



IRISH INSCRIPTION ON A TOMBSTONE IN KNOCKPATRICK
CHURCHYARD, CO. LIMERICK.

AN IRISH INSCRIPTION IN KNOCKPATRICK CHURCH-YARD.

BY REV. J. BEGLEY, C.C., M.R.I.A.

The wealth of local historic lore written on the tombstones of our county churchyards is as yet imperfectly known.

Mungret, so close to the city, and visited by many eminent antiquarians in search of bygone memorials, is still able to furnish to the student some fresh and interesting materials as recent numbers of the *Journal* bear ample testimony. The same is much more true of the old graveyards in remote country districts, where the people buried their dead, and raised monuments to them according to their own ideas.

The greater number of the inscriptions to be met with in the more exposed parts of these burial grounds are in English ; but in among the weeds and brambles are to be found graves that are no longer used as places of sepulture, and often the stones placed over them bear inscriptions in Latin, and not a few in Irish, which recall names that are still remembered, but have no living representative in the locality.

It is a pretty common opinion that Irish inscriptions do not exist in the graveyards of the County Limerick. To dissipate such an idea and stimulate research in this particular, it may be well to give one that has escaped the observation of studious visitors to the old ruined church of Knockpatrick, overlooking Foynes, in the west of the county.

Outside and close to the south-western corner of the main wall of the ruined church is a large flag laid horizontally on the ground bearing the following inscription, cut in Roman characters :—

Pilib ONuallane
Sagart Puraiste
is Docture Ann
Gach Dlighe
Requiescat in Pace
Obit June 8th, Anno Doi
1738 37th Ætatis.

Translation :—

Philip O'Nolan
Parish Priest and Doctor in both Laws
May he rest in peace
Died June 8th Year of Our Lord 1738
37th Year of his age.

The Revd. Philip O'Nolan was P.P. of Shanagolden (1) in the year 1736. Leaving Ireland in his green youth he crossed over probably to Paris, and made his studies for the priesthood in the Sorbonne, having merited by his conspicuous ability the coveted degree of Doctor of Canon and Civil Law.

The Ireland he left was bad from a Catholic standpoint, but the Ireland he returned to was far worse, as the Penal Laws were in full swing. His life was full of peril and adventure, without house or church, moving from place to place, feeding his flock at night or early morning—duties entailing great bodily fatigue, which, perhaps, brought him to an early grave.

I have to thank Mr. William Purtill, Assistant Teacher, Foynes, for making for me a rubbing of the inscription, from which Dr. G. Fogerty kindly photographed the accompanying illustration. The flag is split, which accounts for the apparent illegibility of the inscription.

(1) White's MS.

