

A Bishop of Limerick and a Line of Kings.

AN t-ΔΤΑΙΡ ΤΟΜΑΣ ΔΕ ΒΑΛΛ, Ph.D. DO PCPIOB.

"The Right Rev. Dr. O'Keeffe died on the 4th of May, 1737, and was interred in St. John's Churchyard, but there is no trace of his tomb." (Lenihan : History of Limerick, p. 619). On a previous page the historian of Limerick informs us that Cornelius O'Keeffe, a native of the County Cork, of the ancient family of the O'Keeffe of Clounna-Phrican (sic), was appointed Bishop of Limerick by the Court of Rome in the year 1720. The late Canon Carrigan in his edition of the will of Dr. O'Keeffe says the Bishop died in his 73rd year and therefore was born in 1664 (Archiv. Hib., Vol. III., p. 195).

In the genealogy of the O'Keeffe family as given by Eoghan O Caoimh is his M.S. copy of Keating's History (written in 1709), the place of the future Bishop of Limerick is duly set down. The "Genealogies" published by the Irish Texts Society give the descent of the various Eoghanacht families from Eoghan Mor, son of Oilíoll Olom. There, MacCarthy Mór is traced to an ancestor who was King of Cashel or Munster, Aongus, son of Natfraoch. Aongus is said to have had twenty-four sons and twenty-four daughters. And when St. Patrick came to Cashel, Aongus received baptism at his hands and gave the Apostle twelve of his sons and twelve of his daughters. From the other twelve sons (an da mhac dhéag dhomhanda) descend the various Eoghanacht families. And from one of those twelve Eochadh Fionn comes Eoghanacht Gleann amhrach, i.e., Síol cCaoimh.

Eochadh Fionn had two sons born on the same night and both called Criomhthan—Criomhthan Feimean and Criomhthan, whose mother bore the name Deareon. From Criomhthan, son of Deareon, sprang the Eoghanacht of Oirthear Cliach. And from Criomhthan Feimean, who bore the further epithet Sréimh (striped) descended the O'Keeffe family. Criomhthan Sréimh had five sons, one of whom Cairbre Crom, King of Munster, "donated to God and Colman Mac Leínín Cluain Uadhma in Aoibh Mac Coille." Cairbre Crom had a son, Aodh Flann Catrach. Aodh was succeeded by his son, Cathal, Cathal by Eoin-gan-mhathair, the latter by his son, Fionguine, whose son was the familiar Cathal mac Fionguine of the Aislinn Meic Conglinne, all successive Kings of Munster. Cathal, son of Fionguine, began his reign in 694 and died in A.D. 737 (A.F.M.)

Following the descent of the O'Keeffes from Cathal mac Fionguine we come, after four reigns, to Donchadh, son of Caomh (a quo an fine). This Donchadh played a leading part in the rescue of his kinsman Ceallachan of Cashel from the hands of Sitric and his Northmen. Cinneide (father of Brian Boromha) had little reason to be grateful to Ceallachan. But now that the latter was at the mercy of the common enemy, Cinneide collected his land forces under Donchadh, son of Caomh. As a stimulus, he reminded Donchadh that eleven of his ancestors had been Kings of Munster. Another force was sent by sea under the command of Failbhe, King of Deasmhumhan. The united forces compelled the release of Ceallachan on the strand of Dundéalgan. The date of this exploit was about 950.

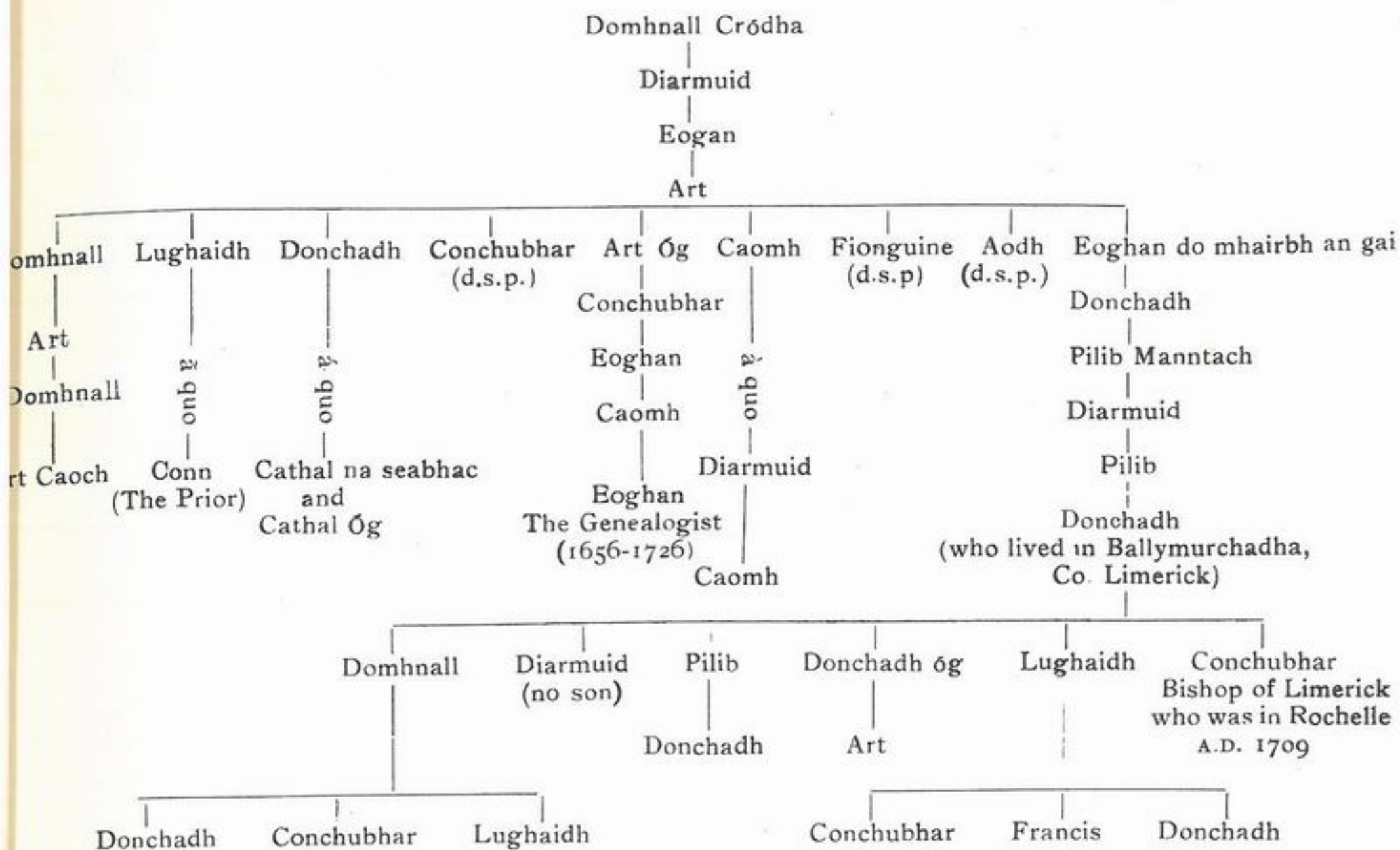
Donchadh, son of Caomh, is styled by Keating, King of the Two Fermoyes.

"The family territory of the O'Keeffes," writes Eoghan O Caoimh proudly, "was the two Fermoyes which are now called the Roche country and the Condons (except when they held the Kingship of Munster), unto the time of Conchubhar, son of Eoghan Fionn, when his people were stripped of every holding and property they had in Duhal-low and in the Barry country. And, alas ! " he adds, "few of their descendants are living to-day. *Laus Deo.*"

To Conchubhar O Caoimh, son of Eoghan Fionn, the genealogist traces all the O'Keeffe families known to him. The senior branch represented by Cathaoir O Caoimh, living in 1709, was descended from Art, the eldest son of Conchubhar mac Eoghain Fhinn. The second son was called Art also, and from him derived the O'Keeffes of Cuilionn, Co. Cork. From the fourth son, Lughaidh, was descended the Dunbolg O'Keeffes. And from the third son, Domhnall Cródha, was sprung the O'Keeffes of Gleann an Phreachain and Rath-Cormaic, to whom belonged Eoghan O Caoimh, the genealogist and poet, and also Conchubhar, the future bishop.

Domhnall Cródha was succeeded by his son, Diarmuid, the latter by his son, Eoghan, and Eoghan by his son, Art. Art had nine sons and four daughters. The daughters were married to four of the Barry nobility. The descendants of the sons of Art can best be set down in tabular form : —

The Genealogy of the O'Keeffes of Gleann an Phréacháin and Rathcormaic.



*Domhnall (father of Art Caoch) died, according to Eoghan O Caoimh, in A.D. 1640, and "was a humane and worthy gentleman."

It will be of interest to compare the names given here with those of the Bishop's relations mentioned in his will (Archiv. Hib. III, p. 195).

After the Confiscations, the history of the O'Keeffe clan must be briefly told. Those that remained at home took farms wherever they could get them. There is an entry on a M.S. in the R.I.A., 23, M. 26 :—"Finit per me Eugenium Keffe, Anno Domini, 1684, a bPort na mádh (sic)." This shows that some members of the family of the genealogist were settled at Purt on the River Maigue, near Adare, at this date. At any rate Eoghan O Caoimh was living there in 1692, when Sam Abbot, the hearth-money collector, drove him therefrom to the mountains.

The Courtenay estate, formerly belonging to the Earl of Desmond, seems to have been a favourite refuge for the despoiled Gaels. And there is left us a brief autobiographical note written by the Bishop when on his visit to Paris in 1734, which appears to settle the vexed question of the Baile Murchadha of the genealogy:—"His father (Denis) was turned out of his patrimonial lands of Dun on the River Bride at Glaunphrechane by the usurper Cromwell, and . . . he at last settled at Dunkine in the County of Limerick, when he left six sons, who were Daniel, Dermot, Philip, Donatus, Luke and the—the Bishop Cornelius O'Keeffe."* Ballymorohoo is found in the Desmond Roll of lands and rents as situated in the manor of Newcastle. As Ballyvorrougho it occurs in Patents 9 James I., beside Ballaghbehie and Killculline as part of the estate of Gerald, Earl of Desmond. In a Patent Roll of 14 Charles I., in a renewal of Courtenay's grant it is placed after Killycullin and before Kilkenlea. On the Ordnance map it is Ballymurragh E. and W. (lying respectively S.E. and S. of the railway, near Barnagh station), whilst, almost due north of Ballymurragh W. and mearing with it, is the townland of Doonakenna (Dunkine).

*O'Farrell's *Linea Antiqua*—from copy in the National Lib. of Ireland.