

THE GAELIC INSCRIPTION OVER A LIMERICK POET AT MUNGRET.*

In the ANNUAL of Mungret College, just issued while this Journal was in press, there is a contribution from the Rev. John MacErlean, S.J., on "Two Irish Inscriptions in Mungret Abbey Churchyard." One is a new discovery; the other is the O'Daly stone (inserted by permission of this Society), which appeared under above heading in the last number of our Journal. On this stone the Rev. J. MacErlean makes the following comment:—

THE O'DALY STONE.

To complete this record of Irish inscriptions in Mungret Churchyard, I append here a revision of the inscription on the stone of the Loughmore poet, Séamur Ó Dálaigh. It has been already studied and discussed by Doctor Wall. I shall add his readings in a note, wherever they differ from mine. It will be seen that with one or two exceptions the differences are of minor importance. My reading and interpretation, however, of the last line lead to dates for the birth and death of the poet considerably different from those arrived at by Doctor Wall. I read the verses as follows:—

1r Céim rár cár ar lár fá lúic a cceúe cuilt
An glé gar d'áin nár cláic a b'fíocail (1) Sáoilge
Séamur cáis Ó Dála an bile dhéacraic (2)
Sa dé gíl áilim (3) fás é meais do t'heara

an fearc laoiú.

Seacé cceúe déas 1r reachtmaíat 10móro (4) deacé
Doacé na déis acé laeúib noacé beic ar
Ó deacé míc de g'ur éas (5) an file ba deacé
Ba hoiú don féanú (6) don lúir eile (7) bíc ceairt.

*See page 86, Vol. I, of this Journal.

Dr. Wall's reading are—(1) b'focail, (2) déaircna, (3) áilinn, (4) mo, (5) so héas, (6) óó féinú, (7) don L V 1r ce (atáin).

The only readings here adopted, which call for any special mention, are two, viz.— $\iota\omicron\mu\omicron\pi\pi\omicron$ and $e\iota\iota e$. They are the regular expansions of the ordinary abbreviations \omicron and ee , and as they are secured by the rhyme they must be looked upon as certain, even though the former word is somewhat awkwardly placed, and the meaning of the latter is rather indefinite. I may note here that $\tau\omicron e\acute{\alpha}\tau$ must be construed as the imperative of $\tau\omicron e\acute{\alpha}\tau\alpha\iota\mu$ in the sense of dictate, write down, compute, etc., and that $\tau\omicron\acute{o}\acute{\alpha}\tau\tau$ means twenty, being a word coined after the analogy of $\tau\pi\iota\acute{o}\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron$, $\eta\acute{o}\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron$, etc. The verses may be rendered as follows :—

'Tis a grievous occurrence that low neath the stone wrapt in a shroud of clay
Lies the Muses' fair scion, who was not infirm in the speech of the Gael ;
Upright Séamus O'Dála, the champion composer of song,
And do thou, O dear God, I beseech, leave mid Thy flock him for aye.

THE EPITAPH.

Seventeen hundred and seventy do thou, however, compute,
Twenty then after it, but with ninety days left out,
From the birth of God's only Son, till this perfect poet's decease.
The age of the champion was another L (fifty) exact.

The year of the poet's death was therefore $1700 + 70 + 20 = 1790$, and the exact day of his death, found by omitting 90 days from the end of the year, is October the second. His age, we are told, was $\acute{\alpha}\omicron\eta\ \iota\upsilon\iota\pi\ \epsilon\iota\iota e$. $\iota\upsilon\iota\pi$, the Ogham name of the letter L, is of frequent use in such epigrams for fifty, and as the rhyme requires a monosyllable here, Father Wall's $\acute{\alpha}\omicron\eta\ L\ \Upsilon\ \iota\pi\ ce\ (\acute{\alpha}\tau\acute{\alpha}\iota\pi)$ seems untenable, even if the letters following $\iota\upsilon\iota\pi$ were not clearly ee , against Father Wall's ce . But what is the meaning of "another fifty"? No other fifty has been mentioned so far, and the construction of the sentence prevents us from adding this fifty to some one of the numbers already mentioned, v.g. $\tau\omicron\acute{o}\acute{\alpha}\tau\omicron$, so as to get a possible age, $50 + 20 = 70$. Hence I am of opinion that the word $e\iota\iota e$ does not add anything particular to the meaning, or at most that it merely refers indirectly to the 50 or L implicitly contained in the figures which give the year of the poet's death. Consequently I take the meaning to be: after you have written down these numbers $1700 + 70 + 20$, or these letters MDCCLXX.,

write down one number more 50 or one letter more L, and you will have the champion poet's age. The result then at which I arrive is that Seamus ó Dála was born in the year 1740, and died at the age of 50 years on 2nd October, 1790. These dates differ considerably from Father Wall's, whose interpretation assigns his birth to the year 1750, and his death to the year 1810, when he was 60 years of age. My dates, however, agree equally well with the facts known about the poet's life. He would have been 35 years old when he wrote the elegy on Seaghan O Tuama, and he would have been living in the year 1790, as Fitzgerald in his *History of Limerick* states.

Of the "several beautiful elegies" mentioned by Fitzgerald as having been written by Séamus ó Dála, Father Wall states that Father Dinneen could only find one in the MSS. of Maynooth College, of the Library of the R.I.A., and of Trinity College, Dublin. In answer to Father Wall's request that anyone who knows of the existence of any other poems by him should make the fact known, I wish to say that I have in my keeping at present a MS. containing three other poems of his; one is somewhat of the nature of an *Airíng*, the second is on the expected return of the Young Pretender, and the third refers to the victories of Washington and the defeat of Howe. These may perhaps afford matter for a future contribution, but it is impossible to treat of them now, as this article has already run to too great a length.

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We have the kind permission of the Rev. Editor to publish the illustration of the other stone, which we hope to avail of in the next number of our Journal, with Doctor Wall's remarks.—ED.