The Letters of Sylvester O’Halloran

Edited by

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Sylvester O’Halloran, second son of Michael O’Halloran of Caherdavin and Mary McDonnell was born in 1728. An Obituary Notice which appeared in The Dublin Evening Post on Saturday, August 15th, 1807 outlines his career:

‘On Tuesday last, at Limerick . . . the venerable and highly respected Sylvester O’Halloran, Esq., an eminent Surgeon and Manmichwive, as well a celebrated historian, M.R.I.A. and of most of the Literary and Honorable Societies in the United Kingdom; he studied physic in Paris and London, and made a rapid progress in his studies, as he published the first of his works before he was 21 years of age; he afterwards wrote different treatises medical and political; a General History of Ireland down to the close of the 12th Century; and in 1800, he published a second edition thereof, greatly improved; he was highly learned in the Irish language and Ancient Laws, and was ever remarkable for his loyalty and attachment to the house of Brunswick, a steady supporter of its Constitution, and a warm advocate of the honour and interests of his native country.’

His historical writings and surgical treatises may be seen in the larger Dublin libraries. A number of letters, several in his own handwriting, others printed in various newspapers, are also in existence. My purpose in editing these scattered letters is to make them accessible in a single publication. With the exception of a few instances in which an obvious error, altering the sense, has been corrected, they are reproduced exactly, preserving the archaic spelling, punctuation, and use of capital letters of the originals.

To Charles O’Conor

A copy of O’Halloran’s General History of Ireland originally belonging to Charles O’Conor of Belanagare, and bearing his book-plate, was purchased in 1949 by Dr. L. B. Sommerville-Large and found to contain, pasted into it, four of O’Halloran’s letters.* Three other letters, also in O’Halloran’s handwriting are in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy.

Charles O’Conor, an eminent historian, was a descendant of Rory, that Ard-Ri whose death at Cong T. W. Rolleston commemorated so movingly:

‘Last of Gaelic monarchs of the Gae, Slumbering by the young eternal River-voices of the western vale.’

A son of Denis O’Conor and Mary O’Rourke, he was born in straitened circumstances in a cottage at Kinmakraney, Co. Sligo, but the family fortunes improved when his father regained an estate in Co. Roscommon forfeited under the Penal Laws. O’Carolan was one of his early

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instructors and the Rev. Thomas Contarine, Oliver Goldsmith's uncle, was his friend. In 1757, with others, he founded the Catholic Committee. O'Halloran's first four letters to Charles O'Conor are devoted, largely, to a discussion of MacPherson who had published verses purporting to be translations from Ossian, the authenticity of which was in considerable doubt. Dr. Johnson was so outspoken in their denunciation that MacPherson wrote threateningly to him, earning the retort: 'I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.'

* It also contains letters from Walter Titley and Count Bernstorff to Dr. Warner and a letter to O'Conor from the Chevalier O'Gorman. They have been micro-filmed by the National Library of Ireland.

My dear Sir,

When I had last the pleasure of seeing you, I requested the favour of your Correspondence; and to prove to you, how fond I am of meriting this mark of Esteem, this letter salutes you.

The Treatise on Amputations, is now actually in press, & as I flatter my self, that it will appear a work of merit & Character, I therefore took the resolution, of transmitting some Account of the Antient State of Physic in Ireland, to our Successors: an Attempt that I flatter my self will meet with your Aprobation & assistance. Enough has been already collected, to demonstrate, that both Physic & Surgery have been here, in a very respectable state, even before the birth of Christ; & your friendly help is requested, to throw this affair, in a still clearer light—for Instance, to trace out the names of the Hereditary physicians, of a few Counties only, & the Authorities—Ó Flaherty mentions the Ó Callinans, & Ó'Canevans, Brudinus the Nelans's & Hickies, for Thomond. The Irish Hippocrates, which you were so kind to say you would bestow me, would be a great assistant; could I get it, I would cheerfully pay a messenger—The Authenticity of this book, would Effectually silence the ill natured remarks which Camden passed on our physicians—if I cannot see it, at least describe it to me, in such a manner, as that I may with Confidence & truth affirm its Existence. If you know, or hear of any more, mention them.

It is with a particular pleasure I learned from yourself, that a new Edition of your highly Esteemed work, will soon appear—You talked of MacPherson's plagiarism & said you would take notice of it; but you seemed to doubt the Authenticity of the poems. I find many Eminent Judges think them genuine; & I think the thoughts so noble, that it would be, doing our Country an Injury, to call them, in Question. but the proving them Irish, & Confuting the Scandalous remarks, of their Infamous translator is I am sure what you will not let pass bye—Tho' I could prove such parts of his Notes, as attempt to Explain the Antient Customs of these Heroes, to be borrowed every word from Keating; yet observe how Insultingly this treacherous Pict declares the Irish Language, incapable of such thoughts & sentiments, as these poems contain! Eternally retrograde to truth, in order to prove the Erse to be the mother tongue, he affirms that a highlander calls his language Gaelic but that an Irish-man calls his Gaelic Erin—but the very reverse of this is the case. should anything, which I have advanced, in three different papers in Wilson's magazine, on this Subject, furnish Mr. O'Conor with any hints, on this matter, I should be highly pleased—Can O'Clyery's Irish Vocabulary or Sansan Nuad be of any service to you? I have it, I have some
Mss., but I doubt, they would be of little service—I am, however promised by a friend of mine soon, a sight of, what he calls something Curious—Rely upon it, Sir, it would give me, a particular pleasure to have it my power, to promote in any manner, your Noble & disinterested Intentions—I love MacGeoghegan for his plain dealings, particularly for his Noble behaviour, with respect to Modern pictish writers; sure you will not let these puritanical Deceivers pass, without a Coup de plume or two?

Will you be kind enough to present my respectfull Compliments to Dr. Curry: assure that Gent. of my sincere Esteem. tho’ I have not the pleasure of a personal Acquaintance with him; yet his Eminence in the profession of physic, & his known Zeal for his Country etc, are what must Endear him, to every Irish-man—I have taken the liberty to Insert both his name and Yrs. in the Catalogue of my Subscribers, & I shall take Care to have Each of you present with one of my books. Can you excuse this rambling Epistle: tho’ but slightly known to you, yet I write with all the Carelessness & affection of one who would gladly be, on the terms of rich friendship with you—I have done on this occasion my best possible, it remains to see, in what manner, it will be returned

I have the honor to subscribe my-self, with great truth & Esteem—
Dear Sir—Your great Admairer, & most obedt Servt.

Sil: Ó Halloran

Limeric Feb’y, 19th 1765.

Dear Sir,

After acknowledging the receipt of yr. very kind letter, I must Inform you, that last Wednesday, Ó Clery’s Sean’s Na Muine, was sent to you by one Daly a Link Chaise-man. The space filled with clean paper, I Intended to fill up, with a Mss, Suppliment to this work, wrote by an other Religious of that order, but cannot at present find it, amongst my books. I thank you for the aditional Medical Names, but must at the same time request the Authorities, may I know how I am to apply for the Hippocrates, as an acquaintance will soon goe to Athlone, from whence a messenger will be dispatched?

The reason you advance against the Genuine of McPherson’s poems are very weighty: I cannot nevertheless healp thinking, that their Bases are real originals. The Customs & manners so different from anything modern; the thoughts & similies drawn from Nature, & the sentiments so noble, & so Correspondent to that of our antient Heroes, make a great Impression: besides to the London Edition of Temora, he he has given the original with the translation: & many of them stories, I well remember to have heard—To affirm as McPherson has, that they are the works of Osseine, would be, like him, to advance the most flagrant untruths. In the letter, which I addressed to him, in one of Wilson’s Magazines for last year, on his publication of Temora, I observed the gross Anachronisms that he has made, in collecting persons, who lived at such distant periods, into one Group.
The truth is, a scheme has been laid, & steadily pursued in Scotland, for above a Century to answer two Ends, Namely to raise the Antiquity of their Nation, & to prostrate our Antiquities—For this the Intrepid Dempster braved History, truth, & Conviction; the pious Father Innes, antient & Modern Suffrages; & Mr. McPherson forfeits Everything that should be dear, to an honest mind! By Establishing the Authenticity of these poems, & of Course of his Notes, the grand scheme is to come out. for as by this work it must appear, that we have no solid proofs of our Antiquity, they intend to favour us, with an History of Ireland, cooked to their own fancy.—The conjecture is not meerly Zeal; I have some reason to be Convinced, that it is near a fact. The time to Compleat this grand Cheff d'Oeuvre they think is at hand—The love of Antiquity, & of our Country, is, by our refined moderns, looked upon as highly ridiculous, & a true Milesian, as a pre-adamite—We are taught (at least too many of my Acquaintances think so) that before the English Invasion, our Ancestors were in a state of the greatest barbarity; & that we have no solid remains of our Antiquity—The famous Mss, found (I think by Dr. George McKenzie) in the Isle of Skye, a Century past, is then to make its Appearance, & to furnish us, with a Complete History of Ireland, in the Caledonian taste. They Imagine, that few, if any of our Gentry, understand the Language of their Country, & fewer still, care what becomes of either, or both, but I hope the task of Effectually securing our Antiquities is reserved for Mr. O'Conor—By admitting the Genuiness of these poems, & like me, turning their Arguments, against themselves, will I Imagine, disappoint them more Effectually, than by opposing them. Provoked at the little regard paid to the Insult Offered my Country, I Entered the lists against this Wretch—indeed with much more Zeal than Capacity—But you I hope will Effectually silence him. It is with singular pleasure, I reflect, that we have still a Milesian left, who has both the Virtue & Spirit, to assert the honor of his Country—A Very sensible Clergy-man, who studied at Prague, gave me this Abstract: "Annius of Viterbo, in his Commentaries on Berosus, a Chaldean priest, says, that in the reign of Breoghan King of Spain, a Colony was sent to Ireland, called from him Brigantes," & this is the Name Ptolemy gives the inhabitants of the Counties of Cork & Kerry—In an History of Portugal, wrote by Emanuel De Peria of Sousa p. 21. of the English translation, I find these words: "this same year (i.e. Ante Christ. 318) Gatetus sailing from Egypt, with his whole family is reported to have landed in Portugal—He had two Sons Iberus & Humeus; the first of them, some will have, to have sailed to Ireland, & given it the name Hibernia. these are mere suppositions." Perhaps these hints might be usefully Applied; they will at least prove my Zeal for my Country, & high Esteem for you—I shall on another occasion mention some other better digested hints, on other points relative to Ireland—In the meantime I beg, you will Indulge the Inaccuracies of this letter: the Avocations of my Profession & my Attention to the press, must plead my Excuse—I remain, with great truth, & high Esteem, Dr. Sir, yours.

Sil: Ó Halloran

Limeric March 1st 1765

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Dear Sir,

A few days absence from town, have prevented me, from being earlier in my Acknowledgement of Mr. O’Conor’s polite & Acceptable Favor. You are pleased to request some further Illustrations of mine, (as you are kind enough to call them) on the poems of Mr. Pherson, which Mr. Blair & he, with the most Cool & persevering Confidence attempt to Impose on the public, for a pittance of performance. However unequal to this arduous task, especially before so aproved a judge, I shall nevertheless candidly & without the least reserve, lay before you, my sentiment on this affair. It is, in a great measure, the cause of my Country: its Antiquity, its honor, its Heroes, are at Stake! Every Individual should contribute his mite; & into whose hands can they with more propriety he put, than into these of a Gent. who has upon many occasions proved himself worthy the name of an Irishman!

I already hinted to you, that I suspected the Ground work of these poems to be original Irish pieces: my reasons I shall set down just as they occur; but which I have nevertheless often considered of before. my time at present will not even allow me to refer to the poem, so shall depend on my memory. Had these Poems been of modern Invention, & originally intended to raise the Caledonian Antiquity at our Expence, there is great reason to think, that the Author would not make Ireland, the Constant Scene of Action. His descriptions are romantically beautiful: the variegated hills the beautiful Vales, the lovely lawns, the rivulets—All so descriptive of Luxuriant Nature, in this (once!) Happy Isle, that we are constrained to Acknowledge it, the work of a Native. Had it been North British, the hated Imagination of the writer, together with known partiality of Scots-men to their Country, must make him, now & then present to our view, bold descriptions, of Snow Covered Mountains, tremendous precipices, dreary wastes etc! But why constantly Confi ne the Scene of Action to Ireland? Would not subjects choose from the Incursions into Brittain, Agricola’s wall etc. seem better Calculated to answer the great Ends of forgery & Imposter? he even seems to me, to stic so close to his text as often highly to distress himself & his nefarious purposes—(Take Notice that the design to overturn our Antiquities, have been long meditated before this; & that what Inductions could be drawn from this were to serve as so many Collateral proofs of our precarious title, to true Antiquity.) Why perplex his designs, by affirming all his Heroes to be Scots, who were known, beyond a possibility of Contradiction to be Irish; & this at a period too, when no part of our History is clearer? Why attempt to Synchronise such glaring Anachronisms? Besides the Compositions are attributing to McPherson a merit which I think him little Intitled to; & one Capable of such a performance, could never think of leaving himself & his Cause, so terribly Exposed, in Every Quarter. But from these principles laid down, which I think should not be transiently slurred over let us attempt to Investigate the whole of this Intricate affair.

About six year agoe, some few detached pieces were published at London & Edinburgh, under the Title of, Fragments of Highland Poetry, which were well received. This procured MP, the Anonymous translator, the patronage of Lord Bute; and he was directed to make further Collections amongst the Highland bards what stories he heard, in prose or Verse, regarding Antiquity, he gathered; and finding his first Essay, so successfull, and probably with the Assistance of Blair & others, of the most
sentimental parts of these, an Epic poem was formed. For—Graculus Esuriens, ad Coelum Juperis ibit!

This might even pass well Enough, had not his strong Inclination to Villify this Country (for which there seem's to be no occasion, except an hereditary passion, and the dread of these poems being reclaimed) made him, in his Notes, Every where belch out the most flagrant untruths. He accuses our History, of want of Foundation, and he makes some of our Writers, particularly Keating and O Flaherty, say, or quotes them for what cannot be found in their works. He affirms from them, that Fionn, Established a Code of Laws, which are yet preserved. If he Quotes these, for what they never said, we must not be surprised, that in a Note on his first book of Fingal, he quotes Strabo wrong, or probably did not understand him. from him, he would insinuate that the Irne of the Antients, must mean Scotland, it being according to him, to the North of Brittain—whereas he Expressly places it, opposite to Brittain—Such flagrant and reiterated Impositions, and such successions of them, from that Country, must make us with Virgil Cry-out—

O tortas adeo mentes,  
assuctaque falli pectora!

But to return: the Heroes celebrated in these originally detached pieces, prove them to be the Songs or odes of different bards, and wrote at different and wide periods—This at once answers your objections to Buchanan and other Scotch Writers being silent on this head. They Could not possibly think of mentioning Epic poems that Never Existed, tho' the different Songs from which he formed them, might be preserved by the Highland bards; and the rather, as most of them figured it, in Scotland as well as here. For being themselves originally Irish, our writings must become familiar to them; and as they preserved a kind of Indepency, till very lately, the English Customs must be little Known to them. The modern bards, being probably illiterate, might in the repition mutilate them just as we see some people, in repeating a poem obtrude words not strictly Classical. Such are my present sentiments of the poems in Question; & it is precisely in this light I have Considered them in my second letter to McPherson, in Wilson Magazine (I think) for Jan. 8 '04, which I wish you would read.

After all, I am little solicitous about these poems, no further than whilst they serve to Confirm, the taste, Erudition & sentiments of our Great Ancestors. but I would think it inconsistent with that Candor & frankness, which I have ever professed, & which is Concomitant or true friendship, to Conceal from you the reasons that make me dissent from your opinion. As I should be sorry, these very undeserving people, should be able to form the least Cavill upon your intended Critic of this work; by contrasting my opinion to your own, you will better Judge the possible objections that may be made. It is true my sincerity Exposes me to your Criticism, but then I hope it is a friendly one.

I cannot put p. Hippocrates out of my head & as the Gent. who was to goe to Athlone, will not set out till May, I am looking out for a safe Messenger to send for it;
in the meantime request you will mention whether it be, Quarto or folio, & what thickness. As I shall mention this book, it necessarily follows, that I also publicly Acknowledge from whom received. This Letter had need be very good. Do you know, that I sat down to write it, last Tuesday; but before I went half thro' it, the Clock Informed me, the post went out—I again resumed it a friday, & by the time I got to the top of this page, a trifling call made it impossible for me, to Close it, for Friday; & I just sat down after prayers this morning to finish it—Whatever is wanting in Capacity & knowledge adequate to the Subject, the Zeal & frankness with which I gave it, will I flatter my self Excuse. my Work goes on very well, & I believe will be a good Edition, with regard to the Work; as to the matter—that's another affair.

I am sure Mr. Ó Conor cannot doubt me, when I assure him, that I have the warmest good Wishes for him, & for the success of his Undertakings; & that I am with great truth—His great admirer, & most obedt.

Servt.

Sil: Ó Halloran

Limeric March 12th, 15th, & 17th 1765.

Dear Sir,

Last post brought me, your agreeable favour, of the 2d; & am much obliged, for the Complaint, you are pleased to pay me, & which I could wish to merit. The Complaint of your sight, gives me real Uneasiness, as I should deem any defect of this kind, a public loss; for how well Inclined soever some may be, yet how few have the Capacity & Qualifications necessary to become the Vindicators of their Country; forever still to render the proper Justice & Applause, to such laudable Attempts! However I hope this Complaint will not be attended, with the Danger you Apprehend—You are pleased to request my Advice on this point, & with the greatest Cordiality you have it—I do think the head should be all over shaved, and washed Every morning in cold Water, & the Eyes in fine soft linnen moistened with Cold Spring Water, & that often in a day; refrain as much as you can from close reading or writing, & in some Cases get an Amanuensis—If the Eyes Should be dull & heavy get a small bottle of genuine Spiritus Volatilis Aromaticus. Drop some on your own, or an Assistant’s hands, & after speedily rubbing them together, apply briskly to the Eyes. This if done right, will Act like Electricity, brisken the Circulation in the humours, & make them water a little. Tho’ you may bath the Eyes, in Cold Water, as often as you will, yet is this to be used with more Caution, as Stimuli too often Applied, rather weaken—As the Nerves may be more or less affected, a Cephalic Quilted Cap, may be applied to the Crown of the head & the Valerian in power taken night and morning. In Cases of this kind I have often Experienced the good Effects of gentle Emollients; for complaints like yours, are more or less owing to too great a density, or disposition to it, in the Crystalin Lens, or the prodigious fine & subtle
liquor, which surrounds it—Thermaturgies, or Snuffs, I would also Recommend you, made of the Common Tabaco, in which is Valerian root & Castor: I have Even in such cases, with good Effect, had a very few grains of Turbithe Mineral Mixt—If I have room, I may probably give the Formulae, of some of these. If these should not yeald the Expected relief, as they have often in this Case, you must have a seton passed in the pole—Take Notice, I have not once Mentioned Phlebotomy, or other Evacuations I would Even Interdict them. Affects of this kind are seldom, so Universal as people Imagine; & tho' they should, relaxing Nature in this Case, is opposing her. I give this hint, as I know these things are indiscriminately recommended in most Affects of sight. this is my best advice, for the present, & if any symptoms should arise, & that you Imagine, I can be of further service, You Cannot oblige me more, than by Commanding me. Having thus dismissed the last part of your letter, which Appeared to me, the most Interesting, in the best manner I was Able, I now proceed to other parts of it.

I have not the least doubt, of the Poems, in the form given being really Forgery: You have Even Convinced me, that the Genuine parts, are much fewer than I Imagined, & I am now satisfied that the Poems were really Calculated for the System. But I think that you should allow some few, to be fragments of different bards, Cooked up a l'Écosais. I was to-day, looking over his Dissertation, page 9 Dub. Ed. on Fingal, where he says, one of the Chuldas is introduced in a poem still Extant, disputing with Ossian, on the xtain. Religion. Is not this the Dialogue of Pàirc a'Chòisum, Everywhere to be seen; & yet observe M.P.-s Candor, he only mentions simply a Chaldee: he would not hint at Patric; for it would not Answer his purpose. At the same time, that this is another proof, of his Intent, it must follow, that some real fragments of Osin he might have got. In the beginning of his Dissertation on Temora, he says, without Records or Even Tradition, they give a long list of Kings ! & yet in the first Dissertation he Quotes p. 11 the Irish Histories, for the death of Comhal (p. 18) He says "it was first Intended, to Collect all the Antient pieces of Genius, to be found in the Gaelic Language; but he had his reason's, for Confining them, to these of Osin. It is true he do's not disclose these Reason's; but I think it, a further proof, of your System. After all I think, some fragments of poems, of different bards, & preserved by oral tradition he must have Collected, & these of Irish bards too—It is true they lost the very Character, of their mother tongue, so much absorbed were they in Ignorance, & may furnish a hint of Fordun the Monk's coming to Ireland to learn their true History; as the books of Antiquity they might have had were become Unintelligible. And this very Ignorance Appears in McPherson's translation, & to me seems to add some degree of Authenticity, to particular fragments. In his first note, on Fingal p. 19, he Calls Scornasena, the hill of Fingal's people. He must either ignorantly or Intentionally render it so; since the word tromone, signifies a soldiery or Militia; & this by the bye, makes me attempt a Conjecture, on the meaning of king of Morven, which is a frequent Apellation of Fingal. In his Note on this, page 39 He says "All the N. W. Coast of Scotland probably went of that Name of old." Now my Explication of it, would be thus—Fionne in several old books, is frequently Called Uigenre; I have myself, some Instances of it—now if we add the adjective Mor to this, no Uncommon Epithet with us, to people of much less Consequence, than a great Commander, the king of Morven becomes Explained. This will Expose McPherson's Consume Ignorance, or Infamous designs, or both.
Upon the Whole, I must agree with you, that only some few fragments of different bards have been gathered, ignorantly or intentionally grouped together: that few, if any are the real Compositions of Oisin, for the Inseparable reasons you Assign; and that the Whole was thrown together, in the form in which they Appear, to serve as a Dernier report of Imposture & Presumption—What I have said, in regard to this point, is crude & indigested—I considered the Defects of your Sight maturely, but the rest, but transiently. You nevertheless see, & must acknowledge, that I endeavor to make what efforts I can, considering how much my Attention at present is drawn to other Objects, particularly my Work, & how very unequal to throw any light on the present Subject—Such as I could, I have done.

I sent this day, one Nich. Molloney, with a letter to Mr. O’Conor, for the Hippocrates; & he is to be with me, by a certain day. I hope he will meet with no delay.

The fear of missing the post, makes me hastily conclude

Dr. Sir—Yours Assuredly
Sib: O’Halloran

Limeric April 8th 1765

P.S. I shall mention some thing of other Conjectures on the Subject of Yr. Works, tho’ I am compleatly Absorbed, on the present Subject.

We are left wondering did the Hippocrates ever arrive. Presumably it did and it may be to this copy O’Halloran refers in his General History of Ireland (… I find the Latin wrote in Irish characters) erroneously attributing it to the fifth century. We do know that O’Conor took MacPherson to task and in a letter to Dr. Curry, in October 1765, he writes: ‘MacPherson resembles the cuttle fish which endeavours to escape by involving itself in a flood of muddy liquor, not unlike ink. It cost me some labour to bring him into open light; I then found it easy to master him.’

Three of O’Conor’s letters to O’Halloran are extant (R.I.A. Stowe Ms. B.1.2). In a letter dated 1769 O’Conor remarks: ‘I entirely approve of the Plan of Study you have chalked out for yourself in your vacant hours. A knowledge of the principal religious Doctrines of our Celtic Ancestors would be the best clue to a Knowledge of their Politics and Manners."

On Feb. 30th, 1769 he expresses a hope that he may see O’Halloran soon: ‘I wish I may see you in Dublin; if I can I shall pay you a visit in Limerick. I have not seen your worthy brother* but he is well and I shall visit him.’

His letter of March 20th 1769 commences thus: ‘For some days past I have been on a Ramble in the County of Wicklow; and it gives me pain that I have been so long in arrears to you: In truth it gives me still greater pain, that in the course of my Irish reading (for you want not my assistance in any other) I cannot clear up many things, which in the Investigation of our ancient Theology, ought to be cleared, because they are of considerable Importance."

O’Halloran’s next letter (R.I.A. M.S. B.I.I) is faded and parts have been crossed out by another hand. Most of it, nevertheless, is decipherable. Asterisks mark portions which are quite illegible; words enclosed in square brackets are those best fitting the sense.


Dear Sir,

I shall not, with our worthy friend Curry, laugh at your Disorder (the gout) but with real pleasure Congratulate you, on your new Acquisition. It promises a long
Series of years; I am too great a friend to Antiquity and my Country, (abstracted from any private friendship) not to be, sincerely rejoiced at it. And yet my Dear Friend, how melancholy is the prospect before us, and what have we not to fear, from new, from unheard of attempts of Oppression! Well may we Cry out with the Psalmist, num quid in eternum irasceris nobis? aut Exstendes iram tuam a Generatione in Generationem! Let Protestant Writers blush when they rail against the Cruelty of Foreign Inquisitions. The unprecedented, the unjustifiable oppressions they have laid on us and the new ones daily inventing to the very Extinction of Industry, of wealth, and of Manufactories amongst us, will be their endless reproach! Read but the petitions from the different towns in Munster for small charters and the reason offered in their behalf. The reasons offered, repugnant to humanity and subversive of liberty and industry, and intended to monopolise the fruits of industry in to the hands of a few! and the only means left to promote what it visibly intends to destroy Industry. See Heaven and Earth Conjured to answer this pious End. Guild Boxes from Cork and Limeric, and Every turn of Machiavel policy Explored, to serve the pious End of monopolizers and oppressions! I long foresaw this storm and gave the alarm early, to them whom I thought, both duty and interest would engage, to oppose it. I applied to the merchantile part of our brethren and shewed them, by this very Bill now depending that no less than poverty Beggary and contempt, were to be the portions of their descendants, or a Religion differing from that of their Forefathers, they heard it early and like the Countryman in the Fable, whose Waggon fell into a ditch, they wait for a Supernatural power to interpose between them and ruin! Far from making any efforts to oppose this Bill they wait with such indifference that one cannot help crying out, Quas in ****. Let me conjure you this, My Dear Friend, to use your interest with your friends in town to oppose the progress of this Bill, which must End with the Extinction of Religion and Industry. will people Coolly submit to this, without using every means of opposition which the Laws and Constitution of their Country afford? I hope not tho' after all these very allegations offered in Support of it are what I find my greatest hopes in it being rejected—Should it nevertheless pass without Effort to oppose it, I think Every Man of Spirit should relinquish **** having neither virtue or spirit to protect themselves—but from this distressing Subject—Tho' Dr. Curry was not kind enough to give me his decisions on my work, I shall soon see this job undertaken by a pen less reserved. Messieurs the Review writers, if my accounts from London are right as I cannot doubt, are preparing an high Coloured Critick on it—with regard to the stile, that they have taken for granted on sight unseen to be execrable etc. and **** than can be easily shoved over—these Gents and I have been alas I cannot say, very good—Acquaintances—for, some years agoe they gave an Account of my Treaties on the Cataract, from a New Edition by Vaillant, [on] which, they were far from being sparing in their Censures on the whole, without once mentioning the purport of the work. This last part, was of the two, more Difficult, as it required a thorough knowledge of both Anatomy and Optics, which probably these Gents. forgot with their politeness. I published at that time an **** which was much approved in London where I then was. I am again importuned by my friend Mr. De Sallis, to request your answer to these two points. Is Regan's works extant in the original Irish or [not] and if so where to be met with? the English translation is from a French [work] by Carew. I shall be obliged to you to be Explicit in this affair; for he is a man I much Esteem. He desires me to assure you, as from Authority, that the letters on the English History are not really Lord Litelton's. I Received last post,
a very long, and a very polite letter from my old acquaintance Doctor Lucas; in which he is pleased to bestow many Encomiums on my Work. I find the popular Honours lately Conferred on him have not made him forget his friends: He has even gone so far, as to relate to me private anecdotes which bespeak a warm friendship—He is a stiff promoter of our Coup de Grace but is in the mean, an honest man, as he acts from principle. I beg to hear from you soon, and that you will give me your Sentiments on this famous Bill, and what probability or Certainty of the fate of it.

Mr. Webb told me, he would be glad of your acquaintance; I told him I should be proud to be the means of bringing you together, by letter but as he would be, he told me, engaged in private affairs for a time he would take an opportunity to seek this pleasure in town—

I am with great truth and respect
your most obed. and much obliged serv.

Sil: O'Halloran.

Limeric Feb. 11th 1766.

"I have flattered myself, My Dear Sir, for some time past, with the pleasure of hearing from you, According to Promise, but do suppose it has Escaped your Memory; or that your hurry, in preparing your Work for the press, may Employ your time, to a much better purpose. But let the Motive be what it may, you see I am resolved to be an Intruding Enquirer. Pray then how do's this Publication of yours go on? have you got subscriptions enough to pay the expense of printing, or do you think I could serve you in this way? if so Enclose me, a few receipts, and you may rely upon it, that I shall do my [best] possible to serve you—Indeed I think there ought to be the closest and firmest friendship between us—Mileslans, Catholics, pursuing the same glorious Cause—the Honor of our Country, what should disunite us? for my part, I think I have given some proofs of my friendship and attachment to you, in my remarks on the two Macphersons, and should be glad of any other opportunity of shewing in the person of Mr. O'Conor, my Esteem for the Author and for the Man.

How do's the Antiquarian Society go on? are their Meetings more Numerous, or are they Come to any Spirited resolutions with regard to their Country; or will their Subscriptions Enable them to perform them. I have read Major Vallency's new Publication, and with Impatience for something more—you will probably satisfy my Curiosity in this and other Matters, if affairs of greater Consequence do not Intervene—I have now Opened my-self to you with that Candor that becomes a man of Spirit and Sincerity; and shall be highly pleased to find that I may Confidently Call you, my friend—

I subscribe my-self, My Dear Sir,
Your very Humble
and Obed. Serv.

Sil. O'Halloran.

Limeric April 6, 1774.
Writing to Charles Vallancey on Nov. 29th 1771 O'Conor refers to O'Halloran's An Introduction to the Study of the Antiquities of Ireland: 'On my return to this place, I received your kind letter of the 6th instanta, with the Covers which enclosed about 100 pages of Mr. O'Halloran's Book on Irish Antiquities. I agree that some of his arguments are shrewd and sensible, and, I think you will agree with me that he has left the main point, just as he found it (in other modern Works) destitute of the proper proofs; I mean, the early use of Letters in Ireland...'

O'Halloran's last existing letter to O'Conor (R.I.A. Ms.3D8, No. 22) suggests that disagreement was arising between them.

Dear Sir,

I received your kind Letter, and am much obliged to you for this mark of your attention. I should have acknowledged it earlier, but that I was from town. You kindly communicate to me, your opinion of our Antient History; & the very little certainty to be expected from our Early Annals. I own it has not appeared to me, in quite so unfavourable a light. I have considered it in every point of view, with critical severity; & do think, it claims a greater degree of credit, than the remote annals of any other nation. When we explore the Early annals of other nations, what are we presented with? but kings descended from God & demi gods; reigns, revolutions, & interesting events, without time or place. Not so, in our history. we trace a regular list of princes, and great men from Noah to even the present time & our chronology wonderfully answers, with the numbers of generations allowing 35 years to each generation, which is the least that can be allowed. Now as to the events. That the early antients choose the sea as the medium of their emigrations, I cannot doubt; for, not to mention, that cool reason would shew the dangers & difficulties attending on colonies passing thro' countries unexplored, the voice of antiquity proves, that most early settlements were effected by water. If moderns, under the notion of scythian's, have placed our ancestors, in the interior parts of Asia, where the scythian's afterwards flourished; and explained the relations of their travels, from thence to the supposed gothia & calicia in their own way still they have not mutilated the records themselves. there with the proofs & illustrations, we shall offer, will demonstrate, that our early ancestors resided in Syria; that their passage was thro' the Mediterranean, not to Gothia but Getulia; from thence to Spain, & so to Ireland. from heber, to Henry o'brien, last Earl of Thomond, the psalter of Cashell, & its continuation, mac brudin's book of Munster, show such a regular lineal succession of princes, & so exactly agreeing with national time, & with our chronology, as makes me, with Mr. O'flaherty, think it, the most unerring chronology that profane history, can produce— & here I would wish your friendly assistance, to clear up, a material difficulty you have started, to take from history chronology, is to take from it, its vitals, & leave it a caput mortum!

From my account of the two principal branches of the hibernian line-Generations have not been multiplied, nor Gasra-sa-brach's, taken into the list of legitimate monarchs. Conary you observe being 5 generations from degad, who claimed the protection of Duach king of munster, must according to our chronology have lived to see his son's great grandson born. Certain it is, that the Munster book is not exact in the successors of degad, & I should be readier to think, that some mistake should happen in this particular genealogy, or some person foisted in, than to reject the chronology of the kingdom, for one or two instances; especially when I find the
Mac Brudins, who were the Acknowledged Historians of N. Munster, allmost to our own times, produce so fair & Undisputed a Genealogy.

It is Undoubtedly Absurd to suppose, that Niul 5th from Noah, to be Cotemporary with Moses; & at the same time to admit, that Heber, 21 Generations from him lived but about five Centuries later! I do not find Authority sufficient to Countenance this; & tho' I did, I should not believe it—Da Veniam Antiquitat is a received Axiom; but however I reverence Antiquity, I would by no means Receive as Truth, manifest Absurdities. In St. Tieme's Poem preserved by Colgan, he had a fair Ocasion to Mention this Meeting between Moses & Niulus to make Christianity Appear more Acceptable to the people, as Confirming their own Annals, was such a thing then supposed; but as Neither he, or his Scholast, take any Notice of this, I find no difficulty to reject it. this makes out a Clear Chronology, without too great a protraction to some, & too glaring a diminution to other lives—Thus as a local History, I shall make no difficulty in pronouncing our Chronology, the most Unexceptionable. Tigernach it is true, thinks our Annals before the building of Emania Uncertain—but what of that? It is but, an opinion, no further binding, than whilst we can find Reason & Truth to support it. But when we Compare the Relations of our Early Ancestors, with the Fragments, of History, of the different Nations, they Communicated with, & see what Lights they throw upon them, & how Easily the History becomes separated from the Allegory & from the Fable, these Accounts hitherto deemed a kind of Mill stone to Irish History will appear as Invaluable Treasure. If then a Detail of Events & Voyages, in so Early a state of the World Illustrate—as they Certainly will—abstruse parts of Antient History, & gain a further degree of Authenticity, by such Elucidation, we should look upon the Remaining part, with some degree of Respect; at least not Reject it, without a fair and Candid trial.

I have thrown these thoughts, loose and undigested, as you may easily perceive them to be, before you, with the same Unreserved Candor, you have given yours to me—We are both I am sure Animated by truth, & not determined by any Spirit of Pyrrhonism. some Allowance ought to be made for me, who Enter myself a Volunteer, in support of the Antient History of our Country, an Object you I am sure, are as Jealousy Interested in. If you will give me your Remarks on this subject, & afford me your strictures, I shall attend to them, with defference & Care.

I am, Dear Sir Your very Affectionate
Humble Servt.

Sil: O'Halloran.

Limerick March 9th 1776.

The last paragraph of this letter contains a degree of asperity missing from the earlier correspon-
dence and with this thought in mind it is interesting to find the following passage in the General History of Ireland to which, incidentally, O'Conor was not a subscriber:

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"Before we proceed further in our history, it becomes necessary to advert to, and refute some specious objections made to our early annals. The few foreigners who have touched on our history, but particularly British writers represent it as that of a barbarous nation... From prejudiced people, and people ignorant of the language and antiquities of the country, such suggestions may pass; but when I behold a gentleman of Mr. O'Connor's abilities, joining in the cry I cannot, I own, suppress my feelings. In his dissertation prefixed to Ogygia Vindicated, being a posthumous work of the learned O'Flaherty, and in his notes on this work, he represents the ancient state of Ireland very different from what it was. He says that being originally peopled by Celtic and Scytho-Celtic colonies, from North and South Britain, they retained the same barbarous customs; and as in this assertion he contradicts all the antiquities of his country, he chooses rather to accuse their authors of imposition and ignorance, than himself of wilful error."

[To be concluded in the next issue]