remarks about this once famous pleasure resort:—“Houses are scarce and dear. For a small house £10 a month is asked.” Dr. Knox, medical enquirer into the nature of spas, states that “this once famed spa has now almost fallen into complete neglect. It would be interesting for us to try to account for this speedy collapse.” Alas, I can no more account for it than the learned Dr. Knox himself.

CASTLECONNELL REGATTA.

Finally the village was visited by Thomas Lacy in 1863, and while he makes no reference whatever to the spa, he leaves a vivid and amusing description of the local regatta, which is in strange contrast to the amusements in vogue when the spa was at its height, even although the “gentry” are still taking part to a certain extent:

“The assembly was large and the attendance on the part of the aristocracy numerous and brilliant. The ladies were eminently beautiful, and fully realised all I had previously heard of the celebrated “Limerick lasses.” The immediate scene of action on this interesting occasion was the point on the river about half a mile from the village of Castleconnell, called the World’s End (see note) where, on the banks of the river, tents were raised, and crowds
of persons from the counties of Limerick and Clare were congregated; the largest number, however, appeared on the Limerick side. The principal race was between two four-oared boats, one of them being manned by five gentlemen of the County of Limerick and the other by an equal number from the County of Clare, four of them rowers and the fifth a steersman. Three of those in the Limerick boat were brothers, the Messrs. MacDonnell, and two of those in the Clare boat were brothers, the Messrs. Lloyd. The distance was nearly three miles up the Shannon, in the direction of O’Brien’s Bridge and back. The judges were in Jasper White’s splendid yacht, and a numerous band, that of the Limerick Militia, in a barge that was moored in the same vicinity. The boats started by the discharge of a small piece of ordnance, simultaneous with which the band struck up the favourite and popular air of Garryowen and the excitement of the multitude was considerable. After a very closely contested race which, considering the distance, came off in an incredibly short space of time, the Clare boat came in the winner by a few yards, to the great joy of the dwellers on the western side of the river. A couple of well-contested races came off in the course of the day; the sport terminating with a remarkably exciting race between three light boats of a peculiar construction, well suited to the arduous task assigned them, that of running down the river and over some numerous falls, and returning by the same course, a work of extreme difficulty. Each boat was worked by two men, who in descending used light oars; and although it required no very great effort to facilitate their progress down the stream, much care and adroitness became necessary to prevent them from being overturned as they passed the falls. But it was when they had to return against the force of the river and the precipitous falls that the nerve and strength of the boatmen were taxed to the utmost; and it required all the power they possessed, accompanied by ample experience, to propel their skiffs against the impetuous rush of the crested flood as it bounded over the ledges of the obstructing rocks. It would be almost impossible under any circumstances to witness a finer manifestation of agility united with physical strength than that which was exhibited on this occasion. In their upward progress the almost herculean boatmen were obliged to use poles to propel their tiny craft and great indeed were the efforts they displayed in the use of them. In mounting over the final and most difficult fall, it was really curious to witness the address made use of by them to bring their boats over the apparently impassable barrier and when they had succeeded in doing so, the shouts of approbation that burst from those who fully understood the difficulty of the task they had accomplished, were such as none but Irishmen knew how to give. One boat only could win the prize; but the hardy fellows in each of the others entitled themselves, by their exertions, to the praise and admiration of the thousands there assembled. The interest was enhanced by the inconsiderable distance which during the whole race appeared between the first, second and third boat.”

**Then and Now.**

As a sort of obituary notice to the Castleconnell of the past, I give here-with Maurice Lenihan’s brief dismissal of the resort in the year 1886: —

“A very elegant Catholic church, built by Mr. Lancelot Ryan of Newport, from designs by W. E. Corbett, Esq., C.E., was opened and dedicated to public worship in Castleconnell, through the exertions of the Rev. Patrick Hennessy, parish priest. The church, contains a fine memorial window of stained glass to the late John White, Esq., J.P., of Belmont, and a beautiful altar presented by Helenus White Esq., J.P., in 1865.”
SEATS—Island House (Sir Richard Donnellan de Burgo, Bart, D.L.), Woodlands (Captain Rich), Hermitage (Lord Massy), Stradbally (J. S. White, Esq., J.P.), Prospect (Eyre Lloyd, Esq.), Castle View (Thomas S. White), Belmont (George Sampson), Shannon View (Helenus White), World’s End (Thomas Grove Grady), Lacka House (Edward G. Bell), The Grange (Edward Gonne Bell), Rock Lodge (Major Thomas Gillie), Upper Coolbawn House (Captain Spencer Vansittart), Lower Coolbawn House (William Corbett, whose collection of the rarest foreign and Irish birds, and of falcons, is said to be the largest in Ireland). All these seats are on the Limerick side of the Shannon. The seats at the Clare side of the river are—Landscape (Standish T. O’Grady), Doonass House (Sir Hugh D. Massy), Summer Hill (Berkley Vincent), Water Park (John N. Phelps), Rose Hill (James O’Grady), Erinagh House (Admiral O’Grady), Erinagh (Thomas S. O’Grady).

In an 1877 directory the principal farmers are given as follows:—Sallymount, M. Coffey; Bonougay, A. Egan; Wood Road, P. Farrell; Coolriver, M. Frewen; Garden Hill, W. Frewen; Montpelier, W. Goggin; Woodpark, J. Keays; Wood Road, J. Richardson; Woodpark House, V. Ryan; and Woodpark, J. Wilmot.

Not one of the seats is now occupied by the owner given above, but I understand from a local resident that there is hardly a single change in the list of farmers.

Deaths devours all lovely things;
Lesbia and her sparrow
Shares the darkness—presently
Every bed is narrow.

APPENDIX No. 1.

This is a charming little Georgian Church with one transept and chock-full of interesting and well-executed monuments. Among the most important are those to Anna, the widow of the 1st Earl of Clare, 1844; John, the 2nd Earl of Clare, 1851; Richard, the 3rd Earl, 1864; John Charles, Viscount Fitzgibbon, who “was killed while gallantly leading his troops in the glorious and memorable charge of the Cavalry Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaklava in the Crimea, on 25th October, 1854, aged 24 years”; Sir John de Burgo, 3rd Baronet of Castleconnell, 1838; General Sir Richard Bourke, of Thornfields, 1855 (“he was suddenly called in this House of Prayer, and fell asleep in the Lord”), and The Rt. Hon. Hugh Hamon, 4th Lord Baron Massy, 1836.

APPENDIX No. 2.

The Bournes of Castleconnell.

The lineage of Sir Richard de Burgo, Bart., who owned the land around the spa in the 18th century, only goes back to his grandfather, Richard Bourke, of Dromsally, who died in the year 1734. Wheneve they came before that date and how they came to inherit the estates of Lord Castleconnell I have no information. He was created a baronet in 1785, and assumed the name of de Burgo. His family have continued to hold lands in Castleconnell and district to the present day, and are now represented by the Bournes of Thornfields.

APPENDIX No. 3.

The poem begins:—

Hail, Castleconnell! by whose verdant side,
The foaming Shannon pours his rapid tide;
Where sporting B——— the angling tribe prepares,
And beauteous Massy, silver trout ensnare;
Where islands, groves, and every rural scene,
Enchant us more than Spencer’s fairy Queen;
The mossy rocks, and the descending rill,
Delight the mind from MacNamara’s hill.
The ruined castle on the Shannon's side
In ancient days its country's strength and pride,
Now useless grown, bespeaks a happier time,
When civil wars are banished this blest clime.

It goes on to describe the fair ones who frequent the resort, and includes references to Fitzgibbon, Grady, MacMahon, Quinn, Ross Lewin, Peacock, Scanlan, Stamer, Massey, Odel, Bruce, Vereker, English, Power, Anderson, Ryves, Powell, Nash, Hickman, Vincent, Croker, Dwyer, Shaughnessy, Bowen, England, Hoare, Anketell, Green, Sergeant, Parker, Moroney, Westropp, Purdon, Miller, MacCarthy, Coffey, Sexton, Collins, Mann, Dalton, Dwyer, McGrath and Harroid, most of them well known in the counties of Limerick and Clare.

APPENDIX No. 4.

The Fitzgibbons.

There is an interesting tradition current in Limerick concerning the origin of the Fitzgibbon fortunes. It is said that a crott of gold was found on the land of the Quanes of Glenogra, in which family there were three girls. The only son was drowned while conveying the gold to Cork and the girls became rich heiresses. One married the father of Dan Hayes, the poet; another an ancestor of the Furnells, Limerick bankers, and the third the grandfather of the Earl of Clare. His son, John Fitzgibbon, became a very rich lawyer, and died in the year 1750. His son, John, the first Earl of Clare, is too well known in his public life, to be discussed here, and a brief account of the chief events in his infamous career can be found in any standard work of biography. We will confine ourselves to quoting the remark of Pitt, when Clare first appeared in the English House of Lords :—"Good God," said he, "did you ever hear in all your life such a rascal." He died in 1802, and was succeeded by his son, John, who died without issue. There is a family tradition that the latter was the intimate friend of Lord Byron, and with him penetrated into a Turkish harem. They were found out and chased but Byron escaped but Fitzgibbon was captured. He was given the choice between death or emasculation, and chose the latter but less final degradation. He was succeeded by his brother, Richard Hobart, who died in 1864, and with whom the title became extinct, his son having been killed some time previously in the Crimean War. A beautiful statue by P. MacDowell, R.A., of London, was erected to him on Wellesley (Sarsfield) Bridge, but was blown up in the troubled times. The bronze relief frieze, showing the famous cavalry charge in which he was killed is preserved in the Limerick City Museum. The Earl of Clare bought Mountshannon from Silver Oliver, and built the magnificent mansion (see Illus., 4-8), which was burned down in the troubled times.

APPENDIX No. 5.

The Massys.

The Massys came to Ireland in 1641, and settled in Duntryleague. The son of the first Massy, Colonel Hugh Massy, married a daughter of the first Lord Carbery, and his son was created Baron Massy in 1776. Their offspring were scattered all through County Limerick, and it would take a paper in itself to trace out all their ramifications. A brother of the first Lord Massy, Godfrey, became a clergyman and was known locally as "Dirty Boots" for the following reason:—While travelling to Dublin he learned that one of his fellow travellers was off to the Castle to intercede for the same benefice for which he was looking. When the coach arrived he set out straight for the Castle without changing and obtained the desired favour from the Lord Lieutenant. As he left the castle his rival arrived in spotless court clothes, only to be told by the Lieutenant:—"So sorry, Dirty Boots was here before you and got it." Another Rev. Godfrey Massy was the founder of a proselytizing movement in the middle of the last century, known derisively as The Newlights of Askeaton. The story of the "Crim. Con." case in which another reverend member of this family was involved is told elsewhere.

The principal seat of the Massys at Castleconnell was Hermitage, a beautiful mansion, which was burned down. It was probably the home built by Bruce the banker, Circa 1780, at a cost of about £10,000.

APPENDIX No. 6.

Charles Massy, the Marquis of Headfort, tried at Ennis Summer Assizes, 27th of July, 1804.

In 1797 the Reverend Charles Massy, son to Sir Hugh Massy, Bart, and the holder of several benefices in the Church of Ireland, married a Clare beauty, Miss Ross-Lewin, and had one son. In 1803, while stationed in Limerick with his regiment, the Marquis of Headfort became acquainted with the couple, and as a result, eloped with Mrs. Massy while her husband was officiating at Church one Sunday night. Massy took action and damages were paid at £40,000.
The trial was so important a one and created such general interest that the most eminent counsel in Ireland were employed on both sides. Massy employed Curran, Hoare, Harry Dean O'Grady, Thomas Carey, John White, Hawkesworth, O'Regan, Lloyd, McMahon and Bennett, while Headfort had Ponsonby, Quin, Goeil, Franks, Burton and Pennefather. Headfort was well over fifty when the elopement took place, and he was assisted by that sinister Limerick character, George Evans Bruce.

The Jury decided in favour of Massy and damages were given against Headfort for £10,000, but the trial is now generally remembered for the magnificent speech for the plaintiff by Curran, and the following opening speech by Mr. Hoare:—"The noble lord proceeded to the completion of his diabolical project, not with the precipitancy of youth, but with the most cool and deliberate consideration. The Cornish plunderer, intent on spoil, callous to every touch of humanity, shrouded in darkness, holds out false lights to the tempest-tossed vessel, and lures her and pilot to that shore upon which she must be lost for ever. The rock unseen, the ruffian invisible, and nothing apparent but the treacherous signal of security and repose; so this prop of the Crown, this pillar of the State, this stay of religion, this ornament of the Crown's prerogatives, descends from these high grounds of character to muffle himself in the gloom of his own base and dark designs, to play before the eyes of the defiled wife and the deceived husband the falsest lights of love to the one and of friendly and hospitable regards to the other, until she is at length dashed upon that hard bosom where her honour and happiness are lost for ever. The agonised husband beholds the ruin with those sensations of misery and horror which you can better feel than I describe. She upon whom he has embarked all his hope and all his happiness in this life, the treasure of all his earthly felicities, the rich fund of his hoarded joys, sunk before his eyes into an abyss of infamy, or if any fragment escape, escaping to solace, to gratify, to enrich her vile destroyer." Elsewhere he refers to Headfort as "a hoary veteran, in whom, like Etna, the snows above did not quench the flames below."

Curran's speech was, as we have said, magnificent, but it is so long that we can only give the very briefest of extracts from it:

"The learned counsel has told you that this unfortunate woman is not to be estimated at £40,000. Fatal and unquestionable is the truth of this assertion. Alas! gentlemen, she is no longer worth anything—faded, degraded, and disgraced, she is worth less than nothing." ... But it is not, gentlemen, by weighing the ashes of the dead that you would estimate the loss of the survivor ... this veteran Paris hawked his enamoured Helen from the western quarter of the island to a seaport in the eastern, crowned with the acclamations of a senseless and groaning rabble, glorying and delighted, no doubt, in the leering and scoffing admiration of grooms, and others, and waiters as he passed. ... But as the noble Marquis approached her, the plume of glory nodded on his head. Not the goddess Minerva, but the goddess Venus, had lighted up his casque with "the fire that never tires, as many a lady gay had been dazzled with before." At the first advance she trembled; at the second she struck to the reddened son of Mars and pupil of Venus ... the jury saw it was not his fault; they felt the impatience for the tenderness of the mother's heart, and the warmth of the lover's passion. The jury saw on one side a young entertaining gallant; on the other a beauteous creature, of charms, irresistible. They recollected that Jupiter had always been successful in his amours, although Vulcan had not always escaped some awkward accidents, etc., etc., etc."

And so the case went on, for twelve hours, and Curran made his last and probably his best speech upon the Munster Circuit.

APPENDIX No. 7.

The Story of a Nosegay.

One of the most sensational civil actions ever to come before the Munster Circuit, was that of Bruce versus Grady, tried at Limerick in the summer assizes of 1816. It arose from a libel against Bruce by Grady in his now famous satirical poem. "The Nosegay."

Tom Grady, of Belmont, Castleconnell, was a member of the Irish Bar, an accomplished scholar, and a man of no mean mental qualities. An infirmity of sight compelled him to use glasses, by no means as common in those days as they are now, and he was known at the Bar as Spectacles Grady to distinguish him from his cousin, Harry Dean Grady. Gifted and ambitious he had hoped to win fame and fortune at his profession, but his talent for satire, which he never attempted to control, quite ruined him, and he never attained any reputation more profitable than that of a wit in the law courts. In the words of Tom Goeil, another member of the Munster Circuit, "No one but Tom Grady could have ruined Tom Grady."
Grady was one of the few Irish barristers who spoke in favour of the Union, and part of his speech has been recorded by Sir Jonah Barrington:—"The Irish are only the rump of an aristocracy. Shall I visit posterity with a system of war, pestilence and famine? No. Give me a Union. United with that country where all is peace, order and prosperity. Without a Union we shall see embryo chief justices, attorney generals in perspective, and anamalica ser- geants. It is as if for his speech on this occasion, Lord Clare made him a County Judge worth £5,000 per annum. Later in life he was appointed Postmaster of Limerick.

An unhappy marriage soured his outlook on life, and Grady retired from the Bar and became "an exile from society in his own house." His whole nature changed. The wit and soul of the convivial dinners of the Castleconnell district became a reclusle and an unpleasant misanthrope, at feud with his own family and the world in general. Martial, Sterne, Rabelais, Swift and Churchill were his favourite authors. From them he learned how to wound those he hated—and never did pupil learn better. Possessed of a delicate poetical fancy, he seldom or never wrote in a tender or ennobling mood. His pen was as merciless as a scalping knife, as deadly as a poisoned arrow, as ruthless as the syctie of time, and as polished and as elegant as it was strong and incisive. It pleased the classical tastes of Grattan, the whimsical outlook of Curran, the delicate fancy of Moore and the oratorical mind of O'Connell. His satires were always aimed at whatever was corrupt and dishonest in life, and before meeting with Bruce he had already satirized his fellow members of the Bar, in "The Barrister," and his next-door neighbour, Lady Clare, in "The Flesh-brush." But in Bruce the banker he found such a perfect model, that he never ventured further.

George Evans Bruce came of a County Cork family. He was of a moral deformity and hideousness that made him a monster. The number and nature of his crimes would have been beyond belief had they not been sworn to by men of unimpeachable character in the courts of justice. His career opens in London, where he married a rich and handsome woman and entered fashionable circles there. But one night at Miles's Club, where play ran very deep, he was caught cheating and expelled. He fled to France to hide his own unsavoury reputation, and is said to have won over £50,000 gambling during his two years sojourn there.

He returned to Ireland in 1789 and, purchasing the estate of Hermitage in Castleconnell, he settled down as a country gentleman. To establish himself he persuaded Crosbie Morgan, High Sheriff of the county, of whom Lord Redeasdale had said:—"I think Crosbie Morgan cheats everybody," to appoint him to the Grand Jury; but when he entered the Jury Box, most of the other jurors left it, and Bruce was so mortified that he did not attempt to enter it again for seven years.

He lived close to Lord Clare, and his next venture was to intrigue with the latter to be put in the commission of the peace. Clare, knowing his reputation too well, was unwilling and Bruce's method of persuasion was to buy a printing press and issue seditious pamphlets inciting the poor to revolt. Some whom he had incited to resist a royal proclamation were hanged, but Bruce won the day and Lord Clare made him a magistrate. He was then so officious in hunting down persons whom his own pamphlets had caused to revolt that Clare made him High Sheriff of the county and held out to him hopes of a baronetage. To those who expostulated, Clare excused himself on the grounds that his action had made a loyal man of a rebel.

In spite of all his patronage by Clare, the Limerick gentry refused to associate with him because, having forced himself on their society he broke its most sacred laws. He ill-treated his wife. He lived with his sister-in-law and had a son by her. He affected to be an atheist, and spoke publicly of divine subjects with ribaldry. He encouraged the young men of property in the county to gamble or worse. He betrayed the secrets of the jury room. He changed his mistresses as often as his clothes. He acted as pimp to Lord Headford in the seduction of the wife of the Reverend Mr. Massy; and in the action for £20,000 damages which followed, he gave evidence that Mrs. Massy had co-operated willingly in the affair. It seems almost incredible that one man could have committed so many crimes and be still at large; but commit them he did, and a jury of his own countrymen believed him fully guilty of them.

In 1806, when Furnell's Bank in Limerick collapsed and its owner committed suicide, Bruce saw his opportunity and opened a bank there. He soon had most of his enemies in his power by the judicious issuing of loans, and then forced on them his company, which they would otherwise have sedulously avoided. In 1813, he founded the Limerick County Club, and was on the high road to social success when he fell foul of Tom Grady, and never recovered from the biting satire which Grady wrote on him.

In 1790 he took an action for libel against William Frewen, who had called him "a rebel, a white-boy, a black-leg, a swindler and a knave." The jury awarded him sixpence damages instead of the £5,000 he claimed, and Tom Grady, who was acting for the defendant
handed him one shilling after the trial and demanded his change. Even in banking Bruce was dishonest, and in 1808 he was convicted of charging usurious interest on money lent, and fined £1,500.

In 1810 he lent Tom Grady £1,300 on excellent security, but in 1812, as the result of a quarrel, he suddenly and uncivilly demanded it back. Grady at once repaid the loan, but bitter things were said in the process and the two men quarrelled. Bruce was the first to put the quarrel on paper. He circulated anonymous letters, in which the character of Grady was assailed, and finally printed a foul lampoon in which Grady was charged with robbing the Post Office and murdering his nephew. There was no doubt as to who had published the lampoon, but when Grady endeavoured to bring Bruce to justice, he found the printer, one Monk, had fled to England, and the libel could not be brought home to Bruce. His revenge then took the form of a satirical poem, entitled "The Nosegay." He put his name on the title-page and there could be no mistaking the subject of the poem. It created an immense sensation, and the whole first edition was sold out within a week. Bruce immediately instituted proceedings but, nothing daunted, Grady issued a second edition. This time, to make sure there would be no mistaking Bruce, he had a caricature of him drawn by Brocas and inserted in the book. With half-closed eye and hanging tongue the portrait of Bruce, which was said to be an extremely good likeness, had a most repulsive look, all the ugliness, cunning and sensuality being considerably heightened. The other prints in the book show Bruce cheating at cards, being hunted away by Nelly Cusack, a peasant girl whose virtue he had assailed, and alone with his terrible dreams at night. The frontispiece was an excellent portrait of Grady, complete with his "spectacles."

The poem was most inappropriately dedicated to Thomas Moore, for it contains passages of the most savage satire ever written by an Irishman. In style it is worthy of Pope, Dryden, or Swift, and in venom, violence and savagery, it exceeds even these writers. It supposes a court of justice before which Bruce is arraigned for his crimes, and begins:

Come Bruce, for tardy justice takes her seat,
Convicted usurer! convicted cheat!
In every mischief, actor and abettor,
Self-wafted infidel, and tampering traitor,
In daring priz, in principles unbuckled;
Reluctant subject! voluntary cuckold!
Thou foul polluter of thy sister's bed!
Fraud, usury, incest, treason on this head!
Of crime a climax—or Pandora's box,
Which every precious gem of hell unlocks.
One eye half-closed—half out thy slavering tongue,
Thy twisted nose from nature's post half wrung,
Cadaverous cheek, and mischief-making grin,
Emblem and offspring both of death and sin;
Come into court—thy fiery trial dare,
And hold thy hand up at the public bar.

The poem proceeds to catalogue, with graphic force, Bruce's crime's against mankind,
and the crowd of witnesses assembled to prove them:

See, round the court, of youths debauch'd, a group,
Who sucked thy poisons, while they supped thy soup,
Who haunt thy dinners, emulous to share
Thy half-digested extracts from Voltaire . . .

See on one side some minors—ruined boys
Whose lands you've mortgaged to sustain those joys;
Who pay, for nights in those sad vigils spent,
A mild retributive of cent per cent . . .

See in the Court, their heads overspreaded with dust,
A group of victims of thy loveless lust,
First purchased, then debauched, and next forlorn
Of comfort, raiment and subsistence shorn:
By misery chastened, and by conscience flayed,
By forced abortions, withered and decayed . . .
But see aloft, and near the sheriff's box
The black-browed spectre of poor Charles Fox;
See, with one hand his angry eyes he rubs,
And in the other holds—the five of clubs;
While on his front, in burning letters shines,
Thy wealth and infamy, the game of Quinze....

See, round the court some gibbering phantoms glide,
By thee to treason urged, who traitors died.
Can none remember when, in ninety-four,
High Treason's standard through the State you bore.
At every post thy daring theme rehearsed,
And manifestoes through the crowd dispersed;
And while sedition round your horses smoked,
Your hoarse harsh voice like horrid raven croaked....

See, round the court, in frightful mystery tread
The incestuous offspring of thy incestuous bed;
What will you call each mystical homuncle?
Is' father are you, or are you its uncle?
How shall we name this medley of creation,
This tangled web, this labyrinth of relation,
This family pie, hodge-podge incestuation?

The final arraignment is as terrible as anything in the poem; and the special plea by which Bruce is spared his life—because twelve peers cannot be found to try him—brings this vitriolic satire to an abrupt conclusion:

Bruce I arraign thee on no moderate plan,
The blasted enemy of God and Man;
Of God, whose majesty you make your sport,
And coarse and vulgar blasphemies support,
Whose stupid arguments and impious pride,
His Son reviled, derided and denied.

Who clothes the earth? Who formed the immortal soul?
Who shaped the concave and Who fixed the pole?
Whose bands the winds, the waves the lightning guide?
Who steers the planets and who steers the tide?
And thou, the vilest of his worms on earth,
Deny His essence and deride His worth,
And, sedulous of mischief, choose the time,
To plant the seed, and propagate the crime....

Thus far the foe of God—now let me scan,
How stands the dread account twixt thee and man?

Is there one evil word you have not spoken?
Is there one human tie you have not broken?
Is there one vice a stain to mortal reason?
Is there one crime from swindling up to treason?
Produce the catalogue, and let me hear
Even one exception in your black career.
Or take the decalogue and read it through,
Is there one line inviolate by you?
Is there, through all this wilderness of doom,
One virtue found to glimmer o'er the gloom?
You have not Prudence—your whole life's a folly,
And Justice blushes when the Courts you sulky,
Temperance you haven't—rash, vindictive, froward,
And Fortitude disclaims thee for a coward....
By Magna Carta, as the law appears,
You must be tried by twelve men of your peers;
But if none such, why then you may defy all,
Eilde grim Justice, and refuse a trial.
My Lords, how say you? Is not this the law?
The Law is so—you've saved him by a flaw;
The objection's fatal, and, however depraved,
For want of peers, the culprit's life is saved.
This poem is, undoubtedly, the greatest poetical satire in the whole history of Anglo-Irish literature; and not only for the modest reason given by the author himself in his dedication of the poem to Tom Moore:—"If I have any merit in the execution of my picture, it is entirely to be attributed to having for a long time minutely considered and deeply studied my original." Grady had a powerful control of English, and had his gifts only been attracted towards a less leathemous subject, or if only they had been aimed at his victims in a less personal way, he would vie to-day with the greatest satirists the world has ever known.

Bruce laid his damages at £20,000 and the trial took place in Limerick. Tom Grady briefed O'Connell, then at the peak of his legal career; Burton, who afterwards became a famous judge; O'Regan, the friend and biographer of Curran; and two other counsellors. Tom Goold, Pennefeather and Jackson stood for Bruce, and Mr. Serjeant Johnson and a jury of County Limerick men tried the case. O'Connell's speech on the occasion was a memorable one. "I shall follow him," he said, "from his first illomened dawn above the horizon until I show him culminating in his meridian, and emitting pestilent flashes through the darkness that envelops his western career ..." while Burton referred to him as "affrighted by his own hideousness, rushing for relief upon society, and by terrified society thrown back upon himself." Even Goold, Bruce's own Counsel, seemed to take pleasure in reading out for the court, in a most spectacular manner, the most virulent passages in the satire, and kept the Court amused by reading Grady's letters to Brocas (giving him a description of the banker so that he might draw a fair likeness of him). Not one single County Limerick gentleman came forward to vouch for Bruce's character, and no effort was made to bring in witnesses who could have denied a single charge made by Grady in the "Nosegay." We cannot, therefore, help feeling that every charge was true, and that George Evans Bruce was the most blatant blackguard that ever foisted himself on Irish society.

The Jury returned a verdict for £500, one fortieth part of the sum claimed, and Grady's comment was:—"The charges in the Nosegay ranged from swindling up to treason and were in number up to forty. Possibly the jury considered that thirty-nine out of the forty were established in quality though not in specie, as they gave the plaintiff precisely the fortieth part of the sum he demanded. The remains of the second edition of the Nosegay was destroyed, and Bruce immediately bought up two reports of the trial. But Grady was not to be beaten and published one himself, with a scathing preface in which he taunted Bruce with the failure of his action. However, the costs of the trial broke him and he fled to France to avoid paying the damages awarded. Here he remained, living and dying in obscurity, and depriving Ireland at once of a scourge, and of a genius.

APPENDIX NO 8.

The fishing pools of Castledonnel.

Herewith a list of the fishing pools as on reproduced map with phonetic spelling of their original Irish names, and an attempted derivation of them:—

<p>| Clough na Loughe | Stone of the Ducks |
| Clon | Meadow land |
| Thonavullen | bottom of the Bowl (mill ?) |
| Fall na Hassa | cliff of the waterfall |
| Doonass | waterfall of Danann |
| Poolbeg | little hole |
| Bawn-na-leek | strand of the flagstones |
| Bawn-na-leek | meadow of the flagstones |
| Fall Corrive | rough cliff |
| Thone | bottom or end |
| Fall Baun | white cliff |
| Lachaleen | flag-stone of the flax |
| Thonahincha | bottom of the milking-field |
| Laca | flagstones |
| Coolen | little angle |
| Thrawnna-Knock | strand of the horses |
| Poulcoun | crooked hole |
| Panlades | the hole of the south ford |
| Moreek | wall of the horses |
| Geoseogue | little green spot |
| Fince | ford of the Weir |
| Fall na herra | ford of the birds |
| Ahane |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commogue</td>
<td>The little crooked place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salahogue</td>
<td>The little sallies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flenoor</td>
<td>The hole of the new ford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poulanco</td>
<td>The hole of the weir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poulaherra</td>
<td>The mouth of the ford of the weir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballinacurra</td>
<td>Little kilt (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flie beg</td>
<td>The stone of the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lickineshe</td>
<td>Long low hill, or shin-bone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lurga</td>
<td>Place of the rapids (tremblings?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drarhus</td>
<td>do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balchraheen</td>
<td>Wood of the ford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balchraheawn</td>
<td>Swallow-hole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finoe</td>
<td>Ford of the arable lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slougher</td>
<td>I have been told by the late Ned Enright, who occupied a house of this name opposite the pool, that its origin was Worrail's Inn, after a man of that name who kept an Inn there in the 18th century. However, there are two other possible derivations. One, as written, because it is the end of the rapids, the other from a Danish name, as suggested by Dr. Curtis in a reference which I cannot at the moment recollect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errinagh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World's End</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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