CROMLEACS IN CO. LIMERICK.

No. VII.

By P. J. Lynch, M.R.I.A.I., Vice-Pres. (Munster) R.S.A.I.

KNOCKFEERINA.

The Cromleac selected for description in this number of the Journal, is another of those which are not mentioned or described by Borlase in his Dolmens of Ireland.

It is situated on Knockfeerina (1), a hill which forms a striking feature in the high range marking the eastern boundary of the coal measures, south-west of the great carboniferous limestone plain of the County Limerick.

The Cromleac is marked “Giant’s grave” on the new 6 in. Ordnance Sheet No. 30, and lies on the northern slope of the hill, close to the 700-ft. contour line.

Dr. Joyce states that the name Knockfeerina (Knockphíomna) signifies the Hill of Truth, as its summit serves as a weather-glass for the surrounding country, for by its appearance they can predict with certainty whether it will be wet or dry.

The hill has for ages been looked upon as the home of the sidh, or “good people,” and always plays an important part in the fairy folk-lore of the district. There was at one time a cairn on its summit which is now in ruins. The history of this monument may have had much to do with the romance of a later period; but of this all tradition appears to be lost. It is Donn, son of Milesius, who was drowned at Teach O’Shinn,

(1) In Fitzgerald’s History of Limerick this is written Knockshirine, which is more correct than the modern spelling.
off the Coast of Kerry, who reigns as prince of the fairy palace in Knockfeerina.

"Tis at Knockfeerina’s foot—that haunted hill
Where Donn the fairy king hath made his hall,
A hall invisible to most, but still
By wanderer sometimes seen at midnight fall,
Rearing its crystal battlements, until
They seem to prop the skies with pillars tall—
There Eileen stands beside her Geraldine,
The topmost branch of Desmond’s princely line.” (2)

On the south side of the cairn is Poulnabreena; this is the hole probably that is referred to by Crofton Croker (3) in his Legend of Knockfeerina.

The story goes, that Carroll O’Daly met a respectable-looking man at the foot of Knockfeerina jogging along on a white pony. After an exchange of salutations, O’Daly learned the man was going to visit the “good people” on Knockfeerina, so he followed him at a respectful distance; and when he reached the top he found the pony grazing outside the entrance to Poul duv, which was said to lead to the fairy castle within the mountain. Curiosity tempted him to fling a stone into the hole “to see,” as he said, “if the fairies were at home.” Listening over the hole he heard the stone bounding from rock to rock with a terrible noise, when, suddenly, it came back again with such force as to send him rolling down the slopes of the mountain head over heels; and he was found, cut and bruised, lying by the roadside, and resolved never again to visit the fairy haunts on Knockfeerina.

Lewis states that the cairn was the site of the ancient temple of “Stuadhraícín,” very likely some confusion of the Irish words, Scuádh (stuadh), which means a pinnacle, and Scuaircín, the summit. The extensive plateau or commonage around the cairn is called “the Strickeens,” which is probably a corruption of Scuaircín, or the summit of anything.

For the notes of the plan of this Cromleac I am indebted to Mr. F. C. Hartigan, B.E., Rathkeale, and Dr. George Fogerty. In the plan the stones forming the cist are drawn in their positions at ground

(2) Ballads of Irish Chivalry, Joyce, p. 28
(3) “Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland.” By Crofton Croker.
level, but, as the northern stones lean out considerably and irregularly, and the southern stones lean inward and are for the most part, covered with surface, the photograph gives the idea of a somewhat imperfect cist—though on examination it proves not to be so. The cist is about 20 ft. 6 in. long inside, and about 4 ft. wide. The stones are large and stand at present, on the northern side, 4 ft. and 3 ft. over the surface and are of the Devonian strata which forms the hill. Many of them are completely covered with surface. (4)

Dr. George Fogerty R.N., has contributed the following notes of his visit:—

"The ascent of Knockfeerina is easily made from the east where the road passes south between the hills. The path leads on through two fertile glens which provide an easy ascent even in winter. On the northern slope of the mountain, about two-thirds of the distance to the summit, are the remains of the Cromleac lying east and west. The northern line of stones have fallen outwards, all except that at the west end, and the southern line of stones have been pressed inwards by the descending bog and earth, which in some cases actually covers the stones. Deep excavations have been made inside the Cromleac from time to time, and this has materially assisted in the process of destruction. The west end stone and the two side stones joining it are the only ones remaining in position. The covering stones are scattered around as left by the spoilers of this grand monument. The view from the Cromleac is very fine, embracing the Plain of Limerick; and the memory of the view as it was spread out before me, on a summer's evening, will not easily be effaced. North lay the wooded hills of Curraghchase and in the distance Limerick and the Shannon, with the Clare Hills as a background. To the West, in the hollow, Ballingarry, and Knockaderry Hill behind it. To the N.W. a level plain bounded by the Slieve Phelim Mountains, and behind Slieve Kimaultha (Keeper Hill), distant thirty miles. Eastward the plain fades away in a summer's haze of hill and dale towards Knockainy and Lough Gur. Continuing the ascent we have to face a steeper incline over rough

(4) The Ordnance Survey Letters of Co. Limerick contain no reference to Knockfeerina.
PLAN OF KNOCKFEERINA CROMLEAC.

THE REMAINS OF CAIRN ON KNOCKFEERINA.  J. Wallace
ground to gain the summit (948 ft.). Here we find the remains of what at one time must have been a very large cairn, as stones, heaped in a circle of fully ten yards in diameter, may still be seen, but not rising more than two feet above the surface of the soil in some places, and at others quite level. On the ruined cairn a small, rude turret, 6 ft. high and 5 ft. at the base, has been built of rough stones, covering an Ordnance Survey triangulation mark."

An ogham stone, found at Knockferina in 1837, was removed to the Limerick Institution but has disappeared.—See Journal of L. F. C., Vol. I, No. III, p. 39.—1899.

There are some other Cromleachs referred to by Borlase, which we think well to note. With these—as far we know of at present—there is only one Cromleac remaining to be described, to complete the Survey of the County Limerick.

FRIARSTOWN.

In the Barony of Small County, Townland of Friarstown North, and Parish of Fedamore, about a mile N.W. of the dolmen at Kilpeacon, was a dolmen, not marked in Ord. Survey Maps Nos. 13 and 22 which contained the townland.

The description of this dolmen is as follows: "A large stone 7 ft. high (7 ft. long), 5 ft. broad, and 1 ft. thick, supported by small stones set on the edges, which being removed, human bones of an extraordinary size were found underneath the monument." (5)

KILPEACON.

In the Townland of Kilpeacon and Parish of Kilpeacon, about six miles and a-half N.W. of Lough Gur, was a dolmen marked Cromleac in Ord. Surv. Map No. 22.

A search has been made for these Cromleachs by Dr. Fogerty and Mr. Wallace, Hon. Sec., but they could not be found.

BARNÁ.

Borlase states that in the Barony of Coshlea, Townland of Barna and Parish of Galbally, a Cromleac is marked on Ord. Surv. Map No. 50.

I had a search made for this Cromleac and find that it has disappeared. The covering stone would appear to have been the last to remain. My correspondent states that "up to about four years ago it stood about 600 yards from the public road at the end of the passage to a farm house. It was a large stone, sufficient to afford shelter to ten men from the rain. About that time the sons of the farmer blasted it and used it up for draining purposes." Comment on this act of vandalism is needless.

"TUAMANIRVORE."

Borlase mentions this Cromleac as in the Barony of Owneybeg, Townland of Cappanahannagh and Parish of Abingdon, near Lissgware, on the N.W. of the Slieve Felim mountains. Ord. Survey Map No. 6, and quotes from the Ord. Survey Letters as follows:—

"This dolmen stands on a small eminence in a field. It measures 21 feet long, 4 feet broad, and 3 feet high. Its sides are described as each defended by large stones, from 3 to 4 feet high, set upright in a row, and deeply sunk in the ground. Two stones of the same size as those of the sides, and set in the ground in the same way, defend the ends. The grave was uncovered above. It appeared, however, that there had been stones placed over it which rested on and were supported by the end (?) sides. These stones lay confusedly on each side. There was also a heap of smaller stones overgrown with grass. (5)

This monument has disappeared. The following note on the Cromleac and its surroundings, which one of our members, the Rev. J. F. Lynch, Rector of Cahircoulis—who has given the subject much attention—has kindly contributed, is interesting:—

NOTE.

By Rev. J. F. Lynch, B.A.

This Cromleac was destroyed about 15 or 18 years ago. The site is on the farm of Mr. Dwyer but not a stone is left. The well near the site has no name so far as I can discover. The monument is called Tuamanirvore (Túaim an mhíre moir) by Borlase, from Ord. Sur. Let. but it has been always called Guaire's Grave by the people, as several old men told me, and I could not find that the name Tuamanirvore—

which means grave-mound of the big man—was known to any old person in the district. Guaire is locally stated to have been a giant (fer mor), and to have resided at Lissavura, as the name Lios Ghuaire is pronounced, owing to the "gh" being sounded as v or w. Guaire had a brother, a dwarf, but his name was forgotten by my informant. This dwarf was married to a most beautiful woman, whose name was forgotten. The dwarf's wife and the dwarf's brother fell in love with each other, and agreed to get rid of the dwarf, who was a great traveller (1) hardly ever at home. The lady arranged with the giant that when the dwarf came home she would cast a "piggin" (2) of milk into the stream south of Lissavura, and this would serve as a signal to Guaire that the dwarf had returned to his castle, so the old man termed the dwarf's residence, but he could not tell where it was. Everything happened as arranged, the dwarf was slain and the giant married the dwarf's wife, and so the story ended. But the old man said that Guaire the giant was buried in "Guaire's Grave." The tale appears to be an adaptation of that one told by Keating, concerning Cuchulain, Curoi and Blathnait, with which is connected the one told in the Dinshhenchas (3) concerning the slaughter of Dairine (little Dara or Daire, Donn by his brother Guaire.

I have, however, been very much puzzled by it. (4) Cappanook, in Abington parish, means tillage plot of the Abhac or "dwarf," (cognate with the Welsh avanc, see Rhys, Hibbert Lectures, p. 592), and I have been told that in Cappanook bog there is a hill of slight elevation on which are some old stones. I was also told that this piece of ground belonged to the dwarf, and that many years ago a man planted the plot with potatoes, which when dug out each one had the shape of a dwarf. The man who told me this tale did not know the story of Guaire and the dwarf, nor did the teller of the tale of Guaire and the dwarf know of the dwarf of Cappanook. Cappanook (Ceapach an abhaic) is an old

---

(1) C.f. Curoi's travelling propensity.
(2) Pigin was the word used. Keating has dabhach, but Coire, Silv. Gad. p. 482.
(3) It has been translated by Stokes in his "Dinshhenchas," also by O'Looney (P.R.I.A. 1870), and by O'Grady in Silva Gadelica.
(4) The tale appears to have been attached to several places named Duibhthir.
place name (5) and casts back the connection of the dwarf with the
district to the old period, but I cannot say whether the dwarfs of the two
tales are identical, but if they are then the connection of Guaire with the
Cromleac may be of considerable importance.

The hill of Lissavura is an outlying spur of Slievephelim, a corruption
or mistaken form of Sliabh n-Eblinni inghine Ghuaire, the mountain of
Ebhleen (Ebhliu or Ebbhe) daughter of Guaire (O’D’s. Sup. to O’R’s.
Dict. p. 701, and Mesca Ulad, p. 14). In the tale of the death of
Eochaid Mac Mairid (the L. Neagh legend), translated by O’Beirne
Crowe (Kilk. Journal); Whitley Stokes (Dinshenchas), and O’Grady
(Silva Gadelica), the mountain range is stated to be named from
Ebliu daughter of Guaire. In that tale Ebhliu forsakes Mairid for
her stepson Eochaid. An old man told me that formerly a most
beautiful lady was often seen by people of the district, standing on the
top of the hill of Lissavura, and that this lady was the one on whose
account the dwarf was slain. It is possible that the lady of Lissavura
is a survival of Ebbliu of the mountain range, just as at L. Gur, Aine has
survived as the Banshee of the lake. The strong fort on Lissavura of
which large portions of the ramparts are left, must be the royal fort
Eibhleo (Book of Rights, p. 92, where it is not identified by O’D.)
The stream which crosses the road a little north of the entrance to
Glenstal is named stream of Anthony (Ath an tonnaigh), the tonnach
having, I suppose, reference to the hill fort of Lissavura. Tonnach
appears to be the same as Sonnach, which we have met in Fermoy
district. By Keating (ii, 83), Eibhlinne of S. Eibhlinne is made son of
Breoghan, and at foot of the same page the sons of Milidh are stated to
have met Fodla on S. Ebbhlinne. Keating also, p. 81, quotes from
Eochaid O’Floinn, that Eibhle (i.e. of Sliabh Ebhlinne) was one of the
forty chiefs of the Milesians. It seems very strange that Eochaid
O’Floinn should have so transformed Eibhle, Fuad, etc., and stranger still
that Dr. Joyce should have accepted the explanation of Cuailgne, etc., as
given by E. O’Floinn. Cuailgne means holly-tree, and is an old form of
Cuilenn, connected with English holly and Anglo-Saxon holegn. Eibhle,
Eibhliu or Eibhlenn, means sparkling, and belongs to the same group

(5) It is mentioned in the State Papers re Abington Abbey, and the Walsh grant of
the Abbey lands.
as Aine and Aoibhenn of Craig Liath, near Killaloe, which I recently visited, and got some local tales which illustrate the written ones. If Aoibhenn has survived at Craig Liath and Aine at Cnoc Aine, we should not be surprised at the survival of Eibhhliu at Eibhleo.

In "All the Year Round," Feb. 1870 (Charles Dicken's Magazine), there is a tale entitled "The Child that went with the Fairies," which describes the abduction of Liam Ryan, who was carried off in a coach and four by a beautiful fairy princess, and a black witch, of whom a most extraordinary description is given. They all vanished into "Lisnavoura," that lonely hill-haunt of the "Good People," as the fairies are called euphemistically, whose strangely dome-like summit rose not half a mile away, looking like an outwork of the long line of mountains that sweeps by it. It was at the fall of the leaf, and an autumnal sunset threw the lengthening shadow of haunted Lisnavoura close in front of the solitary little cabin over the undulating slopes and sides of Slieveelim.

It thus appears that like Cnoc Aine the hill of Lissavura was a sídh, and that on it as on Cnoc Aine was a royal fort, and in it, as in Cnoc Aine, is a cave. In O'Rahilly's Poems p. 203, occurs the line, "Aoife wept in the fairy-mansion of Feidhlim." O'Donovan in his Sup. to O'R's. Dict. p. 701, says that on the maps by Speed, etc., Sliabh Eibhlinne is called the twelve great hills of Phelemghe Modwena, i.e. Felim, or Feidhlim, or Feidhlimidh, King of Munster. There were two Kings of Munster named Felim or Feidhlimidh, one died in 589, the other in 847, according to the Chron. Scot., and I presume that it is with the second that Eibhliu has been confused owing to his celebrity.

The fairy-mansion of Feidhlim or Feidhlimidh is the fairy-mansion of Eibhliu, and the Siog-bhrog or Sidh-bhrug is the Sidh on which is Lios Ghuaire or Lissavura, and Aoife represents Eibhle or Eibhliu (gen. Eibhleinn used as nom. with gen Eibhlinne, Silva Gad. p. 584).

Aoife is also connected with Duntryleague by means of the place-name Gleeney—Gleann Aoife. Aine, according to O'Rahilly, p. 203, wept in the Arus or dwelling of Grian, i.e., Pallas Grean moat. Todd (Introd. to Cog. Gad. p. cxxxii, note 2), says that the border of Aifi (i.e. Aoife) was near Knockany but it has not been identified, for Gleeney hardly corresponds. At any rate there was a place not far
from the hill of Aine named from Aoife. Now if you look up that
curious tale in the Senchus Mor. 1, p. 154, you will find that Aine and
Aiife (i.e. Aoife) are stated to be the daughters of Parthalon, and hence
the connection of the two with Knockaine district is rather curious.

In the Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne, 1, 50, Aoife and Aine are
stated to be the daughters of Manannan mac Lir.

The connection of Aoife with Lissavura is accordingly of much
importance, and I presume that O’Rahilly knew of some local tales now
lorn connecting Aoife with Lissavura.

“Guaire’s Grave” is one of the most important Cromleachs in the
County, on account of the old name attached to it, but unfortunately
I could not get the Irish form. I was also told that there were several
forts and pillar stones in the immediate vicinity of the hill which have
been all destroyed from time to time, except a small fort on the south
side of the hill, and a stone, stated to have been cast by a giant, from
Glengar.

Fairs were held on April 29th and October 27th on the hill of
Lissavura.