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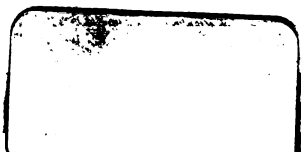
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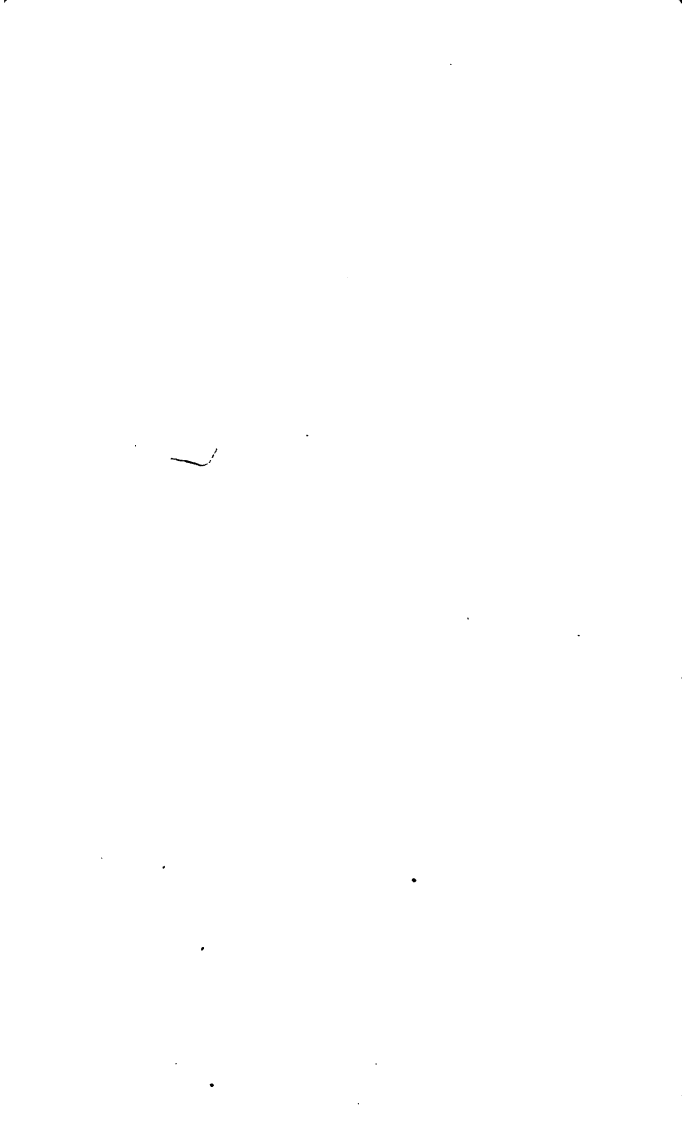
7 Nov. 1894.



To. H. W. Long, fellow Esq

from Rev. P. Murphy

0
Liverpool 1840



①

MEMORIES

OF

THE IRISH FRANCISCANS.

BY

J. F. O'DONNELL.

DUBLIN :

JAMES DUFFY, 15, WELLINGTON-QUAY.

LONDON: 22, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1871.

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ERRATA.

- Page, 1, line 8, *for* 1184 *read* 1182.
- „ 1, „ 4, „ 1228 „ 1126.
- „ 28, verse 9, line 4, *for* Nodream *read* No dream.
- „ 44, line 8, *for* glory *read* A glory.
- „ 49, „ 8, „ Indesolation *read* In desolation.
- „ „ „ 12, „ Hefied „ He fled.
- „ 65, „ 17, „ sharp „ long.
- „ 74, „ 14, *after* mark *put* a full stop.
- „ „ „ 15, „ battlement *put* a comma.
- „ „ „ „ *for* topmast *read* topmost
- „ 92, „ 4, *after* spurned *put* a comma.
- „ 115, „ 8, „ song „ a dash *instead of* full stop.
- „ 156, „ 12, „ crown *leave out* full stop.
- „ 160, „ 16, *for* stopped *read* stooped.

Dundalk,	81
Death of Hugh Roe O'Donnell,	83
Saint Isidore's at Rome,	86
Luke Wadding,	89
Creevelea,	100
	107

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INTRODUCTION.

149 IN the year of our Lord 1214 three or four com-
154 panions of Francis of Assisi, who had been on a
160 pilgrimage to Saint James', Compostella, crossed the
164 Bay of Biscay and landed at Youghal. The object of
those Italians—then styled Minorite Brethren—was
to found convents of their institute under the patron-
age of the Anglo-Norman lords and that of the native
Irish princes who refused to acknowledge King John
of England for their sovereign. At that time Innocent
III. was Pope. Four years previous to the arrival
of the Italians on the Irish shore his holiness had set
the seal of his sanction on the ordinances, which were
framed by Francis for the guidance of his disciples.

Innocent died in July, 1216, and was succeeded in
same month and year by Cencio Savelli, a cardinal
priest, who assumed the title of Honorius III. Like
his predecessor, Honorius became deeply earnest and
solicitous for the propagation of the new order, whose
design was to unite the active with the contemplative
life, and to labor for the sanctification of souls by
preaching and example. The disorders of society, the
decay of morals, and the depravation of human pur-
suits, combined together with the dangers that

threatened the Church from innovators and heresiarchs, contributed to intensify, in this respect, the zeal and anxiety of the pontiff.

The period to which we refer was that of the feudal times or Middle Ages, during which there were strictly no professions but the clerical and military. Laymen, therefore, were generally engaged one half the year, at least, not in the fields of industry, but in the fields of blood. With these mankind had grown so familiarised and, as it were, infatuated, that they became indifferent to the lives of others and their own; and thus a zest was acquired for fray, combat, slaughter. All Europe, then, swarmed with bands of wild, reckless, and impious soldiers. Morals in this state of things could not escape damage and contamination; the obligations of religion and regularity of life, even its simplest proprieties, were first overborne, then neglected, and finally forgotten. The twin destroyers, Avarice and Concupiscence, triumphed over shame and honesty, and pushed their power and influence into all the ranks of life; but chiefly wealth became the universal idol. To wealth every knee was bent, and every principle sacrificed. Wealth corrupted the heart and perverted the understanding. The iconoclast who should strike the heaviest blow at that idol promised to be the greatest benefactor to society.

This idea long occupied the mind of Francis of Assisi, and finally energised every sentiment of his bosom. He resolved to proclaim and proscribe

Cupidity. To acquire the highest sanction and authority for his holy purpose he wisely formed the design of embracing absolute poverty. Poverty, therefore, he wooed and wedded.* The lessons to be derived from this example were to oppose charity and self-denial to covetousness, temperance to excess, and purity to licentiousness. The turbulence of every-day life, and the wide infection of morals, were sources of greater affliction to the Church, but scarcely of more danger than the audacity and progress of the Albigois.† These were fanatics who combined the dreamings and frenzy of Manes—an Eastern madman—with their own extravagances, which projected the ruin of the doctrine, discipline, and ordinances of the Church, the overthrow of her temples and altars, the desecration of crosses and images, and the destruction of the clergy, of civil government and all its necessary institutions. To piety and contemplation

* “For he in youth his father’s wrath incurred
 For certain Dame, to whom, as unto death,
 The gate of pleasure no one doth unlock ;
 And was, before his spiritual court,
Et coram patre, unto her united ;
 Then day by day more fervently he loved her.
 She, reft of her first husband, scorned, obscure,
 One thousand and one hundred years and more,
 Waited *without a suitor* till he came.”—

DANTE, Par. xi.

† So called from the city of Albi in France, where those heretics revived the shocking impieties of Manes, who was flayed alive A.D. 274.

these melancholy features, presented by responsible persons, became a source of bitter anguish—so bitter, so intolerable, so importunate as to excite them to look for principles that would counteract, and remedies that would heal and restore.

Such were the circumstances under which Francis of Assisi made his appearance, and initiated his career. We need not then be surprised that Honorius should be anxious for the wide spread of the order which Francis was missioned to found—still less so when the pontiff called to mind a singular vision of his immediate predecessor who beheld the Lateran Basilica—Mother and Chief of all churches of *the* city and the World*—tottering, but sustained by the arms of the humble and mortified friar.

The fame of his sanctity, which within less than twenty years had become European, reached Ireland long before his disciples set out from Compostella; and we may readily imagine the hearty and reverent welcome they received from the people of the southern Irish haven whose ancient arboretal designation the Anglo-Norman colonists had phonetized “Youghal.”† How they must have rejoiced at seeing in their midst the bosom friends and earliest companions of him who even then could count fifty thousand followers of his rule in every part of the known

* Mater et Caput omnium ecclesiarum urbis et orbis.

† “Eocaille”—the yew wood.

world!—A mighty host adoring what it had burned, and burning what it had adored!

Their first care naturally was to acquire a ready command of the Irish tongue, without which their efficiency as preachers would have been much impeded. This accomplished, the people from all quarters flocked to hear them discourse of the many-sided life of their holy founder—his ecstasies, abnegation, self-imposed poverty, humility, and tender sympathies for all God's creatures. Clad in coarsest garb, girded with a cord, barefooted, and realising in daily practice the stern lessons of mortification which they preached, men of all classes admired their earnestness, sincerity, and repression of self. Their wants were few. Existing on alms, they received them in abundance, and the genial Irish enhanced the gift by the heartfelt veneration that accompanied it.

Ten years after the arrival of the Minorites in Youghal, Maurice Fitzgerald, grandson of Maurice who came to Ireland with Strongbow, was in the act of sinking the foundation for a strong stone castle a little southward of that town. The workmen had hardly completed the excavations when they waited on the earl and asked him for a handful of coin to make merry on the occasion. Maurice referred them to his son, who refused their request, and rebuked them harshly. Pondering this, the earl thought he could not do better for his soul's health than to

change his design, and raise a suitable house for the Grey Friars. He was the more ardently disposed to carry this idea into effect from the fact of his entertaining a strong affection for the Italians, as he traced his own origin to the Florentine Gherardini. What was intended to be a stronghold was thus speedily converted into a house of sanctity and devotion, and thus was the first Minorite convent established in Ireland, A.D. 1224. Three-and-thirty years subsequently earl Maurice departed this life, and was buried in the habit of St. Francis in a tomb which he caused to be erected in the friary of Youghal for himself and his posterity. Every vestige of the ancient edifice has long since disappeared, but it is consoling to reflect that the earliest Irish benefactor of the Minorites was a chief of the princely house of Geraldine.

The convent of Youghal had hardly been finished when the Minorites found a still more puissant patron in Crov-derg O'Conor, known to song and story as "Cahal Mor of the Wine-red Hand." Towards the close of 1224 he invited the Minorites to his principality, and set about building a house for them in Athlone, on the eastern bank of the Shannon. Cahal did not live to see his pious work completed, for he died that very year, and was buried in the habit of a "Grey Friar" in the Cistercian house of Cnoc-Moy, which he had founded in 1189. A magnificent benefactor of his religion was Cahal Mor, and a prince of exquisite tastes in all that related to church-building.

St. Francis departed this life in 1226, but long before then he must have learnt that his order had struck deep root in Ireland, and that vast numbers of its people of all classes had elected to live and die in his poor habit. Nay more, the magnates of the land, whether native or colonists, vied with each other in erecting convents for the observance of his rule. Thus in 1236 Henry III. of England founded a house for Franciscans* in Dublin; and in 1264 O'Scannal, primate of all Ireland, built them a convent near the city of Armagh.

The sentiment of veneration for St. Francis intensified in the Irish heart as years sped; so much so, that, in the course of a few centuries after he had been laid in the mysterious sepulchre† of Assisi, his disciples could count over a hundred convents under

* This designation was not taken till after St. Francis' death and canonization.

† Wadding, in the Annals of his order, A. D. 1230, n. 4, writes thus of St. Francis' place of burial: "223 years after Francis' decease, Pope Nicholas being at Assisi desired to visit the saint's remains. The guardian of that convent agreed to the pontiff's request on condition that he would not bring more than three persons in his retinue, and that the visit should be made by night. His holiness, accordingly, attended by three dignitaries, the guardian, and three of his community, went to the place where the sacred body reposed. Having removed some large stones inserted in the wall, and descended a few steps, they found a door secured by three locks, which was opened with keys brought from the convent. The guardian then said to the

the designation of Conventual, Observantine, and Third Order, in Ireland. O'Briens, O'Neills, O'Donels, O'Rourkes, O'Farrells, Nugents, Delameres, and other illustrious names are intimately associated with the inception and vicissitudes of the order in this country.

pope, 'Enter, your holiness.' The sepulchre was a small vaulted oratory with three little cupolas, the centre one of which had a white marble slab on which the saint stood erect, his face turned to the west, eyes open, looking heavenward, and hands joined, but covered with the sleeve of the habit. The entire body was perfectly sound, and exhaled a sweet perfume. Seeing this, the pontiff wept tears of joy, and prostrating himself before the saint, raised the end of the habit that covered one of the feet, which was unsandaled, and revealed the *stigma* bleeding as though it had been made the day before. As the other foot pressed the extremity of the tunic they did not uncover it. The pontiff kissed the saint's lips, and then those who accompanied him were allowed to see the marvellous sight." A period of about a century and a half intervened, and the exact site of the sepulchre seems to have been unknown, "for," continues Wadding, "Pius V. ordered search to be made for the door of the crypt, but without effect." In 1820 Pius VII. caused a new search to be made, and after laboring at the excavations for fifty nights the saint's body was duly identified by a deputation of cardinals and prelates. It now reposes in the *Third Church* of Assisi. The inscription which Gregory IX., in 1226, caused to be cut on the outer edge of the slab on which St. Francis was found standing has the following remarkable antithesis: "Ante obitum mortuus, post obitum vivus," i.e. dead while living, living when dead.

The churches and cloisters of the Observants—for to them alone these pages relate—were to be found in the lonely strath by the sea-side, and in the populous towns of our island. Austerely beautiful were those structures, whose pointed arches and square aerial bell-towers symbolized the heavenward aspirations of the devout architects by whom they were designed and built.

But the Observants did not confine themselves to that exalted devotion which has been called mysticism. Practically surveying the requirements of the times in which they flourished, they saw that education would be a necessary element in softening the manners, and, as it were, infusing a new soul into generations, which, it must be confessed, were lamentably familiarised with deeds of blood, reciprocal hate, and vindictive raids. Their schools and pedagogy originated in these enlightened reflections; and no rank of society was to be forgotten in their scheme for the diffusion of elementary and scholastic knowledge. Nor did the busy work of instruction prevent the brethren from the toilsome industry of compilation. In the seclusion of his convent, hard by the Nore, in the city of St. Canice, Clyn wrote *Annals* from the birth of Christ to the year 1349, when the plague, then ravaging Ireland, struck the pen from his fingers. There is true pathos in what we may call the last will and testament of this erudite Irish Franciscan: "I leave," says he, in the last paragraph he was destined to pen, "parchment for continuing my work, if any

man should escape this pestilence and live to complete what I have begun." Multifernan, too, had its annalist, whose memorabilia commence with the year of our Lord 45, and end in 1274. Compilations of this sort contained notices of the principal benefactors of the order, of its most distinguished members, and of the civil and ecclesiastical transactions connected with Ireland. Thus did those unpretending men watch over the infancy of our history. Nay more, we find one Hugh Bernard, provincial of the Irish Observants, making a pilgrimage to Palestine in 1360, and returning to Ireland, where he published a narrative of his travels in that land of multiplied mysteries. But of those who reflected greatest honor on Ireland, foremost was John of Down, or, as some call him, Duns Scotus, who, in the rough garb of an Observant, attracted multitudes to his school in Oxford, Paris, and Cologne, where he died towards the close of the thirteenth century. No subtler embodied intellect has ever existed, if what schoolmen say be true; nor may we omit mentioning that England and Scotland have emulously claimed him as their own. From among the Observants sprung divines, preachers, and poets; and for many an age Irish sees were governed by men of that order, elected for their piety and extensive erudition.

Thus had three centuries seen the Franciscans in the enjoyment of peace, public favor, and protection, and thus had they witnessed the increasing fruits of their unwearied labors. The love and admiration of

successive generations of the Irish, commensurate with their deserts, had become a glorious crown. They were at the height of their prosperity and security. Fame and gratitude had combined with affection to exalt the name of Franciscan throughout the land, and to attach to it unfading remembrance. But a dark period was lowering, when the precincts of peaceful and pious toils were destined to be severely and sacrilegiously invaded. Heresy and persecution put forth their fiery torches and their sanguinary hands. In the times of Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Elizabeth, plunder and confiscation took their full swing wherever English power could perpetrate impious violence. From injustice, hate, and cruelty, the only retreats for the friars were with such Irish chieftains as retained a portion of former power in regions not accessible to cupidity and sectarian fury. Amongst those who shielded and sheltered them we find O'Donels, O'Neills, O'Rourkes, and others of their rank. Nor are we to wonder at this ; for, as we have seen, many of these illustrious families had worn the habit, and the mortality of most of them slept beneath Franciscan altars.

The persecution of the order reached its climax in the reign of James I., when the Plantation of Ulster and expulsion of the northern chieftains accomplished the dispersion of the brethren, and the ruin of their houses. Happily they did not lack friends and sympathizers in foreign lands. The profound erudition eminent piety, and sincere patriotism of Florence

Conry influenced the sovereigns of the Netherlands to found a convent for Irish Franciscans in Louvain. At a later period (1628), and under equally favorable auspices, Father Wadding founded St. Isidore's at Rome. The former was the domicile in which Colgan, Ward, and others produced those works so precious to our history, both civil and ecclesiastical. In the latter Wadding, Harold, Baron, and MacCaghwell composed annals, biographies, commentaries, and theological treatises of inestimable value. Far away from their country, those truly eminent men sought her in their studies, and revived her in their labors and literature. Nor did they indagate merely as theologians and historians. They applied themselves to more practical purposes for their countrymen at home, where recent penal statutes had banned the publication of religious books, and, as far as such could, the native Irish tongue. In 1608 Hussey, a Franciscan of Louvain, published there a catechism in the Irish language; and, at a later period, O'Molloy of St. Isidore's edited his Latin-Irish Grammar. This zealous friar composed in his vernacular, also, the "Lucerna Fidelium," a book of tender devotion, which for generations poured its soft and cheerful light on many a sorrowing heart in Erin.* Thus it was that our literary glory

* The Most Rev. Dr. M'Hale, archbishop of Tuam, will be gratefully remembered for his translations of some books of the Scriptures, Homer, and Moore's Melodies into Irish. His Grace has edited a catechism and prayer-book in the same tongue. In all the schools, male and female, under

and the splendor of Irish piety shone forth from the gloom of persecution, and the clouds of national misfortune. The once famous Irish convent of Louvain has long since fallen into other hands ; but whosoever visits its chapel cannot but be touched by the numerous epitaphs of the distinguished Irish exiles who chose it for their last resting place. Father De Buck, S.J., one of the most learned historians of our time, has recently written a comprehensive essay * on the Irish writers who found peace and shelter within those hallowed precincts—an essay so exhaustive as to leave nothing to be desired in a subject of such honest pride to Ireland.

Nor should we dismiss St. Isidore's with a brief notice ; for it would not become us to overpass some of the other signal services of its founder—those especially which have reference to his native land. He enriched the archives of St. Isidore's with MSS. of inestimable value, whether we consider their intrinsic merits or variety. To its wealth he bequeathed the immense treasures of his correspondence, which embodied not only ecclesiastical affairs, but the political transactions eventuating in Ireland, with whose

this patriotic prelate's jurisdiction the Irish language forms part of the course. Dr. O'Hea, bishop of Ross, and Dr. Keane, bishop of Cloyne, have done much for the preservation and diffusion of the venerable Celtic idiom.

* “ L'Archeologie Irlandaise, au Couvent de St. Antoine a Louvain.”

notables and chieftains he maintained constant communication. With Wadding originated the idea of the first "Catholic Rent." This was in 1642, when the hierarchy and nobles of Ireland, upon the dissolution of society by Cromwell, and the persecution openly proclaimed by the remorseless Puritans, associated for self-protection and the formation of a national legal government. The Confederates, after levying supplies upon themselves and their people to the utmost extent, found their finances still straitened. But Wadding anticipated their wants, and proceeded to collect money and arms, both of which he forwarded in large quantities ; so that during the pontificates of Urban VIII. and Innocent X. it may be truly said that he was the principal sustainer of the Kilkenny Confederation. For his great services to Literature and his country the chiefs of the Confederacy sent a memorial to the Pope, praying him to make the far-famed Irish Franciscan a cardinal. The document never reached his holiness : it came into the hands of Wadding, who let it go no farther ; and to this day it remains among his papers in St. Isidore's. Such self-denial and simplicity of soul need no comment.

Nor may we omit to mention that the Irish Franciscans found another royal patron in Frederic II. of Germany, who founded the convent of Prague, which was re-edified on a larger scale by Frederic III. in 1652. This house was signally esteemed by some remarkable men, one of whom was Walter Butler,

well known in the tragic history of Wallenstein. Count Wenceslaus Sternberg erected its splendid library, and furnished it with a large collection of most valuable works collected by his brother. Associated with this convent we find two learned Irishmen whose very names seem to have been forgotten : one was Antony Murphy, who published his "Theologia Dogmatica," Prague, 1753, two vols, 4to ; the other A. O'Brien, whose work, "De Divina Revelatione," appeared at same place in 1762, two vols, 4to. These works are now in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, and afford ample evidence of the learning and research of their authors.

But the grand monument of the Irish Franciscans is the Book of Donegal, known as the Annals of the Four Masters. In the year 1632 four poor brothers, sustained by the bounty of O'Gara of Coolavin, sat down amid the ruins of the once famous convent of Donegal—or, as they themselves tell us, "*in deserto nostræ mansionis*"—to enter upon the laborious project of compiling the annals of Erin from the misty periods of its pagan history to their own times. Having collected materials from every available source, they compared and digested the most ancient MSS. and records of every kind ; and within the interval of four years collected such a body of continuous annals as can be produced by no other country in Europe. This work embraces civil and political history, ecclesiastical affairs, and most important points in the

biography of eminent individuals. Its minuteness in many essential particulars, and its vast comprehensiveness, are greatly enhanced, amongst all the learned, by its admitted fidelity. Let the reader bear in mind that those four poor brothers accomplished this great enterprise at a time when the fiend of persecution had smitten the whole nation with his ruthless hand—at a time when, with the exception of the noble O’Gara, there was neither patron nor protector for learned industry. Had the Irish Franciscans no other claim upon the gratitude of their country, the Annals of Donegal would be an imperishable one, and such a one as can never be fully requited.

Here we have not a suitable opportunity to dwell upon the courage, constancy, and activity of the Franciscans, under the most disheartening circumstances, in ministering to the Irish people the blessings of religion, the consolations of piety, and the example of humility, self-sacrifice, and final perseverance. And it should never be forgotten that their holy ministrings, their indefatigable toil for God’s glory and the comfort of his afflicted people, were exercised during that long and bloody period, when successive viceroys, like Chichester and Borlace, put up their lives at a price—when hounds were fed to hunt them down. It was St. Isidore’s and Louvain that sent forth those faithful and unwearied missionaries

A pleasing and satisfactory history of their labors, drawn up with great care and judgment, has already

appeared, under the name of the "Irish Franciscan Monasteries," three large editions of which amply testify to the fame of the order, and the veneration in which it continues to be held—*esto perpetua !*

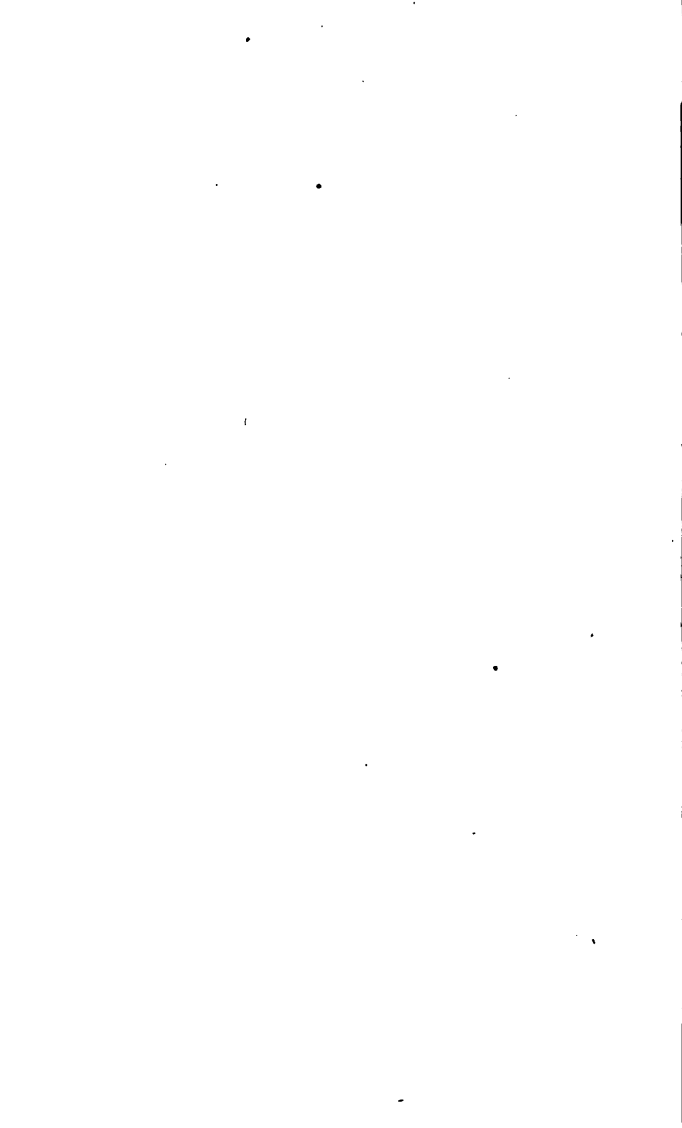
After thus briefly tracing the origin of the order, and its earliest plantation in Ireland, it only remains to be added that it possesses, at present, thirteen houses among us. Some of these are romantically situated under the ivied shade of the edifices reared by their predecessors in the olden times. Wherever they exist their benefit is experienced, especially where wanted most, among the humbler classes, exposed to the double misfortune of ignorance and temptation. The spirit of St. Francis in its pristine lustre still survives in the humble brotherhood ; his virtues still manifest themselves in theirs ; and so, as the Church ever wills it, she manifests her holiness in that of the saint and his faithful representatives.

A word by way of conclusion. The origin of the following ballads is directly traceable to two sources of inspiration. When a lad, it afforded me an ever fresh, if subdued, delight, to wander through the roofless and deserted cloisters of the Franciscan convents and oratories, whose venerable remains stud the broad fields, and cast their shadows over the legend-haunted rivers of Munster. With their story, at the time, I was but vaguely and remotely acquainted, but I at least knew that those ruins were the monuments of an Order which had rendered Ireland noble

and abiding service in evil and calamitous days. Years, and perhaps distance, served only to deepen the impressions which I experienced whilst meditating amid the desolate beauty of Adare, or finding some reliable traces of the great Franciscan house which, according to local tradition, once dominated the Limerick flank of Thomond-bridge. Later on, the Rev. C. P. Meehan's scholarly and delightful book, "The Franciscan Monasteries," came upon me like a revelation, and lighted up those gray chancels and slender arcades, not only with the cold illumination of fact, but with the warmer light of pathos and imagination as well. It was not until I had read Mr. Meehan's work for the fifth or sixth time that the notion of throwing into ballad shape the ecclesiastical and secular incidents which he had so admirably dramatised, presented itself. I could not enhance the sterling worth of his labors, but, by using verse, as a popular vehicle, it might, I thought, be possible to render those labors better known and more universally appreciated. The result belongs to the future, and I am neither vain nor sanguine enough to attempt to anticipate it. I cannot claim a very high character for the following ballads, inasmuch as they naturally involved the manipulation of a serious mass of details, and that in treating these, fancy, imagination, and digressiveness had to be carefully subordinated to the necessities of historic truth. At all events, I can honestly say that I have done my utmost to make

the book what it pretends to be—the story of the Irish Franciscans enlarged into English verse from the nervous and fluent prose of the author of “The Fate and Fortunes of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell.” May I be excused for indulging the hope that the volume will find sympathising readers in the ranks of my young countrymen, and be at the same time an act of tardy justice to the illustrious Order whose services and sufferings it feebly commemorates.

J. F. O'DONNELL.



THE IRISH FRANCISCANS.

THE FRANCISCANS.

[Saint Francis, son of a wool merchant, was born in Assisi, A.D. 1181.
He founded the order which is called after him; and died 1226.]

“The man, whose admirable life
Better in glory of the heavens were sung.”—DANTE.

I.

OF the great Orders, clad in poverty,
Whose labors and whose sufferings help man
Unto the chaste and clear serenity,
Which is not compassed by this earthly span,
I most love that which unto me has been
Familiar as some fixed, true-charted star,
Which one glance at the sky brings to my ken.
I loved it tenderly when life was green,—
Loved it when sorrows grew familiar,
And still would love could life renew again.

II.

It had a radiant origin—it leaped
Fire-winged from St. Francis' heart and brain;
In tears and blood its victories were reaped—
From persecution's red but fruitful rain.

Vast were its early triumphs, when the world,
 Shaken from phantasms of unholy sleep,
 Awoke to hear that God existed still !
 Nor meaner, when Success's flag was furled,
 When darkness fell once more upon the deep,
 And hell, a season, seemed invincible.

III.

Again were fields to fight, and souls to save,
 And principalities to overcome ;
 Again St. Francis' children, sternly brave,
 Rushed to the rescue, and to martyrdom.
 Roused by an inner voice, their hosts advanced ;
 Again in deathful conflict closed with Sin,
 And overthrew it—would it were for good !
 The Church reaped laurels where their keen blades
 glanced,
 The earth heard music where their swords made
 din,
 And found salvation where they spilled their
 blood.

IV.

Another crimson pageant fades, and, lo !
 The world relapses to its ancient way ;
 The prophets of humanity cry Woe,
 Seeing hell's shadow sphered in the broad day.
 Again the rallying cry on sea and shore !—
 This was the demon in his subtlest mood,

With all his enginery close-masked from
sight !

St. Francis' sons against the torrent bore,
Their naked hands its violence withstood,
Till peace shone crescent-wise upon the night.

V.

In those stern ages, barred with gloom and glare,
They held the strong, aggressive world at bay ;
Met it in its own lists when it would dare,
And plucked the greenest garlands from the fray.
Their books were catapults which battered down
The proud, embattled cities of untruth ;
Their confessors were torches fed with faith.
Whether the conqueror's or the martyr's crown,
Repose, or swift, unseasonable ruth,
Their heroism found no rest, save death.

VI.

And if for earth, at large, they labored thus,
What men bore love for Ireland like to them ?
Served her in days when skies were mutinous,
And every wind-gust was a requiem ?
They were with us, of us, in blissful days,
Ere yet across the smiling land there came
Calamity in its extremest form,—
Ere yet invading hands had learned to raze
The altar, giving shrine and roof to flame,
And slaying madly in the fiery storm.

VII.

Their gray and ruined monasteries stand
 By storied lake and river, through the isle ;
 Their square bell-towers, erect, austerely grand,
 Woo from the flying gleams of heaven a smile.
 Chancel and nave with weed and grass o'ergrown,
 Pillars of their sculptured beauty rent,
 Windows through which no fractured sunsets
 pour,
 Plead for a Faith dismantled, not o'erthrown,
 Plead for a race not broken, if 'tis bent,
 Plead for a cause not lost for evermore.

VIII.

Within those wasted sanctuaries the bones
 Of Ireland's bravest, noblest sons find rest.
 Their names are graven on the shattered stones—
 Epitaph, and shield, and broken crest.
 Franciscans closed their eyes, and dug their graves,
 And laid them with their feet against the east,
 And sang their dirges—such a psalm of love ;
 Calmly they sleep, whilst o'er their ashes waves
 The melancholy tree that blossoms least,
 Whose roots in the wet clay are deepest wove.

IX.

Beautiful tradition ! deathless bond !
 That binds St. Francis to our Irish land.
 Immutable, imperishable beyond
 Time, and the despoilers' wrecking hand.

Ages shall wane, yet see its strength increase,
And men shall waste, yet feel its strength renewed,
As is the eagle's bowed with centuries' weight ;
Growing with the growth of fruitful peace,
The patient death and burial of feud,
Assured to all whose faith can hope and wait.

X.

'Tis writ : the Saint shall repossess his own,
'Tis writ : Christ's poor shall have their heritage,
Violence and wrong be overthrown,
And heaven smile down upon a fairer age.
Could Wadding hunger for a dearer time,
Whilst watching Ireland o'er the tortuous foam
Cast on his sandals by a southern sea ?
Could his desires, matured by grief and clime,
Rise to a nobler pitch in friendly Rome ?
Can Rome ask larger blessing ? or can we ?

XI.

Then to St. Francis and his brown-robed sons
I dedicate, with love and reverence,
This little book ; and crave their benisons,
Wishing it bore a higher, deeper sense
Of what my heart would utter. May they spread
And fill the land with their sweet influence ;
With loving labors vivify the past ;
Proclaim that ignorance is crushed and dead,
Scatter those vapors ominous and dense,
Till enmity shall kiss their feet at last.

FATHERS PURCELL AND MOONEY.

[TIME—September, 1617. SCENE—The Guardian's Cell in the Irish Franciscan Convent, Louvain.]

"I was a man of arms, then cordelier ;
Believing thus begirt to make amends."—DANTE.

I.

A SOUL sedate and clear ; not tempered, tried
In the world's battlefields, its councils, schemes ;
Still from the page of Mooney's book it beams
Supremely tranquil, cold, and purified.
It had not striven in mischance of war—
Gathered victorious laurels from no fray ;
But shone in its own compass as a star
Awaiting dissolution with the day.
Thus self-contained, beyond the fiery round
Of force, enthusiasm, hate, and love,
It found content in rich, if narrow, ground ;
And satisfied that here, below, above,
Extends a Providence apast our ken,
He died, the most resigned of thoughtful men.

II.

If on the orbit of this life direct
Some stranger impulse crossed, when least fore-
seen ;
If watching, in its tenor, could detect
A cloud that left it scarcely less serene,

Marring a system lovelily severe

And bathed in its own radiance, 'twas when
came

The voice of Mooney, eloquently clear,

Charged with tradition of time, place, and
name.

Then yielded the strong nature to the charm

Of him, the gray Franciscan, in whose eye

Glittered tradition of attack, alarm,

Battle, and its dispersed pageantry.

He bent his head, his girdled bosom smote,

And whilst the stern Provincial spoke, he wrote.

III.

With tears, I fling the precious book aside,

Withal its bright and golden-emerald grain,

Its story, its procession, and the train

Of long events—our scandal and our pride.

And thus I think: How came those two to
part—

Mooney and Purcell? Did they both go down,

Hand clasping hand, heart beating against heart,

In the red twilight of that Flemish town?

Or did the fate that ever steps between

Souls knitted each to each by unseen bands,

Step in, at the fell hour, and intervene,

And thrust them thwart through sea-divided lands.

Ah! be the separation e'er so broad,

At length they found community in God!

IV.

Mooney was fashioned of the iron stuff
 Which welds the mountain unto mountain mass ;
 His nature was supremely, nobly rough,
 As is the boulder in the giant pass
 Split by the earthquake in its midmost shock ;—
 But where it lay the rain and fruitful wind
 Made havoc in each crevice of the rock
 And sowed with many a flower its blasted rind.
 There were two natures in him—one as stern
 As January's prophetic storm and sleet ;
 The other, nobly, delicately sweet,
 As the poor bind-weed by the angry tarn,
 Which waits, and patiently awaits the hour
 When heaven's straight benediction sends it
 flower.

 THE CHRONICLERS.

[LOUVAIN, 1617.]

PART I.

I.

WITHIN the panelled, lamp-lit room, deep in the
 silence of Louvain,
 Two Friars sat at dead of night, in hoods and gowns
 of Autumn grain,
 Whilst through the narrow window gleamed the
 rounded, shallop moon in wane.

II.

The two Franciscans sat, and read of deeds and
days that one had seen
In his hot youth—a youth that spent its strength
in battle, council-scene,
Between death-measured hosts, between the English
Red, the Irish Green.

III.

Rugged, yet calm, was Mooney's brow—a thunder-
cloud in upper light—
Keen was his eyes' intelligence, steel gray, yet
warm, and definite;
And round his iron temples hung scant hairs not
prematurely white.

IV.

The crowded past behind him lay, reverse, revul-
sion, fortune, change;
He saw the Island ruled by Men, he saw the Is-
lands ruled by strange
And barbarous chiefs, whose mission read: To slay,
or scatter, but avenge.

V.

The last of Desmond's Race had gone, yet he re-
membered when the Race
By scout or parley foiled the foe, or, fighting, met
him face to face;
And in the vales of Munster left for his mailed
heel no resting-place.

VI.

Yes, he had seen a soldier's life, the wild retreat,
the swift attack,
The muffled march o'er hill and heath when moon-
less heaven and earth were black,
And when the glens of Aherlow blazed with the
fires of bivouac.

VII.

Under the serge that wrapped him round he hid
his heart, he hid his scars :
What need for him to speak of wounds who saw
beyond his convent bars,
Night after night, the great God look compassion-
ately from the stars ?

VIII.

Bronzed by a hundred conflicts, tamed, if tamed
such natures ever be,
His heart relaxed its warlike force, he hungered
for tranquillity,
Thrust sword in scabbard, took the cowl in Done-
gal beside the sea.

IX.

Matchlock and sparth no more were his, but nightly
vigil, tearful prayer ;
He heard the rollers on the coast, the tempest
hurtling through the air,
The shipwreck's shock—and blessed the saints that
rest and solitude were there.

X.

And yet 'twas no ignoble rest. He loved his
Order, loved its Saint—
St. Francis of the bleeding palms, and sandalled
feet with travel faint,
Who died to let the angels hear the orphaned
world's sublime complaint.

XI.

He loved him, and he loved his friends, the mighty
Princes of Tir-Hugh,
The proud O'Donnells of the North, who nobly
gave and took their due ;
Where man was wronged they succored him, and
whensoe'er he wronged they slew.

XII.

And who like Father Mooney wept their banish-
ment, their utter loss,
The eclipse of their shining flag on castle battle-
ment and fosse,—
The flag which symbolized the hopes of Ireland's
freedom, Ireland's Cross ?

XIII.

His memory went brimming o'er with thoughts as
brims an urn with flowers :
From dim Louvain his eyes beheld Tyrone's dis-
mantled, battered towers,
Hearth, hall, and chamber ruined wide, their only
guests the winds and showers.

XIV.

Yet he had seen their outlawed lord ride in the
 battle's foremost press,
 Heading the onset, whilst his plumes were lost in
 the thick wilderness
 Of struggling hosts, of fire, of smoke, of shouts of
 triumph or distress.

XV.

Dear unto him those memories ; they haunted him
 from day to day,
 Lived with him, such as figures live upon some
 chamber arras gay,
 When low the light shines, and the breeze behind
 its folds keeps phantom play.

XVI.

He would not die and keep shut mouth, hide the
 gold talent of his brain,
 Or let it shift, as shifts a star from crimson past to
 orange pane
 In the church apse, to sink at last a blank, spent
 splendor on the main.

XVII.

So his soul labored from its depths to leave the
 record of his days
 Something on which a scholar's eye in no unfriendly
 mood might gaze,
 Nor blame its crude Latinity, nor chide its rough,
 archaic ways.

XVIII.

Heaven sent a friend ; behold him there, dear
Father Purcell, ever dear,
Whose feet had paced the cloister's pave with ear-
nest tread for many a year,
Nor thought St. Francis' habit coarse, nor his ideal
too severe.

XIX.

Rome had resounded to his voice, pealed from the
high Janiculum,
And Rome had bent above his books, and panted
till the next should come,
To slay the hated life of sect, and strike its barren
idols dumb.

XX.

Yet here he sits in this poor room, beside his brother
tired of camp ;
Across his lustrous forehead falls the trembling
radiance of the lamp,
The while he turns leaf after leaf with fingers slen-
der, pale, and damp.

PART II.

I.

“Read for me,” Father Mooney said, “dear brother,
slowly read for me
The story of our ruined home in Donegal beside
the sea,
The pile which the O'Donnells built, and where to-
day their ashes be.

II.

“ Not all their gallant dead, I know—for many sleep
in distant lands ;
One lies in Spain, one lies in Rome, with legs
crossed knight-wise, folded hands,
And eyes that never more shall see the sudden flash
of battle brands:

III.

“ Yet many sleep in Donegal. Where once the altar
stood, they rest,
As shattered stone, and manuscript, and clear tra-
dition’s voice attest.
God keep the grass green on their graves, with the
sweet winds that fill the West.

IV.

It stirs my blood to quicker life, that holy name of
Donegal.”
He ceased ; his voice was stifled thick ; his tears
like rain began to fall ;
And whilst his breast heaved heavily, he turned
his face against the wall.

V.

No word spoke Father Purcell, then ; he humbly
bent his hooded head,
Grieved by that mighty agony, and patient till
its transport fled ;
But quick and quicker beat his heart, and even his
wasted cheek grew red.

VI.

Deep silence filled the little room ; abroad the bells
rang low and sweet ;
The watchman's dull and cautious tread was heard
distinctly from the street ;
And from the distant barrack came the evening
drums' recalling beat.

VII.

Then Father Purcell raised his head, to meet with
Mooney's earnest eyes,
In whose clear gray there shone late fire, as shines
the last ray in the skies
Long after sunset, when the stars along their cold
blue orbits rise.

VIII.

"Pax," said the Father. "Pax," replied the sol-
dier of another time,
"I cannot tell you how my heart beat now, as beat
that passing chime—
An Irish breeze blew o'er my face with perfumes
of the ocean time.

IX.

"And straight before my sight arose the monastery
by the tide,
The bay where, in the summer weeks, the Spanish
galleons used to ride,
St. Francis' meadows, crofts, and woods, and
orchards spreading far and wide.

X.

“ I heard the grave Gregorian song down aisle and
 transepts grandly rolled,
 I saw the incense climb the roof, wreathing the
 stone-work fold on fold,
 Till through the trefoils burst the sun, and made
 the cloud a cloud of gold.

XI.

“ Two Spanish lords beside me knelt ; one held his
 plumed cap on his knee ;
 His face it changed a thousand times, and never
 looked the same to me ;
 We rose, and there O'Donnell stood, as plain as
 living man might see.

XII.

“ The next lord rose and followed him ; a glittering
 surcoat masked his steel—
 A mighty blade hung to his side, a silver spur on
 either heel ;
 I looked into his proud, sad face—'twas broken-
 hearted Hugh O'Neill.

XIII.

“ Through the great doors they seemed to pass
 together, and not one by one ;
 I would have followed, but I stood fast-rooted to
 the chancel stone
 Until they melted into mist : the watchman cried—
 my dream was gone.

XIV.

“ Bubbles of brain and blood, I grant—some swift
delirium of the soul,—
And yet, how real, perfect, seemed the moving
shapes, the masted mole,
The priests, the altars, and the long suspension of
the music’s roll.

XV.

“ We shall not talk of this again ! Ah ! Father
Purcell, if you saw
The pillage of our ancient house—that spoliation
blessed by law,
Whilst bloody-hands and ruffian hearts held honest
men and arms in awe,

XVI.

“ Your tears would fill the holy font, your tears its
rim would overflow ;
The day that saw our altars wrecked, gave guaran-
tee of Ireland’s woe,
And plucked the harness from her back, and ’mid
the nations laid her low.

XVII.

“ Where once the psalm on Sabbaths rose, the tem-
pest-beaten seamew screams.
Where once we sat in morning choir the blossom
of the elder gleams.
Of all our pride and worth remain but mildewed
stones and blackened beams.

XVIII.

“Forgive them, Lord ! And yet I feel another day
is sure to come,
And men shall pass, and men shall see the ancient
monastery bloom
Anew from ruin, as a rose takes root and color
from a tomb.

XIX.

“Pray we for that with hopeful hearts, with prayers
that have no interval,
Confiding, leave the rest to God, well knowing He
will order all ;
And, now, my brother, read to me the story of
dear Donegal.”

ROSSERILLY, COUNTY GALWAY.

[FOUNDED A.D. 1351.]

I.

’Tis nigh three centuries
Of battle and repose,
Since ’mid the pleasant Connaught plains
Fair Rosserilly rose :
The world outside was hoarse
With tumults thick and rude,
But east and west its shadows trailed
In peaceful solitude.

II.

The marshes clipped it round
With forest, marsh, and fell ;
No sound disturbed its quiet, save
The monastery bell ;
Or when at morning chaunt,
Or tender evening time,
The friars' voices filled the air
With canticles sublime.

III.

Across the causeway came
The silver peal on peal,
Wind-wafted from the windows of
The glorious campanile.*
Within the altars blazed,
The branchèd windows shone,
And from their canopies the saints
Looked down in breathing stone.

IV.

Picture and tapestry
Gleamed richly on the walls,
With burnished lamps of massy weight,
Aflame at intervals.
Fair was the rood that stood
Where nave and chancel meet,
Our Lord upon the bitter Cross,
The Marys at His feet.

* Belfry.

V.

Often I've watched and seen,
 From out the topmost pane,
 The whirring plover rise and dash
 In cohorts through the rain,
 When winds were piping loud
 In vane-top and in tree,
 And every gust that caught the roof
 Brought odors from the sea.

VI.

Happy our friars were
 In that green Thebiad ;
 Books, meditations, charmed the hours,
 And prayer was sweet and glad.
 Labor was pastime then ;
 Their sole desire of fame
 Was this : to spread the love of God,
 And dear St. Francis' name.

VII.

With us MacEgan walked,
 A spirit high and pure ;
 Kilconnell keeps his sacred bones
 In holy sepulture.
 Since Jerome, flying Rome,
 In Bethlehem abode,
 No braver soul, I deem, was e'er
 More intimate with God.

VIII.

Alas ! a Tudor queen
'Gainst holy Church rebelled,
And far from Rosserilly's walls
Our friars were expelled.
The English sacked our church,
Took plate and robes away,
And rifled the fair tombs wherein
Our benefactors lay.

IX.

Ah ! barbarous was the deed,
Heart-breaking was the sight—
Our vestments, books, and muniments
Strewn round in piteous plight !
The altars hacked and scarred
In very wantonness :
St. Francis must have wept in heaven
To witness our distress.

X.

Yet when the chase relaxed,
And there came friendly calls,
Two by two we hastened back
To Rosserilly's walls.
Ruin confronted us—
The ruin wrought by foes—
Yet perfect, o'er the shattered roofs,
Our campanile still rose.

XI.

The blessing of the friar,
 The golden praise of bard,
 Be his who helped us in our need,
 The good Lord Clanricarde.
 By him again restored,
 The peaceful shade was ours ;
 May God shed mercy on his soul,
 And gird his grave with flow'rs !

XII.

Two lay brothers, six priests,
 Were our community ;
 From daybreak until set of sun
 We toiled unweariedly,
 Till Rosserilly bloomed
 As radiant as of old,
 And round the altars, blazing high,
 Our loud thanksgiving rolled.

XIII.

A peaceful pause ! and then
 Again the English came—
 Again our altars were o'erturned,
 Our roofs were given to flame.
 A heretic stood firm
 'Twixt us and certain death—
 Daniel of Tuam ; would that he
 Found rest in the true faith !

XIV.

But yet, once more, the sun
On Rosserilly shines ;
One moment more the robber's hand
Its iron grasp resigns ;
For Richard of Kinsale
Has hastened to our aid ;
Again the bells at morning ring,
The altars are arrayed.

XV.

Black Richard of Kinsale
A woful deed hath done ;
But from our hearts, for his soul's sake,
Welled many an orison.
In bitter days he stood
Beside us to the end.
Was ever yet Franciscan known
To once forget his friend ?

XVI.

He fought in English ranks,
He helped the enemy,
When Celt and Spaniard sought to make
The bleeding island free.
But his reward he shared
With spirit generous,
And in the thick of evil times
Proved sword and shield to us.

XVII.

Through trials sharp and sore
 The monastery passed ;
 Now lies it opened to the stars
 And naked to the blast,
 The ivy shakes upon its walls,
 And where the altars stood,
 The dead red nettle flourishes
 And drops its leaves of blood.

XVIII.

Scattered are all our friends :
 Some sleep the dreamless sleep,
 Some labor in the old land yet,
 And some beyond the deep.
 Think you they never shall return ?
 Ah ! heaven is kinder far
 Than we, and in the darkest cloud
 Still folds the promised star.

 THE LADY NUALA'S VISIT TO ROSS-RIAL

I.

NUALA, wife of great Hugh Roe,
 Arose at matins' latticed gray ;
 By the bent taper's troubled light
 She vested her in garments white,
 And plume and jewel gay.

II.

A purple cloak her shoulders hid ;
And when her amber hair would float
In the fresh air of dawn, one saw
The golden, fretted fibula
That glittered at her throat.

III.

Her steed beside the postern stood,
Two kerns in green held either rein ;
Black was his hide as is the larch
Through all its upper boughs in March,
And ringletted his mane.

IV.

One foot to stirrup, and she sat
Safe in the Spanish saddle's girth :
Never since forests first were green
Rode lovelier woman, truer queen,
Around the shining earth.

V.

A damsel rode at either side,
Two laughing pages pricked behind.
Around, as thick as blades of grass,
Clustered or wheeled the gallowglass
In motion unconfined.

VI.

And so, with many a blast of horns,
 Along the forest's marge they speed.
 But fairest in the mingled throng
 That swept the winking leaves among,
 Nuala and her steed.

VII.

Riding all day, they hurry south
 By ford, by pass, by torrent-path,
 Past the gaunt fortresses that stand
 Like beacons through the smiling land—
 Past druid grove and rath.

VIII.

Till sixty miles afar from home
 The weary cavalcade dismount,
 And pitch the princess' tent of blue
 In a deep meadow, dark from dew,
 And freshened from the fount.

IX.

Set are the sentinels ; the night
 Grows coldly lustrous overhead ;
 But yet Nuala cannot sleep,
 Nodream her troubled sense will steep—
 Dreams !—death and spirit wed.

X.

She watches for the morning ray,
And when it comes she thinks how soon
Ross-Rial's holy friars will cry
From choir and crypt in melody,
And stir the birds of June,

XI.

Startle the deer in covert green,
The hare within her narrow form,
Whilst the chill air from east to west,
Fired by the sun's supreme unrest,
Grows delicate and warm.

XII.

To horse ! to horse ! Again her veil
Is floating on the forest wind ;
With eyes of innocence and pride
The damsels ride at either side,
The pages prick behind.

XIII.

They press for many a weary mile,
And many a wasting, heated hour,
Till o'er the rolling downs they see,
Standing against the noon-fire free,
The square Franciscan tower.

XIV.

Her heart beats fast ; she knows it well—
 That paradise of singing bells ;
 And o'er the purple ridge of heath
 She sees the chapel housed beneath
 Within its round of cells,

XV.

Where the brave friars pray and toil
 From Sunday unto holiday,
 Beseeching Heaven to bless their trust—
 To raise the nation from the dust,
 And break the foreign sway.

XVI.

And swift and sure they reached the gate,
 Beholding in the sultry air
 The mighty windows of the church,
 The wild stone-roses round the porch,
 The cloister's silent square.

XVII.

In chapter sat the holy friars,
 And heeded not the gleaming train ;
 Absorbed in the strong work of God,
 They half forgot the world abroad,
 Save mountain, stream, and plain.

XVIII.

But she, the lady of the hour,
 Raised from her steed, approached the door,
And, like a poor petitioner,
Waited for voice to welcome her,
 And whisper, "Grief no more."

XIX.

She wanted not of tithe or land,
 Her people's weal alone she sought.
She begged for that she could not buy,
That which throughout our history
 No tyrant sold or bought ;—

XX.

A little colony of friars
 To bless the valleys of Tir-Hugh—
Break daily the Atoning Bread,
Baptize the living, wail the dead,
 Be comforting and true.

XXI.

Long time the tonsured fathers weighed
 That tender and imploring prayer.
Troubles were brooding o'er the land,
They were an isolated band,
 And few were left to spare.

XXII.

“O lady Nuala !” said the white
 Provincial, “it is sad to see
 Christ’s flock abandoned to the wolf,
 Christ’s flock impending o’er the gulf—
 And that this may not be !

XXIII.

“Some future day—if Heaven allow—
 Our hearts shall fly to your relief,
 Share in your joys, however few,
 Watch you with patience firm and true,
 Be partners in your grief.”

XXIV.

At this the proud O’Connor blood
 Flashed like an impulse o’er her face.
 Raising her queenly, golden head,
 “I’ve rid a hundred miles,” she said,
 “To ask of you this grace.

XXV.

“Refuse me, father, if you will—
 Refuse me, and the Heavens incense !
 For every soul amongst us lost
 Your own shall bear the bitter cost
 In agonies intense.”

XXVI.

So pleaded she in accents sweet,
But strengthened with heroic tone.
The pitying friars paused and wept,
Till from their midst one brother stept—
“I'll follow thee alone.”

XXVII.

But not alone, for others came
And likewise craved with him to go ;
The lady Nuala's eyes waxed bright
But holy fair, as shines the light
Across the morning snow.

XXVIII.

And when the gray provincial cried,
“Courage, my sons : God bless your way !”
Up from the parquetry of grass
Leapt belted kern and gallowglass,
And waved their bonnets gay.

XXIX.

Into the forest depths they plunged,
Into the wild wood green and free—
No damsels now by Nuala ride,
There the Franciscans prick beside,
A saintly company.

XXX.

And soon Tyrconnell's mountains blazed
 Like barriers begirt with fires,
 From peak to peak rejoicings rang,
 "Glory to God" the people sang,
 "And welcome to the friars."

 THE FOUNDING OF THE MONASTERY OF
 DONEGAL.

[A.D. 1474.]

I.

THEY chose the monastery's site
 Upon a bluff above the bay :
 Beside the Esk streamed blue and bright,
 By wooded deeps and castles gray,
 Into the fierce Atlantic spray.
 From the tall steep one saw the ships
 Far off and dim, like clouds in calm,
 When breathes the south with dew-blown lips
 From isles remote of spice and balm.

II.

Far inland stretched a land of rest,
 Of violet hills and yellow vales,
 Where yet the eagle held his nest,
 White-crusted by the western gales
 That chafed the wave, and swelled the sails

Of tall barques looming through the haze
 And pressing harborward, at night
 The lamp at masthead half-ablaze—
 A sinking, rising, restless light.

III.

It was the climate of Tir-Hugh—
 Land of a race that held its own,
 While Ireland unto Ireland true;—
 Refused, if beaten, to lie prone,
 Or see its manhood overthrown.
 There Irish law held sovereign force,
 There Celtic lore and minstrelsy;
 The people feared no foreign curse—
 They loved their princes and were free.

IV.

So on this bluff of Donegal
 The trench was dug with pick and spade,
 And true against the eastern wall
 The square foundation-stone was laid,
 Enwreathed with flowers in curious braid.
 Its socket held the founder's name,
 The dear name of St. Francis too;
 No battle ever fetched thee fame
 As did that festival, Tir-Hugh.

V.

The brown Franciscans stood around,
 The breviary in each thin hand,
 Pealing above the holy ground
 That litany of martyrs grand
 Whose voice is heard in every land.
 And when the final prayer was said,
 And tears stood in the princess' eyes,
 They waved their sparths twixt heel and head,
 And shook the seaboard with their cries.

VI.

Day after day it slowly rose,
 That monastery by the sea,
 Graceful and delicate as snows
 That drop from the bent hazel tree
 Whilst yet the Winter is to be.
 A fairy charm possessed the stone,
 So perfect its fantastic mould ;
 And ere the tower had fully grown
 The seamoss hid its base in gold.

VII.

Through tangled columned groups the sun
 Poured east or west upon the pave,
 Red as a martyr's orison,
 Kneeling beside his open grave,
 And at his head the slaying glaive.

The slender shafts that propped the roof
 In purple twilights sprang half hid,
 To sun, and star, and planet proof,
 As is the core of pyramid.

VIII.

Last leaped the bell-tower square and gray—
 St. Francis' finger pointing high
 To that fair world beyond the day,
 To God and his immensity,
 Type of the faith that cannot die !
 Last came the bells, whose voices are
 Echoes of what the world must dree—
 Reflexions of another star
 Whose light is immortality.

THE DOWNFALL OF DONEGAL.

I.

KING Henry sat on England's throne—
 He came to spoil and slay ;
 Where'er St. Francis built his home,
 In Ireland, by mountain holme,
 Or by the green seas' wind-blown foam,
 The monarch held high sway.
 His purse was scant, supreme his want.
 He heard awake the solemn chant

Of the Franciscans through the night,
 Around their altars dim ;
 He heard it at the morning's light,
 When rose the glorious hymn
 Of the cowled brothers, as in line
 They passed the mystic bread and wine—
 That legacy of Love divine,
 Which, under heaven, and over earth—
 Through all its vastness broad,
 Binds men of poor or noble birth
 In that close tie which needs no girth—
 Companionship with God.

II.

That monastery by the sea,
 And silvered by its breeze,
 Had many a vestment wrought in gold,
 Or silk with figure manifold,
 Whereon the artist's hand had scrolled
 His heart in images.
 Ciboriums, with jewels set,
 Like amber plumes with dewdrops wet ;
 And sixteen chalices,
 Whose sides ran sweet with myrrh and palm,
 And passion roses, blooms of balm,—
 They made for heaven a crystal psalm,
 As when, uplifted high,
 All the cowled brothers knelt, adored,
 And from the pane, as from a sword,
 Flashed down the stooping sky.

III.

The strong Tyronian came at times
And spoiled O'Donnell's lands ;
But his heart softened to our chimes,
And *ours* was spared *his* bands.
The poor were ours to feed, to teach,
In no vile form of foreign speech,
But in true dialects that reach
Across the wastes of years—
The language which O'Donnell spoke
Ere his brave heart in exile broke
To see the Isle accept the yoke,
Resisting but with tears !

IV.

Our brethren of the Pale were robbed,
Outraged past all belief ;
We wept for them, but hoped that we,
Shrined in that shining sanctuary,
Were safe beneath our chief.
Tyrconnell, to our country's shame,
Was then one sea of smoke and flame ;
Its prince, princess, adherents, lay
In dungeons, barred the light of day ;
For Shane the Proud, as fierce a man
As ever headed sept or clan,
Or stopt retreat, or led a van,
Rushed headlong to his end.
He met it as a soldier ought.

Pray God that in his latest thought
 Rose up the ruin he had wrought—
 The prayers that might amend.

V.

Where was O'Donnell this dark hour ?
 In Dublin's towers immured,
 Crushed by a traitor's deadly power,
 With bar and bolt secured.
 And where the headship of the sept ?
 Blind to all fact and force, except
 When his eyes opened and he wept
 To see the sovereign wand
 Of his great House, and Ireland, shake,
 As shakes a reed amid the brake,
 Uncertain in his hand.

IV.

Fitzwilliam's captains wrought us sore—
 They swept the shire from hill to shore ;
 With flying steps we fled,
 Bearing in flight the altar-plate
 And vestments, heavy with the weight
 Of jewels, fetched from many a state—
 Chief, where the Adriatic's gate
 Opens unto the fortunate
 Mediterranean.
 Our brothers to the mountains sped,
 And in their purple foldings led

A life between the quick and dead—
Most fugitive of men !
Black Willis—blackest of the black—
Pressed day and night upon their track ;
But neither dungeon, fire, nor rack,
 Could shake the people's faith.
We were their friends in days of pain,
And they proved double friends again ;
Not friendship based on hope of gain,
 But that which dies with death !

VII.

Thank the good God ! O'Donnell's come,
Heralded by no blast of drum,
But in the midnight, dull and dumb,
 Our gallant prince returns.
'Twixt many a shieling's walls that night
The bogwood made a blaze of light,
The bagpipe's cry, the minstrel's might,
 Were musical by turns.
King of our hearts, he ruled once more,
 And who dare say him nay ?
Why, through the length of Donegal,
Each cabin meant a fortress wall
To shield him in war's interval,
Or hold for him, ere he should fall,
 Until the Judgment Day.
Our prince he swept the Saxon out,
Put Willis and his horde to rout.

You should have been and heard
 St. Francis' sons sing jubilee
 For that great feat of sword!
 Our dear home was our home once more,
 Again beside that lovely shore
 We labored, taught, and prayed;
 And many a gallant spirit, spent
 By warfare on the continent,
 Where brothers' blood and blood were blent,
 Round flag or long-defended tent,
 Sought our calm cloister's shade.
 They rest there till the voice shall cry,
 "Arise! eternity is nigh."

THE SIEGE OF DONEGAL.

[AUGUST 10, 1601.]

I.

UNDER the refectory roof
 Our forty patient friars sat;
 Many had toiled in distant lands,
 And left their footprints in the sands
 Of barren wastes, and alien strands,
 Deserted by the owl and bat.
 Grave men were they, of looks austere—
 High olive cheeks, and sunken eyes,
 Slow, gracious speech that had the ring
 Of northern climes or southern skies.

Ruin impended o'er them all,
As stoops o'er some gray abbey wall
The bell-tower, quivering to its base,
Which leans, and leans, and falls at last,
Yet falls in its allotted place,
Discrowned, but still entire and vast.
With heavy eyes they watched the sea
That clamored cold and piteously
Against the monastery wall ;
No friendly bark swam into sight
With white sails slanting to the light,
Her flag blown free o'er all.
A shadow loomed upon the deep ;
Each promontory, cliff, and steep,
Up whose stern front the surges leap,
Or round whose roots the slow tides creep—
Loomed through the ghastly gloom.
The night of shame and wrath drew nigh,
The night of guilt and infamy,
The night of utter treachery,
The night of crime and doom.

II.

Lough Foyle the blue has seen once more
Invading hosts on wave and shore.
In red battalions they advance,
Strength in each stride, fire in each glance,
Hate in each sunburnt countenance.
If Ireland is to hold her own,

'Tis time, 'tis time to strike—
 Mow down the hot-flushed enemy
 With sabre, sparth, and pike.
 Alas for Ireland ! she lies still,
 Half slain by apathy of will,
 And rent by native strife.
 An empire draws its slaying sword ;
 Will no man save her life ?
 Yes ! there was one who would have rushed
 To her deliverance ere gushed
 One blood-gout from her virgin veins,
 To rust afresh her iron chains.
 O saints ! he was afar—
 Far down in Thomond's plains, and near
 The hills that cluster, spear on spear,
 Round glorious Limerick ever dear
 In peace or hurtling war.
 A hireling namesake filled his place
 (Foul traitor to his creed and race),
 For common cause he made
 With England's minions, England's will,
 Against the prince whose blade
 Smote men, as lightning smites the cloud
 When earth is vext, and heaven is bowed,
 And thunders challenge, long and loud,
 Across the baleful shade.
 Ah ! Brother, Brother, God is just—
 Niall O'Donnell shamed his trust ;
 What of him but dishonored dust ?

III.

We knew the traitor menaced us ;

We heard his tread through Donegal
Distinct as if, at dead of night,
A battle-horse, for action dight,
Stamped in his iron stall.

With many tears, we bore away
Our altar vessels' fair array—
The chalice, fired with many a gem
Worthy a monarch's diadem—

The golden-gleaming pyx,
But, to confront him when he came,
We left within the oriel's flame
The silver crucifix.

Brother, in such extremity,
I cast me on the friendly sea
(More merciful than man could be).

Full lurid rose the storm,
The cloud came on us foul and thick,
The mast snapped as an elder stick
In woodlands when the year is sick,

But still the days are warm.
Yet through the vastness of the cloud,
That wrapped us in its triple shroud,

I saw an awful form—
An awful form, with face as white
As is the sun's directest light

On a snowed Apennine ;
The arms outspread, as to caress—

The eyes uplift, as if to bless ;
 I saw his garments shine ;
 And my heart rallied, leapt, surprised,
 For in the form I recognized
 Our dear St. Francis, as he looks
 From some old panel's square,
 A smile on his ascetic lips,
 Glory around his hair.

IV.

Black Niall came ; and soon our roofs
 Resounded with unholy din
 Of sentinels who tramped without,
 And fiends who yelled within.
 From night to day, the wild halloo
 Of tameless riot gathering grew—
 Vile blasphemy and hideous jest
 Profaned the sacred home of rest.
 Nor fared they better, in the main,
 Our brethren of the Little Plain :*
 Their monastery seized and sacked,
 Their flight to wood and fastness tracked ;
 They stood far off, with tearful eyes,
 And watched as ruin multiplied ;—
 Watched as the devastator's brand
 Flashed fiercely far and wide.
 'Twas bitter that we suffered thus,
 With none to help, to succor us.

* Magherabeg.

But, oh ! more bitter 'twas to know
That an O'Donnell was our foe.
We might forgive an English spite—
That compound strange of wrong and right—
But how absolve him from his crime
 Within whose veins there flowed
From many a tribute ancestor
 Our Prince's royal blood !

v.

The monasteries soon became
 Fortresses stout and high ;
For Niall was no laggard chief,
 And English aid was nigh.
Each buttress top and battlement
For free artillery was rent.
Our walls were loopholed cunningly,
That through the massive masonry
The musket-men might have full play,
 And blaze from left to right,
When the descending enemy
 Would dare to hazard fight.
Trench upon trench was dug and laid
With parapet and palisade.
The stakes were interlaced with withes
 Of osier tough and pale,
Such as the sturdy thresher knots
 Around his hissing flail.
Then Niall, in exultant mood,
Smiled, and declared the work was good.

With such defence around him cast,
 He hoped to hold his own,
 Though marched his kinsman to the plain,
 With all the levelled spears of Spain
 In pitch of onset thrown.

VI.

Meanwhile O'Donnell, from the south,
 By marches forced and desperate,
 Reached the grim scene, and pitched his camp
 A stone's throw from the convent gate.
 And he had sworn that Niall ne'er
 Should taste an hour's surcease from care
 Whilst he and his should dare remain
 Our dear asylum to profane.
 Called to surrender, Niall replied,
 With haughty, self-sustaining pride,
 That he had yet to learn to bow,
 And know what 'twas submission meant.
 Clipped front and flank, he dared the worst :
 So help him God and his intent.

VII.

From night to night, from day to day,
 The combatants waged sleepless fray.
 In captured trench and blasted breach,
 With slaying blade and maddened speech,
 They closed in terrible embrace,

And neither foe relaxed his hold,
Till, on the slippery waste of death,
 Stabbed twice and thrice, the other rolled.
Deserters fled the robber's hold ;
Strange stories to our prince they told,
How Niall, mastered by despair,
 Resolved beneath the cloak of night
To quit the desecrated church
 And to the mountains bend his flight.
The quicker pressed O'Donnell on
Round the beleaguered garrison.

VIII.

It was the night of Michaelmas,
 And as the prince had knelt to pray,
Around him shone a dazzling light
More fearfully and wildly bright
 Than is the northern day.
It vanished, then all heaven awoke
As if in mutiny it broke—
As if God's final word were spoke,
And men saw, through the planet's smoke,
 The judgment's crimson ray.
He leaped, he gazed upon the scene—
Accursed Niall's magazine
Had fired, exploded, filled the air
With a fantastic, scarlet glare.
How many renegades it sent
Shattered against the firmament

To tumble back, a bloody dew,
 But the Recording Angel knew.
 Wretches, half-blinded, terrified,
 Who 'scaped the awful wrack,
 Essayed to quit the furnace blast ;
 O'Donnell's swordsmen round them massed,
 And sternly thrust them back.
 They perished in that foul eclipse
 With execrations on their lips
 For Niall. May their agonies
 The wrath of outraged heaven appease !

IX.

Triumph was certain when there came
 Tidings of import from Kinsale ;
 Spain had at last fulfilled her word,
 And sent the promised sail.
 O'Donnell longer dare not wait,
 On his resolve hung Ireland's fate.
 He struck his tents, with many a sigh,
 And marched to succor his ally.
 Brother, need I relate to you
 How that brave enterprise fell through ?
 A priest shall rise to write it yet,
 And make the heart of Ireland thrill
 With sorrow for our chieftain's loss,
 And Ireland's loss as well.
 Ill fared the house of Donegal :
 I witnessed step by step its fall.

I wept when Lambert burned our books,
 Asunder ripped our vestiments,
 Profaned the Lord's most holy cup,
 And spat upon our penitents.
 One gleam of sunshine lit the gloom,
 When yet another of *that* race,
 Rory O'Donnell, sought us out
 Indesolation's dwelling-place.
 He would restore us if he could,
 But England feared O'Donnell blood ;
 So, with his life within his hand,
 Hefled pursued across the foam,
 To share the exile of O'Neill,
 And break his heart in Rome.
 My brother, I have told you all—
 The fate, the fall of Donegal.

THE FOUR MASTERS.

[The names of the Four Masters who compiled the "Annals of Donegal,"
 were Michael, Conary, Cucogry O'Clery, and Ferfasa O'Mulconry. The
 work was commenced in 1632, and was finished in the vicinity of the
 ruined monastery of Donegal, 1636.]

I.

UNDER the casements flashed the sea,
 Green mirror of the cloud and light ;
 On high-peaked roof and swinging vane
 The storm came down with awful might ;
 And east and west, from strand to bay,
 The chafing surf warred wild and white.

II.

They sit within the silent room,
 With lips compressed and ardent eyes ;
 The great Four Masters, whilst their pens
 Alternate fall, alternate rise,
 As the long scrolls beneath them breathe
 Of truces, wars, and prophecies.

III.

Love nerves the hand, love lights the mind ;
 Love for the living and the dead—
 For king, for chief, for saint, for bard,
 Who ruled, or prayed, or sang, or led—
 For them who pine on alien shores
 Proscribed and disinherited.

IV.

They are not rich, those loving men—
 The world has coldly passed them by ;
 They saw its splendors, its rewards,
 Fade off, but never uttered sigh.
 God gave them noble work to do,
 And, with it, gave them poverty.

V.

The roof that hides them is not theirs,
 The floor they tread another owns,
 Their very raiment is a gift ;
 Yet for such need their task atones,

And the rush chairs whereon they sit
Are dearer than imperial thrones.

VI.

Cast in a barbarous age and day,
When persecution stalks the land,
When for the crozier and the cross
The people see the sword and brand ;
They think and write for Ireland's sake,
With throbbing brain and steadfast hand.

VII.

They dream no future eulogy,
They harbor hope of no reward ;
The day is past when learning thrived
Beneath the eyes of native lord,
And sacred as the Holy Book
Were held historian and bard.

VIII.

One prince affords them shelter yet,
The aged chief of Coolavin ;
Their fruitful days pass on in peace
Amid the loud, external din—
The roar of factions, and the cries
Of beaten and victorious men.

XI.

And many a prelate sent them aid,
Drawn from his great necessities ;

The time was terrible, but lacked
 No radiant comforters like these—
 Men steeled by misery and pain,
 And perils faced by lands and seas.

X.

So blessed and guarded, wrote the Four,
 By one untiring purpose spurred ;
 Scroll, chronicle, epistle, myth,
 Exhaled the spirit from the word,
 As, from the matted ivy roots,
 The clear song of the hidden bird.

XI.

Into the twilight space of years
 They plunged with purpose resolute ;
 The causeway stones that bore their feet
 Ceased to be mystical and mute,
 But breathed deep music like the chords
 Of the suspended, wind-blown lute.

XII.

They told of battles which our sires
 In heat of bitter passion waged,
 Before a foreign enemy
 Their knitted swords and shields engaged—
 Before invasion's iron heel
 The birthright of the Gael outraged.

XIII.

Blent in that mighty pageant, shine
High saint and valiant warrior,
Sages whose eyes were inward turned,
Bards like their hill-tops stern and hoar ;
The pillar tower above the plains,
The cromlech heaped upon the shore.

XIV.

A compact, rude, but healthful life,
Its charms were deep and manifold ;
It had the freshness of the dawn ;
Its sway was wide, its wealth untold—
The sparth, of bronze leaf shaped, and lithe,
Was crusted deep with virgin gold.

XV.

Ah ! if those days were primitive,
And lacked our sharp intelligence,
To problems, theories, and dreams,
The dwellers made no loud pretence—
For peace of heart, the sky and earth
Were all-sufficient evidence.

XVI.

But conquest came, the land was changed ;
By native treachery and guile
A stranger fastened iron bands
Upon the long-divided isle ;

And liberty gave up the ghost
 Upon the Nation's funeral pile.

XVII.

But not till there was struggle fierce
 And wild, protracted combatings,—
 Not till the land ran red with blood,
 Did conquest flap its crimson wings—
 Not till the cloisters round received
 The last of our anointed kings.

XVIII.

Years pass, but pass to see renewed
 The ancient war for Ireland's right,
 The axe, the gibbet, stake, and steel,
 Have sorely maimed the people's might ;
 But they have braced their strength anew,
 In the long trances of the night.

XIX.

Had England only whispered, "Peace,"
 She might have had her sovereign will ;
 Alas ! her conquering mission meant
 To crush, to confiscate, to kill,
 And prattle of tranquillity
 When Ireland, one vast grave, lay still.

XX.

The priest was chased into the wilds,
 He hid him in the mountain cleft ;

Around him knelt, beneath the skies,
The few whom sword and cord had left—
To lead the lives of famished wolves,
Of all but wrathful hope bereft.

XXI.

Learning proscribed, its lamp was veiled ;
Our sires its subdued radiance sought,
Far from the crowded haunts of men,
In solitary hut and cot,
Where, in the intervals of prayer,
The pale Franciscan sat and taught.

XXII.

Our fathers could no longer bear
Their masters' brutal tyranny ;
Again they clutched their rusted swords,
Vowing to perish or be free ;
They failed—the Masters tell us why—
And turned their faces to the sea.

XXIII.

So ends the record of the Four—
That record, Ireland's holiest trust—
The stern recital of her wrongs,
Her efforts, disappointed trust ;
The chronicle of English shame,
Bloodshed, rapacity, and lust.

XXIV.

No cromlech, cairn, or monument,
Commemorates the mighty Four.
They sleep unhonored ; their great task
Inspired by loving faith, is o'er.
But the brave land they served so well
Asks: Shall it thus be evermore ?

XXV.

Shame on us, if reply be, Yes !
Yea, double shame, forgetting them
Who plucked our story from the fire,
In days of persecution grim,
And in the crown of Ireland set
A shining, an abiding gem.

XXVI.

A Celtic cross, around whose arms
Shamrocks in many a cluster fall,
Should plead for them, and lift its head
'Twixt blasted tower and shattered wall,
Where beats the sea against the base
Of gray and ruined Donegal.

WARD, COLGAN, AND O'CLERY.

[These Franciscans were natives of Donegal, and highly distinguished for their wonderful attainments in Irish Saint-History. Ward died in Louvain, 1636. Colgan, a native of Carn, county Donegal, wrote the "Acts of the Irish Saints," &c., &c., and died at Louvain, 1658. O Clery (Michael) died in Donegal, 1643.]

I.

THE noble three, the matchless three,
 Brave types of love and constancy—
 Where upon earth such toilers be?
 Cleave the deep past with eagle flight,
 And linger in the desert cells
 Where broods and writes the anchorite,
 Hemmed in by mountain slopes and fells.
 His mediæval splendors fail
 Matched with the courage of the Gael.

II.

Matched with their high and stern estate,
 Matched with their cause unfortunate,
 A cause so old it failed in date!
 Yet sternly held its head on high,
 Depressed, yet ever raised again,
 Like centuried stars that quit the sky
 To blaze anew on wondering men.
 Mated to this cause were the three
 Whom pain fetched immortality.

III.

In the soft-sliding, gentle rain
 That makes a murmur on the pane,
 They pace the cloisters of Louvain.
 Ward, Colgan, and O'Clery, straight
 As a new arrow from the sheaf,
 With something of the warrior gait
 That speaks reminiscence of chief,
 Battle, and court, and camping hours
 Amid the tents and heather flow'rs.

IV.

Of war and tumult Ward could tell,
 For he had heard the trumpets swell,
 The drum replying to the yell
 Of savage, mustering enemies
 Shot 'twixt partitions of the Pale,
 When sea-blown gust or highland breeze
 Brought man's defiance, woman's wail.
 Tyrconnell in his sight went down—
 A sword's flash o'er its ruined crown.

V.

On days of state, great festivals,
 His fathers harped within the walls
 Where now the owl to owlet calls.
 They were O'Donnell's minstrels ; they,
 With fervor not transcended since,
 In mighty dirge or martial lay
 Sang the achievements of their prince.

God rest him sweet ! he sleeps afar
Beneath a foreign stone and star.

VI.

And their descendant walks to-day,
His eyes of tender, thoughtful gray,
Scanning the marble-patterned way,
Through the dear cloisters of Louvain ;
 Past fair arcade and paneled bench,
Where, too, in Ormond's iron reign,
 Walked strong, expatriated French,
Who, rather than shame home and God,
Preferred to break his heart abroad.

VII.

As Ward the cloister's windings tries,
A sudden gladness fills his eyes—
A glow of welcome and surprise.
Sandaled, bareheaded, they draw near—
 Colgan, O'Clery—friends of old ;
The one straight as an ashen spear,
 Whose crowning steel has changed to gold—
So long to heaven its point was raised
That it at last caught fire and blazed.

VIII.

O'Clery stands, but somewhat bent,
A fiery soul in harness pent—
An Atlas weighed with continent.
In his deep eyes Ward sees the force

Destined to win, at least to strive
 To shake from off the land a curse,
 To make our history alive ;
 Not a mean chain of fits and starts
 Forged by small brains and vulgar hearts.

IX.

Together they abide awhile,
 Discussing, between sigh and smile,
 The fate, the fortune of the isle,
 Till, like the weary prodigal,
 With charm of voice, and lifted brows,
 O'Clery speaks, "I'll rise, and call,
 And go unto my father's house ;
 I go to Ireland—may she be
 A port of safety unto me."

X.

Daily the three in council met,
 Their hearts on one achievement set,
 If God would bless, and time permit.
 Lost in the early Christian age,
 Or, worse, by barbarous pens abused,
 Or blurred by sacrilegious rage,
 The island's history was fused
 With that of lands which later saw
 The Faith developed into Law.

XI.

It grieved them that no straight, distinct
 Chronology of fact succinct

The deeds and name of Ireland linked.
That grief shall touch the world no more.

Roses shall blow around the chain—
Flowers gathered in each corridor
And cool, square cloister of Louvain—
Bred in the Irish press, which they,
The three, have toiled at many a day.

XII.

True to his word, O'Clery goes :
But not for leisure, not repose,
Plunges he headlong 'midst his foes.
In college, sacristy, and crypt,
He searches, copies, reads, amends,
Black volume, yellow manuscript,
With which the moths have been close friends,
And the rich fruit of toil and pain
He straightway sends to dear Louvain.

XIII.

Five years and ten slide swiftly by,
But yet the kindly Irish sky
Bends o'er his tireless industry.
One task is ended ; he has proved
We were a people civilized
What time the Eastern nations moved
To thoughts which riper thought despised ;
Our sunset island sent them light
Across the European night.

XIV.

A sterner task awaits him still,
 It stirs his brain, it nerves his will
 With the strong magic of a spell.
 He sits him down in Donegal,
 Beside him sit co-laborers three :
 And there, 'mid ocean's rave and squall,
 They marshal Ireland's history—
 There wrote the annals of our race,
 And saved us from a last disgrace.

XV.

Ward's "Irish Martyrs" from the press
 Of Louvain have gone forth to bless—
 Types of strength, wisdom, tenderness.
 And Colgan's glorious calendar,
 Whose truth no critic creeds attain,
 Has set the glory of a star
 Round many a long-forgotten saint—
 Imperfect reflex of the ray
 Of their calm Paradisial day!

XVI.

For Ireland's sake thus toiled the three,
 Divorced by continent and sea,
 But leagued in heart and unity.
 Three poor Franciscans,—poor, yet rich
 In power and amplitude of soul,
 And that stern sense of duty which
 Can hold a planet in control,

However far may orb its race
Through solitudes of silent space.

XVII.

No promised guerdon cheered their days,
No hope that yet their names would blaze,
As blaze they do, in Europe's gaze.
Fitted for trial of the time,
Scorning the shadow of renown,
Their life became a feat sublime,
The pen, a lamp—the cowl, a crown.
They breathed the air of ages vast,
And so, from Death to Life, they passed.

XVIII.

Calmly the Three together sleep
Where, through the cloistered stillness deep,
The organ's tones at sunset creep.
Eddying, swaying, loud or low,
Sounds psalm or penitential wail :
“ Pray for the Three who rest below,
O wandering pilgrim of the Gael !
They were thy friends ere thou hadst breath,
Be thou, to-day, their friend in death.”

THE SAINT OF DONEGAL.

[On the summit of Drombearg, near Donegal, stands a *cairn*, or pile of stones, erected to commemorate Father Bernard Gray, subject of the following poem. See "Franciscan Monasteries," p. 10.]

I.

I LOVE the fragrant, the delightful story
Of Father Bernard, named of Christ, the Poor ;
Of his sharp trials—great, if transitory—
His travails upon field, and marsh, and moor.

II.

He came amongst us young and golden-hearted,
From dark, old Clogher, cold to bride and wealth ;
From earth and earth's allurements he had parted,
Prizing above their worth his soul's clear health.

III.

And this he found within our monastery :
Thin robes, long fasts, and hourly offices ;
Hearing, through vigils of the night-time weary,
The hoarse clash and reflux of mingling seas.

IV.

He was of God's own heart, supremely fashioned,
A radiant soul, a being blent of air ;
No mortal ever saw his face impassioned,
Save in the ecstasies of silent prayer—

V.

Those silent ecstasies of calm devotion,
Teeming with heavenly visions pure and broad,
Which move the heart, like pulses of the ocean,
And lift it to the nearer light of God.

VI.

He lived amongst us, and we dearly loved him,
His step was sanctity, his word was grace ;
For deed or failing never voice reproved him,
We blessed him as the sweet saint of the place.

VII.

And so it passed that he, of earth, not earthy,
Wrought signs and miracles for gracious cause ;
God, in his instance, thought our brother worthy
To loose or bind our stiff material laws,

VIII.

And give them space or tension, as was needed,
Mould them, or leash them in vicarious yoke ;
The lame man flung aside his crutch unheeded,
The blind embraced his healer and awoke.

IX.

In Lenten time, when fasts be sharp and rigid,
And sharp austerities refresh the soul,
He blessed the estuary's waters frigid,
And the bright salmon swarmed in shoal on shoal.

X.

Few these of many deeds of him related—

Him whom Kildare had honored as high guest,
 Praised with his kingly eloquence, and fêted,
 Deeming the threshold which his feet touched
 blessed.

XI.

Death came to him as came the triple angels
 To Abraham—a messenger of love ;
 He raised his eyes from the illumed Evangels
 And saw the Presence hovering above.

XII.

“Haste to Armagh,” he said, “and tell the chanter
 That he and I shall meet our Lord this night ;”
 And then the mellow, saintly voice grew fainter,
 The holy eyes seraphically bright.

XIII.

We bore his message swiftly, and, returning,
 Found Brother Bernard kneeling, bowed in
 prayer,
 To heaven his eyes, though reft of light, upturning,
 His habit perfuming the chancel air.

XIV.

At that same hour the chanter's soul departed :
 So call we Bernard prophet. He was one
 Who trod his mission's highway lion-hearted,
 Winning that blessed name—St. Francis' son,

THE CHALICE OF DONEGAL.

[A beautiful silver chalice, formerly belonging to the monastery of Donegal, is now in the possession of the Rev. Mr. M'Gauran of Quebec. This sacred relique bears the following inscription: "Mary, daughter of Maguire (Cuconnacht), wife of O'Buairc (Brian Og), had this chalice made for her soul, for the friars of Donegal, the age of Christ, 1633."]

I.

THE pale priest rose and left me in the glow
 Of the Canadian sunset, and the fire
 Which set the shadows wavering to and fro
 Upon the ebon wainscoting, and higher,
 The ceiling and its centre—sword and lyre.
 The wind made dreary music in the streets,
 Ghastlily white with the long-settled snow ;
 And from the campanile above the roof
 The vesper bell tolled dreamily and slow.

II.

Seated, I read a book of queer conceits,
 But no prehensile force lay in my eyes,
 Which took in what they saw in gaps and bits,
 Having before them gleams of eastern skies,
 And coasts round which the hoar Atlantic cries.
 There blazed the beacon on the graven cliff,
 There shot the mountain peak above the vale,
 There, through the ravenous waters in the dark,
 The fishing smack flew home with dripping sail.

III.

A footstep ! the brain mirror broke in twain ;
 Then with a reverend step approached the priest,
 Bearing in a cloth of golden grain,
 With many services and foldings creased,
 That which had fetched me from my native east—
 The blessed cup of blessed Donegal—
 The silver chalice piety had given,
 That the strong soul of Bryan Oge O'Rourke
 Might find the peace that earth denied, in heaven.

IV.

It was fair-fashioned and symmetrical,
 A flower-bell poised upon a slender stem,
 With indents set at certain interval,
 Wherein might sparkle the imprisoned gem.
 No narrowness of soul degraded them
 Who called O'Donnell's silversmith and said :
 " This do thou rightly with thy cunning art ;
 Remember God shall plead from it for thee ;
 So give it all the valor of thy heart."

V.

My priest read the inscription round the base,
 In the dear Celtic language, and it said :
 " Mary, a daughter of Maguire's stern race,
 Commanded that this chalice should be made
 For her soul, and her husband's soul—whose
 blade

Clove darknesses of battle, as a flash
Illumines the long hollow of a cloud—
The Bryan Oge O'Rourke, whom wayward ill
Consigned too soon to sepulture and shroud."

VI.

And being made, the lady's voice decreed
That it should ever rest in Donegal,
Where the true friars loved each glorious deed
Of him they had seen prematurely fall,
As parts a bastion from a fortress wall.
How many hands have raised that cup on high
At the dumb climax of the sacrifice!
How many prayers rose with it that her soul
Might find beatitude in paradise?

VII.

"These were the days of faith," my priest resumed,
"Days when men's souls were vital, chaste, and
strong;
Red flowers beneath their feet too often bloomed,
For they were quick of purpose—hated wrong,
Nor deemed that life was an idyllic song
For halts and pauses in its sunny ways,
And merry junketings on softest sward;
They felt it had a meaning true, if dark,
And sought that meaning both with cross and
sword.

VIII.

" Call them not barbarous, nor fired with lust
 Of wide accession, or of narrower gain ;
 They were supremely, resolutely just ;
 Their tribunals were pitched in open plain,
 And there inquiry rent or bound the chain.
 Resolutely just, when roused, attacked,
 Surprised, or harried—were it soon or late,
 Vengeance for vengeance was their iron code,
 And well they learned how to retaliate.

IX.

" Yet mark, throughout these hurricanes of war—
 War often waged the altar to defend—
 At home, or drawn by needs of strife afar,
 They never once forgot the final end—
 God was their hope—St. Francis was their friend.
 Lights supernatural moved on before
 Their clustered spears and banners ; death was
 scorned ;
 They fought for Christ and for His people's sake,
 And bravely died, forgiving and forewarned.

X.

" You seek the proofs : wherever through that isle,
 Which sleeps in ashes, or awakes to tears,
 The stone crops' flowers within a spandril smile,
 The ivy to a quatrefoil adheres,
 Barring the ray that pierced in other years,

The proof is palpable. The soldier sleeps,
 His stag-hound crouched across his mailed feet ;
 But in his knitted hands is trust in God,
 As if his lips its language could repeat.

XI.

“ Look you at this—this chalice cold and fair—
 No barbarous stylus ran within these lines,
 They have the limpid grace of mountain air,
 The flexile sway of torrents and of pines—
 The trunks through which the tumbling water
 shines.

Beauty and balance in the cup are wed,
 The stem below, the perfect flower above ;
 Granted that Art directed, fashioned it,
 Art had a Master, and his name was—Love !

XII.

“ After the battle, in the red repose
 Of treachery and ruin, Bryan lies,
 Dear ministering hands his limbs compose,
 And draw the tired curtains of his eyes.
 For him no more is life—life’s miseries.
 What is the first thought kindled in his wife ?
 What the first fruit of her pure woman’s grief ?
 That at God’s altar holy men shall raise
 Salvation’s cup for the departed chief.

XIII.

"There is a Christian splendor in the act,
 The hope that strikes its deepest root in death,
 Belief that calculates nor time nor fact,
 But takes its impulse from untroubled faith—
 'Peace shall be mine and his if He but sayeth.'
 The woman died, her history remains,
 And with it this pure offering, which to-day
 Keeps her name sweet on many an altar stone,
 Under the shining heaven of Canada."

 THE O'ROURKES.

[ROSSERILLY, 1604.]

I.

ON Sligo's black and barren coast
 The Spaniard struck at dead of night,
 The rollers crashed upon his ships,
 Whilst glittered through the foul eclipse
 The beach-foam, ravenous and white.
 Mast followed mast, rope, sail, and spar
 By the gigantic storm were rent ;
 The cries of drowning mariners
 Clamored unto the firmament.
 So fared the great Armada—Philip's pride,
 For whose triumphal march the world seemed not
 too wide !

II.

Twelve torches blazed straight through the gloom,
 A wind-tossed barrier of flame ;
 Down hidden pathways through the rocks—
 Shook by the waves' impetuous shocks—
 O'Rourke and his retainers came.
 Far inland they had heard the shouts
 Of drowning and despairing men ;
 And saw the flash of signal guns
 Light up the mountain scalp and glen.
 Bryan-na-Murtha rose, and pointed where
 The last gleam lingering died upon the troubled air.

III.

With flying steps they sought the shore,
 With earnest hands they toiled to save ;
 God aids them, and, ere comes the sun,
 A hundred gallant men are won,
 Or rescued from uncoffined grave.
 Helpless the Spaniards sit around,
 Tired with the sea's strong buffetings,
 Till suddenly on every ear
 A voice, in pure Castilian, rings :
 "Thrice welcome, friends ! delivered from the
 foam,
 My castle is at hand, my castle is your home !"

IV.

Thus spoke the chief, whilst on him leant
 Antonio de Seva, pale—

A leader, politic and wise,
 Whose flag had blazed in twenty skies,
 To sink in that accursed gale.
 Few words they said whilst toiling up
 The rugged, billow-eaten slope ;
 But in the leader's hollow eyes
 There gleamed at times a certain hope
 That he might reach his native land again,
 And lay his unstained sword before the throne of
 Spain.

V.

Sad Dromahere, with dripping weeds
 Thy voiceless chambers are content ;
 No more the cresset shines at dark,
 That friend and foe alike might mark
 From out thy topmast battlement.
 Hoots the gray owl at middle night ;
 There seldom comes the foot of man ;
 The moat is choked, the warder dumb,
 And cannonless each barbican ;
 The very winds that pass thy turrets by
 Sing to the future and the past an old-world
 threnody.

VI.

But not on this auspicious night :
 The trumpet, cythern, kettle-drum,
 Brayed, rolled ; whilst at the smoking board,
 At whose high head sat Breffny's lord,
 The Spaniards dreamt no more of home,

But gazed in wonder at their hosts ;
 Drooped eyes, and shyly gazed again.
 They oft had heard of, never seen,
 That race of men called Irishmen.
 The proud Castilian forgot his fears,
 And his great gratitude made manifest in tears.

VII.

But whilst the feast and banquet ran
 With scarce an intermittent breath,
 News of O'Rourke's humanity
 Were quickly sped across the sea,
 And reached the stern Elizabeth.
 White in her fury waxed the queen,
 That enemies were harbored so ;
 Had her estate on Irish soil
 Fallen so immeasurably low
 That an O'Rourke should feast the enemies
 Whom tempest and her fleets had broken on the
 seas ?

VIII.

Forth went the words : " Despoil and waste,
 Burn Breffny through its utmost girth ;
 Slay quick, and spare not, till it be
 The blackest spot of misery
 Whose sterile savor curses earth."
 Fitzwilliams, Bingham, heard and went
 Almost before command was spoke,
 And soon fair Breffny's fields and homes
 Were rolled in lurid flame and smoke.

The chieftain fled, and James, the coward king,*
Returned him to the queen—a bloody offering.

IX.

He scorned to kneel before her throne :
The courtiers sneered : “ How could it be ?
He bowed his head before the paint
That represented martyr, saint !”
“ Ah ! different men,” he cried, “ are ye.”
Upon the scaffold, base Magrath
Abjured him to renounce his faith—
In the apostate’s face he glared,
Then, smiling, gave himself to death,
And died, as only heroes know to die,
True to his Church, prepared to face eternity.

X.

He died, and gallant Bryan Oge
Stepped to his martyred father’s place ;
In that dark hour of misery,
No braver, wiser chief than he
Could come to rule a warlike race.
His spurs he won on many a field,
Fighting beside O’Donnell’s side ;
(For in a lost and desperate cause
Their noble hearts were close allied.)

* James VI. of Scotland.

They scattered England's valor by the Boyle,
And left the reeking plain strewn thick with dead
and spoil.

XI.

And when, cooped up in weak Kinsale,
Clamored for aid the Spanish chief,
O'Rorke, with his renowned ally,
Pressed through the marches gallantly,
To their beleaguered friend's relief:
He fought until a brother turned
Traitor to him and Ireland too;
Then hastened home to guard his right,
And deal the renegade his due.
But mercy poised his strong, uplifted hand,
And let the traitor live to be a blight upon the
land.

XII.

His castle was asylum safe
For men who, in disastrous strife,
Sooner than Ireland's cause should fall
Without one struggle, periled all—
Fortune, reposeful days, and life.
When the MacGuires, O'Sullivans,
To snow, and sleet, and tempest proof,
Marched through the land a hundred leagues,
They found a refuge 'neath his roof.
Through all disaster sang the happy bird,
"Though Spain may not strike now, the hour is but
deferred."

XIII.

The castle, in its turn, besieged,
 He flung the Emerald banner out.
 Lambert and Bustock came to slay ;
 Their children long recalled the day
 He put their hosts to utter rout.
 What foreign hate could not effect,
 Domestic treason madly wrought ;
 A brother at a brother's throat
 Was just the contact England sought.
 Dispirited, with vast conditions bound,
 He snapped his sword in twain, and left the sacred
 ground.

XIV.

'Twas sacred then—'tis sacred still ;
 The sounds that in the ruins lurk,
 The broken arch, the loop-holed wall,
 Chamber and court, and bower and stall,
 Whisper the magic name, O'Rourke.
 He was a man for any time,
 A veteran in council, field ;
 Till worse than ruin broke his heart—
 He strove, he fought, he would not yield.
 Oh ! vain endeavor, when the foe accurst
 At one pure matron breast with him was fondly
 nursed.

XV.

To Galway town he journeyed slow,
 A weary journey, litter-borne ;

Passed by him, like some phantom sight,
The waning darkness of the night,
The crimson of the growing morn.
He died in peace with God and man—
Even with the traitor he abhorred—
Craving before his lips were still
St. Francis' russet gown and cord.
And these once given, he bade adieu to all,
And turned his pallid face against the chamber
wall.

XVI.

In Rosserilly's cloisters pale,
Where he desired his bones might lie,
We buried him, at early prime,
Whilst yet the boughs were fresh with rime,
With awful Mass and litany,
Thick fell the white and yielding snow,
And sternly swept the sullen wind ;
But we perceived not, for our eyes
With bursting tears were blear and blind—
The hot, fierce tears of pain that men must weep,
When one who was their light goes down to his
last sleep.

XVII.

Thus perished noble Ogue O'Rourke !
Oh ! had a happier clime been his,
He might have won the foremost place
In battling for another race,
For any race on earth, save this.

His foemen would have judged his worth,
 And made advance to him ; but, then,
 Pent in this island, cursed to him,
 He'd hold no truce with Englishmen.
 His father's blood was scarlet on their hands,
 And their adherents swept with fire and sword his
 lands.

XVIII.

Peace to his ashes ; may the God
 Who looks upon us from the skies
 Lead up his brave and pious soul,
 Beyond all enmity's control,
 To the bright gates of Paradise.
 There let him be as one of those
 Who, clipped by trouble, sorrow, wrath,
 Strove manfully, strove earnestly
 Up difficulty's wayward path,
 And saw, beyond the clouds around him driven,
 The fixed and the unalterable lights of heaven.

MOONEY'S PORTRAIT OF HUGH ROE
O'DONNELL.

I.

I STOOD on Kilmacrenan on the day
 That saw our gallant prince, O'Donnell, crowned,
 With chief and clansmen clustered thick around,
 A martial, fierce, magnificent array.
 Trumpet to trumpet poured defiant bray ;
 The hooves of rushing chargers shook the
 ground ;
 Then, when the tribal erenach had placed
 Within the compass of his small white hand
 The sceptre which no deed of his disgraced—
 The sovereign, the imperial, ruling wand—
 The skies quaked with the clamor of acclaim ;
 The mountains shouted back in sullen glee—
 The very valleys knew O'Donnell's name—
 Red bolt of battle ! Pledge of victory !

II.

I rode at the Blackwater at his side
 When Bagnall's routed columns, erst so proud,
 Streamed, like a shattered skirt of thundercloud,
 Towards Armagh, spur and lash with wrath
 applied.
 I saw him upon Castlehaven's beach
 Waving his hand, what time he passed to Spain,

With sparse retainers in his faithful train,
 Never again his native shore to reach,
 Gaily he spoke us : he would soon return—
 Renew the fight, if God should give him grace :
 My aged eyes within their sockets burn,
 Hot tears of agony course down my face.
 A poor Franciscan closed his eyes in Spain.
 We'll never look upon his like again.

III.

Comely his stature, tall and finely knit ;
 His features symmetry ; his entire mien
 With rare nobility of life was lit—
 Buoyant, but with a buoyancy serene.
 His voice was musical, but in its tone
 A tender, patient melancholy reigned—
 A sadness half infect, and half ingrained.
 A low wind through a ruined forest blown.
 His aspect was a king's, majestic, slow,
 Save when in his shielded eyes there blazed
 An enterprise's momentary glow,
 And the thin lid inquiringly was raised ;
 Then the great orbs flashed out, dilated broad,
 And—pardon !—but he seemed a very god.

IV.

No perils daunted him ; brave, courteous, true,
 Each promise was fulfilled, each word redeemed ;
 Not of this bastard age of ours he seemed,

But of a time whilst yet the world was new.
 Fearless in battle, he loved discipline ;
 Punished excesses, honored valiant men ;
 Encouraged learning, execrated sin ;
 Revered what lay beyond his wisdom's ken.
 Yet so accomplished, so immaculate,
 I've heard him say, if God would grant him peace,
 By making the war's issue fortunate,
 From camp and court he'd essay swift release,
 Take our poor habit, and be buried with
 Us in community of life and death.

 DUNDALK.

[Dundalk Convent, founded in the thirteenth century, by John De Verdon.]

I.

Six hundred years have spent their force
 In sun and tempest, rain and heat,
 On these gray stones, and left the shocks
 Of conflict at my feet.

II.

Mullion and grotesque architrave
 Lie scattered in the waving grass,
 And look reproach between the stems
 Of daisies as you pass.

III.

Yet, this was no ignoble pile ;
 A Verdon raised it to the sky,
 Wrought subtle graces on its walls,
 And built its bell-tower high.

IV.

And hither came St. Francis' sons,
 Sandaled and girdled for the fight
 Between the long-opposing powers—
 The Darkness and the Light.

V.

No record of their deeds remains,
 But there comes to me, in this hour,
 The odor of the Alpine plant,
 The lovely gentian flower,

VI.

Which, when it dies below the snow—
 Between the snow-line and the plain—
 Breathes perfume from its hidden roots,
 Like jasmine in the rain.

VII.

O calm, O silent brotherhood !
 Earth holds not your biography,
 Knows not of effort, nor of deed—
 What matter, if *they* be ?—

VIII.

If from their hidden worth arise
The clear result at which you aimed ;
Such is endeavor's noblest crown.
Why murmur if not named ?

IX.

The storm that rent and shook those walls,
And split their storied roofs, has passed,
As sinks a palm of thunder cloud
Upon the sinking blast.

X.

Kings have gone down to purple tombs,
The royal purple on their bones ;
And men have raked them from the dust
And dragged them through the stones.

XI.

Who would not choose to be unknown,
Or not desire a fleshless face,
When at his coffin lid there knocked
The savage populace ?

XII.

Who would prefer that knaves should cry,
"Ho Capet !" "That's a Tudor's head !"
To sliding down ingloriously
Amid the peaceful dead ?

XIII.

The potentates have had their day,
In mighty spheres their lot was cast,
They had their short ascendancy ;
'Tis yours, 'tis yours at last.

XIV.

Friends of the living and the dead,
St. Francis' prayerful, toilful sons,
You ruled no world, but, wiser far,
You loved the little ones.

DEATH OF HUGH ROE O'DONNELL.

I.

THE lamp burns by the curtained bed,
It glimmers palely on the head
Of him, the chieftain of renown,
By swift disaster stricken down.

II.

Silent and motionless he lies,
The lids half closed upon the eyes—
Those rigid eyes which ever fix
Their gaze upon the crucifix.

III.

And save that some excessive sigh,
Breathed in his heart's great agony,
Swells the embroidered coverlid,
The leech might well count him for dead.

IV.

Not yet. Before that pinioned soul
Vast past and future, mingling, roll.
Poised between both, his eye discerns
What man inevitably learns :

V.

Decree of ours makes nothing fit ;
We strive, and, failing, must submit.
Irate at mastering circumstance,
Rebellion ends in worse mischance.

VI.

He, the O'Donnell, lies to-day
From Ireland many a league away ;
Robbed and proscribed and fugitive,
He dies consenting to forgive.

VII.

He saw his people plundered, banned,
And strangers riot in the land ;
He saw the altar levelled low
At beck of the imperious foe.

VIII.

Remembering all, with even mind,
 He clasps the cross and breathes resigned.
 Tell me, O doubting sciolist,
 Would it be wiser to resist?—

IX.

Protest when death is at the door ;
 Or patiently embrace the floor,
 And die, as stainless saints have died,
 In ashes stretched, and mortified ?

X.

Let the world answer its own way—
 Creep down its stages of decay,
 And pause at every fresh descent
 To sound its own accomplishment.

XI.

Not so will Hugh O'Donnell die,
 Cleaving the air with victor cry ;
 But bravely calm, and nobly mute,
 Trustful, submissive, resolute.

XII.

One moment in his pain he turns,
 For, where the lamp beside him burns,
 O'Dunlevy, with folded hands
 And bended forehead, weeping, stands.

XIII.

O true Franciscan ! who but thou
Should kiss a dead O'Donnell's brow ?
Whose hand but thine should close his eyes,
And bid them ope in Paradise ?

XIV.

None other. See ! the lamp shines low,
The wind breathes heavily and slow ;
Draw close the curtain, turn the glass,
And let his soul to Jesus pass.

SAINT ISIDORE'S AT ROME.

[Founded by Father Luke Wadding, 1625.]

I.

I HAD climbed upwards from those wondrous cham-
bers

Which penetrate the mighty heart of Rome ;
And, in my dazzled eyes, the sun shot ambers—
The torches' and the daylight's wedded bloom.

II.

Dawn lay upon the city stern and hoary,
On obelisk and fountain, square and bath ;
And, centrewise, through its transcendant glory,
The Tiber streamed, a turquoise-colored path.

III.

At intervals, there came the silver pealing
 Of myriad bells on the translucent air,
 Dying away, returning, still revealing
 Day had returned, and, with its advent, prayer.

IV.

Cool moved the air by portico and column—
 Grim-dark their shadows stretched across the
 pave—
 Blowing the white spray from the fountain's
 volume—
 A smooth-haired naiad leaning from her cave.

V.

But, as the sun rose, the soft wind was heated,
 A burning brilliance girt the Vatican;
 And, seeking rest and silence, I retreated
 Up the fair slopes of the famed Pincian.

VI.

Ruins of empires thronged the space around me—
 Fragments that spoke of distant sea and shore;
 But one gray spectacle arrested, bound me,
 The time-stained College of Saint Isidore.

VII.

A thousand memories held me in a second,
 A hundred names to Ireland always dear;
 I thought the lofty gateway bent and beckoned,
 With voice austere, yet friendly: "Come thou
 here."

VIII.

So, to the hospitable voice assenting,
I passed in spirit through the massy door
To the quadrangle, cool with leafy tenting,
Which poured a twinkling radiance on the floor.

IX.

And all around me rose the fair creation
Of dear Luke Wadding of the teeming brain,
The son, the would-be saviour of our nation,
At one stern epoch of exhausting pain.

X.

His portrait, limned by Italy's chaste painter,
Carlo Maratti, beams upon the wall ;
The years have made its pristine splendor fainter,
But the true face of Luke shines out withal.

XI.

A brave, bright head, crowned with the brow's
expansion—
A sovereign head, with purpose in its mould ;
Eyes, windows to a fiery spirit's mansion ;
Glance keenly resolute, and self-controlled.

XII.

You guess the power from its arrested fleetness
(A pause is one of Art's strategic quips),
Power mellowed by the tender, human sweetness
Which glows around the curvings of the lips.

XIII.

He had a mission—patience to fulfil it.

Here, from vast Rome, his eyes to Ireland turned,
To her whose brows were circled with the fillet
Of agony,* yet strove, despised and spurned.

XIV.

To win some passage through the ranks opposing,
To liberty, to learning, unto light,
Ere Europe marked around her sternly closing
The fatal darkness of barbaric night.

XV.

So in the Cæsars' city he exerted
His strong soul to redeem her from her ills,
Not with a flaccid energy half-hearted,
But with the iron purpose which instils

XVI.

Life into apathy—the proud persistence
That persevering ever works its way,
Seeing, beyond the nightmare of the distance,
The splendor of inevitable day.

XVII.

On the fair Pincian, where the Spaniards chanted
Their litanies and read their offices,
Hopeful, the flag of Ireland's faith he planted,
Committing unto heaven its destinies.

* See the form of torture to which a Christian virgin was subject in Moore's "Epicurean."

XVIII.

Column, and frieze, and roof, at his commanding,
Towered up into the pale Italian air,
The gray Past with the Present closely banding—
The fading sunset with the matin glare.

XIX.

For, next his heart there lay a purpose tender—
Hatred of ruin, longings for increase ;
He would not touch the sad and mildewed splendor
Of that grim house in which Spain's sons found
peace ;

XX.

But saved it, as a dove saved from the tercel—
A grape bunch snatched from out the press of
wine ;
Saved it, and made it inmost part and parcel
Of the perfection of his brave design.

XXI.

Nor when the cunning architect, retiring,
Pronounced that all was good, did he desist ;
He was too largely dowered, too aspiring
To find in naked travertine a rest ;

XXII.

And so Rome's artists toiled on wall and ceiling,
Till panel, spandril, cornice, was ablaze
With saints ecstatic, martyrs slain, or kneeling—
Souls, victors in the world's unquiet ways.

XXIII.

In one bright work, a giant on a highland,
 The canonized apostle of our isle
 Stands blessing all the peoples of the island
 With that archaic but expressive smile

XXIV.

Which lit the patriarch's face by his pavilion,
 When angels were his guests—as the round sun,
 Bathed in the deserts' purple and vermilion,
 Summoned the stars, and they came one by one.

XXV.

On these unquiet times there stormed no Titian,
 No Raphael, no Michael, scaffold-propped ;
 Art, the divinity, had grown a vision
 Since Angelo the plumb and pencil dropped ;

XXVI.

Or tired its sprained wings in lamenting measure
 Against conventionality's dense bars ;
 Whilst the good world, a critic at its leisure,
 Catalogued its weaknesses and scars.

XXVII.

This granted : one's blood tingles at beholding
 The bright sweet frescoes of Saint Isidore,
 Subject into subject finely folding,
 Like high and nether clouds in Autumn hoar.

XXVIII.

Art has its uses and its benefaction—

The spiral lines round which its pulses move—
Here they're embodied in prehensile action,
Pure technicality controlled by love.

XXIX.

And when one, turning from their chaste, calm
beauty—

That rose-fringed foam on an ascetic shore—
Turns back, as though the instinct were a duty,
Down the still twilight of the corridor,

XXX.

Up springs the Library, 'twixt sculptured column,
Brown with the wine-dark color which the leaf
Of manuscript volute and ponderous volume
Borrows from Time, who binds them in his sheaf.

XXXI.

In the gray lights that file between the portals,
I see this solemn chamber of the dead,
The placid faces of the cold immortals,
Each in his blazoned shroud of black or red.

XXXII.

Silent, and yet how eloquent, ye beings,
Ghost-like as windless sails on moonlit seas,
Ye comprehended our remotest seeings,
Ye struck the key of unborn centuries.

XXXIII.

Ye were the rare, the long delight of Wadding,
 To whom the sun were darkness, without books—
 A travail sorer than the herdsman's plodding
 Through stubbles when the sunset draws the
 rooks.

XXXIV.

He loved ye with a stormy, fruitful passion—
 Loved with a love enduring and as deep
 As the first rivet in the groaning cassion,
 Buried ten fathom in alluvial sleep.

XXXV.

There Colgan, sanctifying priestly leisure,
 Louvain's ascetic, eagle-eyed and pale,
 Sent scroll and manuscript, in heaped-up measure,
 Writ in the radiant language of the Gael.

XXXVI.

Here Hickey, Fleming, champions of St. Francis,
 Seated beside Luke Wadding, thought and wrote
 The Annals of their Order—clumps of lances,
 Which, ever smiting, never yet were smote,

XXXVII.

Nor bent, nor shattered in the headlong battle
 Of truth, so armed, against blind ignorance,
 With its prolonged and crepitating rattle,
 And masked and half-averted countenance.

XXXVIII.

I hear the stubborn conflicts of these ages,
 The call, the rallying shout, the rush, retreat ;
 I see the self-contained looks of the sages,
 I feel their hot hearts' quick, laborious beat.

XXXIX.

No more on Montorio Wadding rested,
 Building transcendant futures in the air.
 The harder, nobler task to him entrusted
 Mellowed the bitterness of daily care.

XL.

And rising to its measure, and above it,
 He worked, he thought, he hoped, he prayed for us ;
 But heaven was dumb ; if violence could move it,
 Could it be deaf to him, impetuous ?

XLI.

And stormful in his fervor, as an ocean
 Lashed by cloud-shattering blasts, what time the
 day,
 Blinded by the lightning's sharp commotion,
 Dies out in colorless and empty gray.

XLII.

Ireland had sprung anew to life. Tyrconnell
 Stared from his northern eyrie on the foe ;
 Burning to marshal hosts with him, O'Donnell
 Hungrily watched the signal for the blow.

XLIII.

It came at last ; and from the sea-washed regions,
 Pent in the sullen circuit of the North,
 Banner and spear, and hotly mustered legions,
 Like torrents from the mountain snows, rushed
 forth.

XLIV.

Wadding rejoiced ; and in the oratory
 Which looks towards the Campagna, he thanked
 God,
 For this short sun-burst of ephemeral glory,
 This sharp, brief respite from the tyrant's rod.

XLV.

Warring with obstacles, doubts, indecisions,
 He roused old Rome to help the last crusade ;
 He was no creature of abnormal visions ;
 For action, shaped in strength, the man was
 made.

XLVI.

O'Neill writes to him, cautious, or consoling :
 The grand Franciscan hurriedly replies,
 Whilst down his wrinkled cheeks the tears are
 falling,
 And the dim library repeats his sighs.

XLVII.

Hope withers—hope for ever withers slowly,
 As comes the bitter ash-from smouldering kelp ;
 Again he kneels in resignation holy,
 Submissive to the fate he could not help.

XLVIII.

And, dying in Saint Isidore's, surrounded
 By weeping brethren, who watch his white
 face—
 Watching the limit where we see confounded
 Life's latest stand-point, and death's instant
 grace ;

XLIX.

A stranger enters. 'Tis Prince Ludovici,
 Bringing with him his cherished son and heir ;
 A stripling manly as the forms that we see
 On some Cellini buckler round and rare.

L.

The boy stoops, and the old man, slowly rising,
 Gives him the benediction of the just —
 No more distracting, and no more surprising ;
 'Tis ashes unto ashes, dust to dust.

LI.

Peace unto thee, thou spirit brave and royal !
 St. Francis lead thee to thy blessed Lord ;
 For thou hast won, by services thrice loyal,
 The bright eternity of just reward.

LUKE WADDING.

[This celebrated Irishman was born in Waterford, October 16th, 1588, and died in St. Isidore's, Rome, 1657.]

I.

WHERE looms the tower of Reginald,
Above the Suir, which rushes past
Quick as a battle's trumpet blast,
When loud the last reserves are called,
Luke Wadding first saw star and sun—
The pleasant city by the tide—
The circling mountains, gold or dun,
Chained, scalp to scalp, on either side.

II.

And there he grew till he became
A growing light of that stern host
Who deemed not Ireland's fortunes lost,
Nor triumphed in her passing shame.
His main delight the manuscript
Writ by some saint in fairer days,
Each letter black as cavern crypt,
Each marge a field of tangled blaze.

III.

His city was not blessed to see
His rare fruition through its length,
Its gathering purpose, grace, and strength,
Crowned by supreme maturity.

Crossing the seas his sires had crossed,
In desert Lisbon he sat down,
Resolved to win—despite all cost—
Christ's, and his country's radiant crown.

IV.

I follow him through those vague days,
As often, in the night alone,
I climbed St. Patrick's steps of stone,
Through their worn, penitential maze.
He beams a priest upon my eyes,
Whilst yet his suns count twenty-five,
Heated and harnessed for the prize
Which heaven ordains to them who strive.

V.

From wall to wall, through roof and stair,
The gray-stoned Salamanca groans,
Pulsating to the mystic tones
Of one whose voice seems fire and air.
'Tis Wadding! 'tis his glorious lot
To peal through Christendom abroad
The truth, that never sin could blot
The Virgin Mother of our God.

VI.

Rome folds him in her matron arms ;
He dreamt of her in Liria,
He dreamt of her in Bathala,
The Monastery of the Farms.

From her embrace he could not part,
 Could not release that clasp divine ;
 He plucked his longings from his heart,
 And laid it at St. Peter's shrine.

VII.

For in the Cæsar's city hid
 Were heaped Titanic scroll on scroll—
 The legacies of many a soul,
 Beneath the coffer's fretted lid.
 He yearned to fetch them to the light,
 To purge their story free from dust.
 Answer, confessor ! anchorite !
 Did Father Luke betray his trust ?

VIII.

But seldom toiled his tireless brain
 To such true purpose, such firm good,
 As when, beside the blessed Rood,
 With many a pang of love and pain,
 He read St. Francis' work anew,
 Rebuilt the pillar years had rent,
 Plumbed the great architecture true,
 And left the world a monument.

IX.

The spirit of his Order fired
 His inmost being to its core ;
 To see it rise, expand once more,
 Was all his steadfast soul desired.

He wrote its story day and night—
For him such toil had subtle charm.
The giant's load is great, but light
When poised upon the giant's arm.

X:

And to this day its glorious truth
Stands stoutly as a pin-point rock,
Unswerved by storm and earthquake shock,
Garlanded by eternal youth !
The friar in St. Francis' cells
Bends o'er its pages brown and damp,
Whilst on the wall his shadow swells,
As his cowl rises by the lamp.

XI.

Deep in the cloister's twilight dim,
Deep in the silence and the shade
That breathed 'twixt pavement and arcade,
A voice from Ireland cried to him ;
A solemn voice from far-off seas—
A wind with odors of the foam,
Blent with all tender sanctities,
And songs and memories of home.

XII.

O'Neill had died, a refugee,
But not the cause his sword espoused ;
From hill to cape the land was roused,
Unto the cry of liberty ;

The people rose in self-defence,
 They fell upon the common foe,
 Ah! in that hour-of fierce suspense
 No priest lay hid, no altar low!

XIII.

For when did Ireland ever cry
 And her Franciscans not respond,
 Within her shores or far beyond
 The limits of the rounding sky?
 Luke Wadding heard her wild appeal,
 And answered with heroic strength;
 He longed to see o'er serried steel
 His nation's banner flame at length.

XIV.

So when our chiefs confederate
 Plunged in the tumult then begun,
 He was to them a priest, a son,
 A second providence, a fate;
 He summoned to their succor, Rome,
 And Rome, the generous, replied
 With flags that set the sea in bloom
 And ships whose freights oppressed the tide.

XV.

The sword of gallant Aodh O'Neill
 Fell to his keeping; and he sent
 The blade, with praise and compliment,
 To him—the battle's thunder-peal—

Our great, our valiant Owen Roe,
Pillar of fire that blazed in fight
In front of friends, in front of foe :
May God assoil his soul to-night !

XVI.

And wheresoe'er that keen blade drew
Its instant lightnings through the air,
The Saxons fled in blind despair,
The Irish followed firm and true ;
No cannon raking front and flank
Availed to rout them or disturb ;
They fought for faith and home, till sank
The star of England o'er Benburb.

XVII.

In vain endurance, courage, trust,
Long fortitude, high scorn of pain !
The land relapsed to chains again,
And hugged its fetters in the dust.
Lough Outer saw the stern O'Neill
Struck down by foreign fraud and hate ;
The poisoned cup, not foemen's steel,
Again left Ireland desolate.

XVIII.

Revel on murder followed fast,
Murders on revel followed soon,
They interchanged with change of moon ;
Men at each other glanced aghast,

And Wadding's heart beat quick and wild ;
 He could not stop the hand to slay,
 Nor keep the virgin undefiled,
 Nor save from bloodstains hairs of gray.

XIX.

He had dared much, and, losing all,
 Submitted in reluctant mood,
 For the stern passion in his blood
 Revolted at submission's call.

What then ? To break his heart in prayer,
 To chafe the sandstone of his cell,
 And plead, in tears, that God would spare
 The isle that loved St. Francis well.

XX.

Close on the tempest follows calm,
 When cloud and hurricane are spent,
 And the pure, freshened element
 Breathes from its vastness breaths of balm.
 And Wadding, weary of the fray,
 Returned, with sighs, to his first love—
 His pen, abandoned many a day,
 His tomes, o'er which the cobweb throve.

XXI.

Dying, he heard—worst news of all !—
 Of Ireland's *utter* overthrow ;
 And reeling underneath the blow,
 He turned his face against the wall.

It seemed, in Rome, as if the sun,
 On Easter morn, in night was furled,
 Just as the Pontiff's benison
 Went speeding round the waiting world.

XXII.

Peace unto thee, Franciscan brave !
 Thy like we never shall see more ;
 Beneath the roof of Isidore,
 May tears and prayers bedew thy grave.
 Alas ! the marble bears no flower
 Save what the sculptor's cunning wove ;
 But with our hearts, as with a tower,
 We fence thy bones with Ireland's love.

CREEVELEA.

[Founded by Owen O'Rourke, Prince of Breffny, A.D. 1568.]

I.

WHERE flows the Boned, willow-fringed,
 By devious paths to meet the sea,
 Rose Creevelea cold and calm,
 In gray austerity.

II.

The site was fair, and charmed the eye
 Of blessed Patrick when he came
 To put the idols of the land
 To everlasting shame.

III.

And where the cowled Franciscan sang,
His slender oratory stood,
With sloping roofs of matted leaves
And posts of carven wood.

IV.

The leaf and post had vanished long
When the O'Rourke desired to see
A monastery bless the spot
Blessed by St. Patrick's knee,

V.

Whose print is graven in the stone,
As is the webbed foot of the bird
Which, ere the Deluge, trod some shore,
Whose voice no man hath heard.

VI.

And priceless was the aid the chief
Received from kinsman, friend, and wife—
From her, Fingalla's sister fair,
The white rose of his life.

VII.

Day after day the building grew
Symmetrical, without defect ;
For piety laid each stone true,
And love was architect.

VIII.

Of grayest marble were the shafts,
The chancel was a marble sea,
The girded roof, a world of oak,
The altars, porphyry.

IX.

The lamp before the Presence hung
Was bright and pleasant to behold,
The flame that burnt within its vase—
A ruby set in gold.

X.

Jasper and shattered crysolite
In every mullioned window beamed,
When through the interlacing stone
The level sunshine streamed.

XI.

Three years passed by, and porch and tower
Had reached their ultimate estate,
Then came M'Brady, of Kilmore,
To see and consecrate.

XII.

The friars were of Donegal,
Gray men and young, whose lives had run
In shocks and pauses of the time—
Battle and orison.

XIII.

Well-dowered the foundation was
With orchard, woodland, croft, and lawn,
With white-fleeced sheep, and kine that lowed
In many a pleasant bawn.

XIV.

And happy moved the seasons round,
Spring, Summer, with their fresh delights,
Brown Autumn bent with nuts and corn,
The storms of Winter nights.

XV.

Then lowered a cloud upon that peace,
So tender, true, and sanctified—
In fullest bloom of years and grace
The Princess Margaret died.

XVI.

They laid her, where she prayed, to rest,
Beside the altar high and fair,
Her statue kneeling on the tomb
With fingers knit in prayer.

XVII.

Nor slept the Princess long alone,
For swift and soon beside her lay
Her widowed lord, ere yet his hairs
Had caught the winter gray.

XVIII.

In our poor habit he expired—
Died as the saints alone can die,
The name of Jesu on his lips,
The clear hope in his eye.

XIX.

For us it was a year of grief ;
Fingalla, the white-shouldered, pined,
Till God released from suffering
A spirit so resigned.

XX.

Sorrow on sorrow multiplied ;
We saw our dearest friends depart
Behind the Shadow : with what tears—
What agony of heart !

XXI.

A midnight fire devoured our church,
Scaled arch and column, roof and beam,
And reddened many a league of cloud
With its fantastic gleam.

XXII.

Hermon O'Donnell, brave and young,
The sacred vessels strove to save ;
He plunged into the yelling flame—
Alas ! it was his grave.

XXIII.

Yet when the crimson storm had passed,
 The ruins sheltered us again—
 Glad to find refuge 'twixt their walls
 From beating storm and rain.

XXIV.

Till Bingham burst down in his wrath,
 Expelled our brothers one by one,
 And made the temple of the Lord
 A furious garrison.

XXV.

His soldiers quartered in the aisles,
 His horses neighed in stall and choir ;
 The oaken panels, rarely carved,
 Made up a mighty fire,

XXVI.

Whereat the troopers sat and swore,
 Cast dice, and quarrelled bloodily ;
 For men and angels what a sight !
 For foulest fiend what glee !

XXVII.

Lonely is Creevelea now,
 Its ancient pride and splendor gone,
 But the great faith that raised its walls
 Immutably lives on.

XXVIII.

That is not quenched—that cannot die ;
 St. Francis, high in Heaven, renews
 His task with prayers, as failing flowers
 Are strengthened with the dews.

XXIX.

For me, I never lost the hope
 That the old times shall yet return,
 That the old aisles shall hear our cries—
 The ruined altars burn.

XXX.

No pure, bright cause was ever lost
 Which held, within its grasp and scope,
 The courage that contemns defeat—
 The potency of hope.

 CLONMEL.

[Founded probably by Otho De Grandison, A.D. 1269.]

I.

THE shining Suir, the dreamy Suir,
 Blue tribute of the hill and dell,
 Streams down by fields, and crofts, and farms,
 Apast the gray walls of Clonmel.

II.

The alders lean above the tide,
The violets hide in lushest grass ;
And up and down the barges go,
From gleaming river pass to pass.

III.

There, he who sails from Waterford
May see, across the ancient town,
The Abbey's steeple o'er the roofs
Of bluest slate or tileage brown.

IV.

The ivy scales its stubborn sides,
And clasps them in its green embrace ;
And where its tendrils miss the stone,
The humble golden moss finds space.

V.

The battlements are bleached and gray,
Battered by storms of centuries—
Bitten in Runic characters
By salts blown in from far-off seas.

VI.

Who were its founders—who the men
That chiselled, poised, and raised the stones,
Whose skeleton stands firm and stark
As by the sea a giant's bones ?

VII.

What Desmond noble bid them rise?
What Grandison of buried fame?
No voice, no chronicle replies,
With certitude of time and name!

VIII.

Whoe'er he was, his work remains,
In its rude grandeur, tall and strong,
And looks across the fruitful fields
A noble, a granitic song.

IX.

A psalm of an heroic time,
Whose tender music haunts the heart—
Music developed and inspired
By burning Faith and loving Art.

X.

Loud sings the rain upon the roof
This breathless, tender Autumn day,
As down the walls, across the graves,
The melancholy sunbeams stray.

XI.

I hear the murmur of the town,
I see the brown boats cleave the stream,
And yonder, on the hill's red scalp,
The season's momentary gleam.

XII.

A lovely quiet fills the place,
And, in its silent hush, return
The monks in choir and oaken stall,
The altars where the tapers burn.

XIII.

Ascends the loud Gregorian chant,
As day, contending with the gloom,
Procession-wise moves down the aisle,
And casts a rose on every tomb,

XIV.

Smiting the white sarcophagus
Which holds the warrior lord of Cahir,
With many a crimson arabesque,
And shadow delicately fair.

XV.

A change : the friars are there no more—
To strange succeeds familiar face ;
Destroying torch and ruffian sword
Have left their memories in the place.

XVI.

The pleasant buildings by the wave
Heaped, ruin upon ruin, lie ;
Where flamed the lamp and blazed the hearth
But desolation meets the sky.

XVII.

Gone—not for ever—are the days
When, at the monastery gate,
The friars stood, and fed the poor
With looks and words compassionate.

XVIII.

The poor may starve, the poor may plead—
Their prayers are lost on alien ears!
Repulsed, St. Francis stands apart,
And mixes with their tears his tears.

XIX.

Dream not, it shall be ever thus,
Though shameless progress urge its course,
And girdle the quiescent earth
With misnamed energies of force.

XX.

We are not happier that the past
Has merged into a sterner time,
Which, frowning upon former ways,
Deems charity no more sublime.

XXI.

We are not happier that the men
Who prayed for, helped us, day by day,
Count, in the commonwealth of mind,
For shattered shreds of potter's clay.

XXII.

They did brave work in evil times ;
Think you their mission came to end
When simple manners grew despised,
And Progress called the world his friend ?

XXIII.

Release me from this constant goad
Of fretful, sad activity,
And, with the chaste St. Francis' sons,
Let me live backwards—but be free

XXIV.

To breathe unharmed the common air—
To preach, inflamed, unswerving faith ;
And feel, untroubled, round my heart
The mild presentiments of death.

XXV.

I envy—be the sin forgiven—
The souls that prayed and labored here,
Sanctuaried from the outside whirl,
And holding peace, of all things, dear.

XXVI.

For them the sky was as the brow
Of Jesus o'er his creatures bowed ;
Each planet was a panting saint—
An angel's wing each floating cloud.

XXVII.

From prime, until the set of sun,
The swift, bright river sought the sea,
Past islands, like the decades linked
In fiery Dominic's rosary.

XXVIII.

The silent mountains lay beyond,
Each in his purple cowl and stole,
Their feet in earth, their heads in heaven—
The true ascension of the soul.

XXIX.

Thus all things blent and typified,
Filled them with peace without excess ;
They did not love themselves the more,
They did not love their country less.

XXX.

But struggling, praying for the two,
They past away, and left behind
Traditions sweet as is the smell
Of camphire on an ocean wind.

XXXI.

Disbanded, scattered, yet again
Beneath one roof they re-unite.
Slow tolls the vesper bell, and lo !
The Abbey windows are alight.

ADARE.

[Founded by Thomas, seventh Earl of Kildare, and Joanna, his wife,
A.D. 1464.]

I.

A BRAIN cramped by paralysis,
Or else a world-steeled heart, is his
Who wanders, when the day is deep,
Or when the midnight moon is fair,
Along the tributary Mague,
Under the shadows of Adare,
Nor sighs by that green-remembered shore
For that which was, but is no more.

II.

From the white falls of singing Croom,
The river slides through wastes of bloom.
It takes the sunshine of the field ;
It steals the purple from the hill ;
It hears the birds in pendent boughs—
The quick splash of the water-mill ;
And, leaving these to rest, it flows
Past one green Eden of repose—

III.

Apast a sweet and fruitful land
Whereon, in broken sequence, stand

The ruined aisles divorced from nave,
The cloisters where the mosses grow,
The clerestories, and the heads
Of propping columns, all ablow
With lilies such as burst their frond
On dear St. Joseph's wedding wand.

IV.

I pace the consecrated swarth—
That quiet space of sacred earth—
Where men sought labour, rest, and
death,
Where the brown-robed Franciscan came,
With rubied breviary in hand,
And heart and counsel all on flame.
Ruins on ruins round me rise,
And overhead the void of skies.

V.

No voice, this April day, doth stir,
Save that of Christ's red chorister,
The robin, with the bloody fleck
Dilating, sparkling, on his breast,
The shrilly, intermittent cry,
That will, and will not be at rest.
He sings alone, and out of sight,
A shy, melodious anchorite.

VI.

Enter ; and lo ! the roof recedes,
 And as, through wind-disported reeds
 Masking a mighty river's face,
 The silent heavens a moment beam ;
 So down on me, 'twixt wall and wall,
 A thousand bygone splendors stream ;
 But indistinct and dim they pass,
 As Paul saw His face in the glass.

VII.

Vain to arrest them ; vain to try
 And grasp the instant pageantry.
 The eyes' deliberate conceit
 Falls into mists impalpable ;
 The impress and the force abide,
 But what impressed them who shall tell ?
 Poor students we, who knock and wait
 And strive outside the Folded Gate !

VIII.

But if the phantom so elude
 Embrace, appeal, solitude,
 The golden chronicle remains ;
 It peoples these abandoned aisles
 With radiant priest and sandalled monk,
 With brave men's faces, children's smiles ;
 And, through it, in their grim decay,
 The sullen walls make holiday.

IX.

A gallant soul, a great Kildare,
Laid these foundations, true and square.
A Desmond's daughter helped him well ;
And, when the mighty walls sprang high,
She caused the warrior-son of God
To flame against the western sky :
St. Michael triumphed on the pane,
And at his feet the fiend lay slain.

X.

Our bell, her gift, was heard afar,
Even in desperate days of war ;
Clear as a summons unto truce,
A voice behind the Temple's veil,
It rang the joy of festival,
It blended in the solemn wail
Of monks, with cowled and bended head,
Pacing before the sainted dead.

XI.

No limit bound her lofty sense
Of bright and wise benevolence.
She loved the beauty of God's house ;
And humbly on her matron knees
Offered to Him, with many tears,
A gift of silver chalices.
These sacred shades enshrine her dust.
God give her portion with the just.

XII.

The bounteous dead shall have their due ;
 Let others be remembered too.

O'Sullivan, at whose command
 The glorious belfry leaped in air,
 Stern as St. Francis' lifted arm,
 Beautiful as the last sweet prayer
 Breathed by a nun ere, out of sight,
 She glides into the grille's dim light.

XIII.

Peace unto him ; and peace beside
 To good O'Dea's unwearied bride.
 Foundress of the great chapel, she
 Here left her heart in beauteous stone,
 In carvings rich and manifold,
 But now with Vandal weeds o'ergrown.
 What matter ? Time's destroying sword
 Cannot annul her long reward.

XIV.

I lay the teeming volume down ;
 For what of profit is renown
 To them whose names enrich its leaves ?
 They labored truly in their time,
 And, in the registers of heaven,
 Have found acquittance more sublime.
 They have outgrown our feeble praise,
 Our tepid hearts, our narrow ways.

XV.

But here the monastery stands,
A beacon light above the lands.
Its treasures have been scattered wide,
Its friars have been stricken dumb ;
One city holds its chalices,
And one the great ciborium,
And one the precious cross that went
Before the Holy Sacrament.

XVI.

The vile may sneer, the good may mourn,
But doubt not I there shall return
A better day for dear Adare,
When once again its bells shall ring,
And round its altars, blazing high,
The friars in triple rows shall sing.
We may not live that day to see :
Patience ! 'Tis God makes history.

MULTIFERNAN.

[Founded by William Delamer, A.D. 1306.]

FATHER MOONEY'S STORY.

I.

ON Donegal's sea-rifted headlands,
High over the desolate sands,
The pile built by princely O'Donnells
In shattered magnificence stands.
Fire, tempest, the stout walls have blackened ;
The wind through its aisles chants a tune ;
And in, through the tall chancel window,
At midnight, come gleams of the moon.

II.

Ah ! father, I fondly remember
The days when that chancel was thronged
With the kernes and the wives of Tyrconnell—
Ere yet the Franciscans were wronged.
When torches blazed red round the altar,
The roofs echoed back the loud strain
Of voices grown shrill on the highlands,
Or deep, on the thunderous main.

III.

'Twas there—in those long-ruined cloisters—
I threw down both matchlock and sword,
Full sick of the world and its conflicts,
And yearning to live for the Lord.
For I had been trooper, and leader
In many a desperate fray ;
And plundered the barns of the Palesmen,
In secret or open foray :

IV.

I marched to the field with our chieftains,
O'Donnell, and daring O'Neill ;
And watched on the plains of Clontibret
The flash of their death-dealing steel.
I fought in the thickest, when Bagnal
Went down in the press of the slain ;
And saw, through the grate of his vizor,
The blood gushing hot from his brain.

V.

But, now, these excitements were buried—
I longed, craved, and hungered for rest ;
The Cause had the flower of my manhood—
St. Francis might well claim the rest.
With tears I besought the Provincial
That I might be one of that band
Whose courage kept burning unclouded
The fire of the Faith through the land.

VI.

He smiled acquiescence, and sent me
 To fair Multifernan. To-day
 Its arches are muffled in ivy,
 Their sculptures are white from decay !
 'Twixt moulding and mullion, the tempest
 Hurls inward the pitiless rain ;
 And sadly through meadow and marsh
 Pours the weed-choked, monotonous Gain.*

VII.

I saw the vast pile in its glory
 Of clustering columns that rose,
 Like pines in a lightning-swept forest,
 Till lost in the roof's dim repose.
 O'er every gold-laden altar
 Rare picture or tapestry shone ;
 And each of the multiplied windows
 Burnt fierce as incarnadined stone.

VIII.

A Delamer built Multifernan—
 For him and for his I pray peace—
 He laid the last stone on the bell-tower,
 And girt it with fruitful increase
 Of lands laughing yellow with harvest,
 Of orchards where apples hung red,
 And waters that mirrored the dreamlands
 Of trees, clouds, and stars overhead.

* A stream near Multifernan.

IX.

Ah! pleasant and fair was that region,
Embosomed in woods from the world!
One path to the uproar outside us,
Alone, round the forest's skirt curled,
And, joining the highway to Longford,
Left friars and birds to their cells—
The little rooms ringing the cloister—
The nests in the leaf-hidden dells.

X.

How often, by calm Derreghvera,
I've paused, as the eyelids of dawn
Half opened on water and woodland,
And kindled the dews on the lawn!
The crescent light shot to the zenith—
A scimitar flashed in the dark—
And loud o'er its keystone of scarlet
Exultingly clarioned the lark.

XI.

Dreams, dreams! All has wasted, has perished;
Bare, desolate now is the place;
Tradition breathes vaguely of Nugent—
Of him and his high-hearted race.
Aye—they were our lords, and befriended
Our Order with chivalrous zeal,
With favor of gift and endowment—
If needs be, with championing steel.

XII.

God rest the good barons of Delvin,
 For, when the eighth Henry decreed
 That we should be plundered and scattered,
 They stood us in desperate need.
 Our lands became prey of the spoilers ;
 But—grace to the Nugents !—we still
 Held the church where we prayed that St. Francis
 Might bid the sharp tempest be still.

XIII.

Full often the peace of the cloister—
 Distinctly the memory recurs—
 Was jarred on by trailings of sabres,
 The janglings and ringings of spurs !
 The troopers were quartered upon us,
 Their fires in our porches they lit—
 Swore, bullied, with true English fervor.
 And we ? What could we, but submit ?

XIV.

Just let me recall—'twas October,
 That Deputy Blount ordered Shane,
 With three scores of horsemen and footmen,
 To camp on the banks of the Gain.
 Their task was to sack Multifernan,
 To capture and prison our friars,
 To massacre, ruin, and pillage,
 Till gorged to their hearts' worst desires.

XV.

And closing upon us, at evening,
There fell to the hands of the crew,
Kilmore's sainted, fugitive bishop,
A martyr and confessor true.
A beacon was he in the darkness,
A soul to whom labor was love.
His bones have been laid in our cloisters ;
His soul shines with Francis above.

XVI.

For dearly he loved the Franciscans,
And never consented to dwell,
Though palaces stood at his bidding,
Outside the four walls of his cell.
He came of the best blood of Ireland—
His fathers, as princes, held sway
O'er the broad lands of Breffny-O'Reilly,
Ere came the invader to slay.

XVII.

And, with him, that sunset, were captured,
Moriarty, the dean of Ardagh,
Father Hayn, Father Gray, all Franciscans—
As such were proscribed by the law.
Then entering the convent, they seized on
The guardian, Nehemias Gray,
With six of our habited brothers,
Who'd come to the altar to pray.

XVIII.

A few of the fathers, perceiving
 The clamor and uproar, escaped—
 Fled fast to the woods through the darkness,
 Unshodden and scantily draped.
 Of course we dreamt not of resistance,
 But, fearing to anger the foe,
 Commended our souls to St. Francis,
 And silently bowed to the blow.

XIX.

Oh! gleefully vain were the soldiers;
 They shouted with joy o'er their prize;
 The arched roof of chapel and cloister
 Re-echoed their blasphemous cries.
 And whilst some were searching for treasure,
 The rest sat contentedly down,
 And feasted and drank to repletion,
 Whilst cursing the queen and the crown.

XX.

Our guardian escaped in the tumult,
 And I might have followed; but no!
 I cherished one pious ambition,
 Much more than I ever feared foe.
 I longed for this poor cord and habit,
 I longed in our Order to die—
 As God and St. Francis might will it—
 No judge of such issue am I.

XXI

And, knowing that Shane sent our bishop
A prisoner to grim Ballinmore,
I guessed that I soon should rejoin him—
As soon as Shane's searchings were o'er.
Two days passed ; the third rose in heaven,
And I and a lay brother, tied
Securely to stirrup and pommel,
Rode on to the fort, side by side.

XXII.

We suffered, but never once murmured,
Nor answered our escorts' reproofs,
Nor paled, till we heard ringing, rearward,
The clatter of galloping hoofs.
'Twas Shane on his fire-snorting charger—
The flame of the pit in his eyes—
He shouted, and pointed behind him,
We turned, and the cloud-laden skies

XXIII.

Were red as the mouth of a furnace
New lit for the potter, at night—
Blood-red, as the rivers of Egypt,
Rose castle and cross in their light.
The brand had assailed Multifernan ;
The flames leaped with eddying roar
Round buttress, and column, and casement ;
The home of the saints was no more !

XXIV.

Heavy, despairing, and tearful,
 We passed o'er that desolate road,
 Till close in the shadows athwart us
 The castle lights drearily glowed.
 'Twas Shane's task to burthen my sorrows
 With ribald and infamous jest,
 And expletives coined by the demons
 Whom torments and fires yield no rest.

XXV.

"Fling off," he exclaimed, "an' you love me,
 That villainous brown gaberdine ;
 Be a man, not a prayer-singing friar,
 And draw a good sword for the queen.
 Trust me, you shall not be forgotten
 When Blount plants his foot in the north ;
 There are lands to be had for the asking,
 And titles for valorous worth."

XXVI.

Good father, I never made answer,
 But groaned, in my saddle, in prayer.
 Soon over our heads loomed the castle,
 With buttress and battlement square.
 Once cast in its noisiest dungeon,
 I knelt on the hard, slippery floor,
 Kissed the ring and the feet of our bishop,
 The lion of wasted Kilmore.

XXVII.

He raised me, he blessed and embraced me,
Saying : " Brother, what fate brings you here?
Son, you might have fled to the fastness,
And liberty always is dear."
Then, choking with sobs, I related
Why I became captive—would dare
Exile, or dungeon, or torture,
Content if I only could wear

XXVIII.

The coarse cord and gown of St. Francis ;
Nor did the good prelate upbraid.
I knelt to our hoary Provincial,
And there my profession was made—
Ay, made in that foul prison chamber ;
But even in that terrible place
The voice of our saint penetrated,
And filled the four walls with his grace.

XXIX.

I have seen functions in Brussels,
Processions and fêtes at Cologne,
The blazing of windows and altars,
The pomp around mitre and throne ;
But never a function so solemn,
So grand in external and core,
As was that half-whispered profession
Within thy grim walls, Ballinmore !

XXX.

St. Francis, thank God, was my master,
 My life from his life to take shape ;
 My wildest ambition was glutted,
 So I bent every thought on escape.
 I was young, I was strong, I was daring,
 And felt, if again I were free,
 The pure-hearted friends who were with me
 Not long in a dungeon should dree.

XXXI.

Could I once reach the camp of O'Donnell,
 Or whisper a word to O'Neill,
 I knew that to ransom the bishop
 They'd pause not a turn of the heel.
 In the eyes of Tyrconnell, the tonsure
 That fringed round a consecrate head,
 Was dear as the bones of Columba,
 Or the blood Januarius shed.

XXXII.

So, counselled by bishop and guardian,
 One night, fired with desperate hope,
 I silently dropped from the window,
 And swung to the wind by a rope.
 It broke, ere descent was effected ;
 And with a great gasp at the throat,
 I fell thirty feet in the waters
 That flooded the ice-crust'd moat.

XXXIII.

The battlements blazed out with torches,
The bugles rang shrill on the air ;
Below was the darkness of midnight,
Above all was tumult and glare—
The tumult of challenge and watchword,
Hoarse questioning, sullen replies—
Then, sudden, the uproar was silent,
And peace breathed again in the skies.

XXXIV.

I was saved for the time ; but our bishop
Was fated to waste precious years
In the damp, dismal dungeons of Dublin,
Conflicting 'twixt hopes and 'twixt fears.
Ransomed by friends, when to daylight,
And freedom, and action restored,
His face was more white than an amice,
His tongue could scarce utter a word.

XXXV.

How fared it with good Moriarty ?
Whilst journeying to Dublin, fast bound,
With the rest of his brothers in durance,
By troopers pressed closely around,
A Nugent rode up to the escort,
And, steadily levelling his piece
At the many-plumed head of the leader,
Demanded their instant release.

XXXVI.

Refused, nothing daunted, young Nugent
 Gave signal for fight to his men ;
 They rushed on Shane's boastful banditti,
 And charged them again and again.
 The rabble, sore beaten and scattered,
 Fled fast as but cowards can flee ;
 The struggle was short, if not final,
 Moriarty a moment was free.

XXXVII.

'Twas only a moment, however ;
 For quick on the heels of the fray
 The queen's troopers dashed upon Nugent's,
 Deciding the fate of the day.
 Again is our guardian a captive,
 And prone on the plashed grass he lies ;
 A musket has felled him to earth,
 And a bullet has passed through his thighs.

XXXVIII.

They flung him to rot in a dungeon,
 And there, sick and tortured, he died ;
 Through the long and exhausting ordeal
 No friend's voice rose up at his side.
 He passed to his peace tired, but hopeful,
 As sheaves in the harvesting fall,
 And we laid him to sleep in the churchyard
 A pace from the old city wall.

XXXIX.

But, soon as the tempest had lightened,
And day shone, we gathered us back
To the ruins of dear Multifernan,
As birds know their favorite track.
We toiled, we rebuild'd a chapel
With ardor of muscle and soul,
When Rochfort came down, and his minions
In one night demolished the whole.

XL.

He bore off the friars to Dublin ;
The bishop was hurled in a brake,
Left for dead as a prey to the ravens
Or waterfowl haunting the lake.
He lived to do good work for Ireland,
To serve her, to love her, to raise
Her soul from the shadow and weakness
Which leant on those desperate days.

XLI.

How solemn you seem, as I tell you,
Our friars, when freed from their chains,
Once more hurried back to the ruins
That stand by the rivers and plains.
And there, to this day, notwithstanding
The storm's ever-gathering blast,
They live by the rule of our founder,
And cling to the land to the last.

FLORENCE CONRY.

[This learned and patriotic Archbishop of Tuam, was born in Clonahee, county Galway. He founded the Irish Franciscan Convent of Louvain, and died at Madrid, 1629. Florence Conry was distinguished for his profound learning, and devotedness to the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, whom he accompanied from Belgium to Rome.]

I.

A GRACIOUS soul, a mighty heart,
 He rose upon a troubled age,
 Which held the lands in war apart,
 And made opinion battle's gauge.
 His race was great ; his father's hands
 Had crowned and sceptred Connaught's kings,
 And in their fingers placed the wands
 Of stainless bark, and clustered rings.

II.

From Galway of the Seas he came,
 What time the crownless bride of God
 Beheld her temple-tops aflame,
 And heard her enemies applaud.
 Stern spirit, worthy of such time,
 He stood between her and her foes—
 Stood with an energy sublime,
 And in magnificent repose.

III.

Fierce conflicts tost the east and west,
 And lit the frontiers of the Pale ;

The black invaders flourished best,
 And sorely fared the harassed Gael.
 The priest was led to sacrifice,
 Himself the victim. Ireland stood
 With tearful and uplifted eyes,
 Knee-deep in ashes, fire, and blood.

IV.

Tempered in this uneven strife,
 Our Conry grew to man's estate;
 He saw the utter scorn of life—
 Contempt for death immediate.
 To him 'twas given to comprehend
 What might be done, what could be
 done,
 To make the Island's soul ascend
 A little closer to the sun.

V.

And, if the race which gave him birth
 Were not mysteriously dowered,
 How, in such barren girth of earth,
 Could such a giant brain have flowered?
 'Twas not an age of wingèd thought—
 It was an age of camp and burg,
 Ere continental breezes brought
 The thunders forged by Guttenburg.

VI.

He quits the desecrated shore,
 Plundered and fired by ruffian bands,
 And toils, through travails thick and sore,
 On towards the friendly Netherlands.
 Some Flemish city, dim and old,
 Receives him in its quaint retreat
 Of shrine and minster manifold,
 Grass-eaten court, and solemn street.

VII.

And journeying thence, in other years,
 He turns his face to potent Spain,
 Where yet the field of Culture rears
 Its thousand shocks of golden grain.
 It was a land of promise rich,
 A land of kindly government,
 Whose great ambition reached the pitch
 Already scaled by his intent.

VIII.

Franciscan was he ; but he loved
 To brood o'er St. Augustine's page,
 To render him, as it behoved,
 The fast light of a troublous age.
 The theologic tempest shook
 The councils and the heart of man ;
 He fled for peace to scroll and book
 Writ by the mighty African.

IX.

And trusting to them, held, despite
The clamor and the growing din,
That Jesus' Mother, pure and white,
In her conception bore no sin.
Another generation saw
The quarrel sealed and set at rest—
Raised to the height of settled law,
And hailed with joy from east to west.

X.

Thick honors showered upon his head ;
A king rejoiced to kiss his hand ;
And when the fiery Spaniard led
His fleets, in simple vastness grand,
Against the pale Elizabeth,
Our Conry numbered one of those
Who fearless challenged fame or death
In conflict with his country's foes.

XI.

High hopes were his for Ireland then ;
He saw the Spaniard rule the sea,
He saw the flying Englishmen,
He saw his bleeding country free.
Hopes dashed to earth ! the tempest's breath,
Blown from some evil-boding star,
Covered the deep with wreck and death,
Lit by the baleful fires of war.

XII.

But God protects ; and he returns
 To toil again in royal Spain ;
 Compassion in his bosom burns
 For that crost isle beyond the main.
 And so he sets him down and writes
 His " Christian Student," to avail,
 In persecution's stormy nights,
 The souls of the long-suffering Gael.

XIII.

Ireland was ever next his heart ;
 Her very name pulsed through his blood ;
 Of all his being she was part :
 Her sorrows colored every mood.
 And so he labored, planned, and thought,
 To serve her in her bitter need,
 To lighten her oppressive lot,
 To make the staff supplant the reed.

XIV.

A gallant stranger reached the shore,
 Great Hugh O'Donnell, come to crave
 Aid from the Spanish king once more,
 To save what still was left to save.
 The monarch made him promise fair ;
 A mightier fleet than ever bore
 The Spanish flag in foreign air,
 Was destined for the English shore.

XV.

Vain was that promise. Day by day,
 O'Donnell saw his hopes succumb,
 Fade into melancholy gray,
 Or linger to grow wearisome.
 Simancas heard his latest sigh,
 There Conry by his bedside stood,
 Till the last gleam had left his eye,
 And his white cheek the puissant blood.

XVI.

Stupendous was that closing scene—
 A noonday set of summer sun—
 Tyrconnell's fields had wasted been ;
 A stranger set his foot upon
 The palace hearth, where, in old days,
 The lady smiled, the minstrel sang,
 And, mingling with the wood-fire's blaze,
 Loud plaudits to the roof-tree rang.

XVII.

He lies in far Valladolid,
 That gallant chief, whose heart would break
 His coffin's triple, massy lid
 If Ireland only would awake—
 If Ireland only would forget
 The feuds that sealed her misery—
 The miserable feuds that set
 Her brow in thorns of agony.

XVIII.

O'Higgin, Tuam's prelate, died,
 And Rome decrees Conry shall wield
 The sceptre of that region wide,
 Whose every rath, and stream, and field,
 Is bright, enduring testament
 Of Irish valor, Irish love,
 Fidelity of long descent,
 And faith that might the mountains move.

XIX.

Exiled from home our fathers were ;
 But Conry dreamt a noble dream—
 An Ireland in a foreign air,
 Fired by the continental beam.
 He willed it ; and Louvain arose,
 With dome and turret multiplied—
 A home beyond the reach of foes,
 Our Nation's immemorial pride.

XX.

Albert and Isabella laid
 The vast foundation's corner-stone ;
 Porch, cloister, chapel, long arcade,
 Expanded like a flower new-blown,
 And poured an odor down the years,
 Which floods with sweetness all that space
 Of passing lights, and certain tears,
 With which the epochs dower our race.

XXI.

How often through those memoried halls
 Paced Colgan of the flashing eye,
 Timing his tread at intervals
 To look abroad on tree and sky !
 Here Ward debated, weird and keen,
 O'Clery strode, austere and tall,
 Dreaming of many a distant scene
 Beside the sea of Donegal.

XXII.

And wheresoever Ireland pressed
 Her sons beyond the rounding main,
 Of peace, of fame, of name in quest,
 They turned with tears unto Louvain.
 There lay the refuge in the night—
 The mighty nurse of Celtic mind—
 That kept alive the living light,
 And rayed its splendor unconfined.

XXIII.

Our language flourished in its shade ;
 And from its cloisters Ireland drew
 Knowledge and strength—the double blade
 Which cut her rusted chain in two.
 At home we slept, or, waking, wept—
 Wept tears of unavailing rain ;
 But vigil, never tired, was kept
 For us and ours in dear Louvain.

XXIV.

Conry had struck for Ireland's sake,
If darkness had not shrouded Spain ;
Her mighty throne began to quake,
Her banner drooped along the main :
Matched with a destiny too great
To shape its ways to her control,
She vanished from her high estate,
And from dominion's muster-roll.

XXV.

But he persisted till, at length,
He felt the slow approach of death ;
The toil had overtasked his strength—
The keen steel rusted in the sheath.
In proud Madrid he laid him down—
Gave up the ghost, with prayer and trust,
Few better won a hero's crown,
Or portion with the blessèd just.

XXVI.

His ashes lie in fair Louvain
Under a marble pyramid ;
No eulogy supremely vain
Runs o'er the panel, ledge, or lid.
Heaven be his bed ! he stood us well
In days of agony and shame.
His was the struggle none can tell,
And ours his labors and his fame.

THE ASSASSINATION OF BERNARD, SON
OF THE GREAT HUGH O'NEILL.

[Brussels, 1617.]

I.

IN the thronged, stately city of Brussels,
Men whisper with lips that wax white,
Or pass through the shadowy faubourgs
Like fugitives earnest on flight.
The steel of an English assassin—
The hand of a churl of the Pale—
Has slain, in the flower of his promise,
Lord Bernard O'Neill.

II.

Graceful and grave was the slain one,
In virtue, in chivalry skilled ;
The hope of his sept and his nation,
Heroic, pure-souled, and high-willed.
In the wreath of the glorious archduchess
No flower bloomed more brilliant than he ;
Pale knight in the conflicts of scholars,
This end was for thee !

III.

'Twas well that thy sire went before thee ;
'Tis well the great chieftain is spared
This worst deed of vengeance and bloodshed
The pitiless foeman has dared !

Wert thou in the city of Cæsar,
 To strike thee no ruffian dared thus.
 To God we give prayer and submission :
 The grief is for us.

IV.

At Louvain, the gray-haired Provincial
 Is blind with hot, passionate tears :
 A star has burnt out of his heaven,
 Its ashes have fallen on his years.
 And Purcell weeps silent beside him ;
 No comforting voice can he give :
 Thinks he, " But for God and St. Francis,
 'Twere worthless to live."

V.

They rise in the night, and their voices
 Crave mercy and peace for the dead ;
 They pray till the tall chapel windows,
 Full smote by the morning, grow red.
 The host and the chalice are lifted ;
 And as from the altar he turns,
 The face of the saintly Provincial
 With ecstasy burns.

VI.

Who slew the O'Neill ? Why the question ?
 Whose interest was it to slay ?
 'Twas theirs who had exiled his father,
 And made of his principedom a prey.

One obstacle stood in their pathway—
 The heir to the lands of Tyrone :
 Let them chant a loud song of rejoicing,
 For *he* is o'erthrown.

VII.

"On his head be his blood," cried the robbers,
 "The work is the work of his hand."
 Not so, while it bears, red and glaring,
 The stamp of your murderous brand.
 O'Neills have gone down in wild battle,
 'Mid uproar of musket and glaive ;
 They could die the death of the hero—
 But not of the slave.

VIII.

What hand shall yet draw back the curtain
 Which hides, in its innermost fold,
 The wretch who has angered high heaven
 For some base acquittance of gold ?
 Who yet shall reveal us the tortures
 Which writhe through each nerve of his
 brain—
 The hell of the present and future—
 Pain mated to pain ?

IX.

'Tis idle to question. But whether
 Discovered, or hidden, he ends
 A life charged with tortures and curses,
 God's justice our justice transcends.

That justice shall be manifested
In all its intensity clear,
In the face of the Lord and his angels—
Elsewhere, if not here.

DROGHEDA.

[Founded by Plunkett, baron of Louth, in 1240].

I.

CLOSE to the singing river's brim,
Girdled by mead and blowing wood,
The happy monastery stood,
Crowned by its bell-towered diadem.

II.

Of precious marble was the church,
Of marble were the cloisters too ;
Their pillars, clustered two and two,
Ran, four-square, from the stately porch.

III.

It was a wondrous dream in stone,
And blazoned glass, and metals rare,
Shaped in devices quaint and fair,
With flower and emblem overgrown.

IV.

The river took its image up,
And mirrored its o'erhanging sky,
Distinct as stars which, speeding by,
Are mirrored in the lake-flower's cup.

V.

Peace reigned above, peace reigned below,
And round that shining, little world,
Where sin and passion's wings were furled
In Love's calm, purifying glow.

VI.

Two hundred friars sang in the choir—
The carven choir of ebon oak—
And through the censer's fragrant smoke
Shone the far altar's double fire.

VII.

Prayer for the living, for the dead,
Ascended ceaseless, night and day ;
(This was ere men forgot to pray,
Or Faith was disinherited.)

VIII.

The glorious church held noble trust ;
For there the Darcys, tired of strife,
The Plunketts, hoping fairer life,
Bequeathèd their thrice-honored dust.

IX.

And never Mass was said or sung
And they forgotten. May they rest
With the immortal and the blest,
Till the last trump through heaven has rung.

X.

It was a silent paradise,
Save when from woodlands round about
There came the cuckoo's joyful shout—
That music of the earth and skies ;

XI.

The lark that caroled after rain,
The thrush, alive in hazle gloom,
The blackbird's flute at sunset's bloom,
The bells that pealed o'er stream and plain,

XII.

Blended in no sad dissonance,
Though myriad-chorded, but as one
Great anthem rolled in unison
Through some cathedral's vast expanse.

XIII.

Alas ! as over Eden's bowers
A shadow dropped at middle day,
Changing its sapphire skies to gray,
And folding the unbosomed flowers !

XIV.

So, over stately Drogheda
The bolt descended from the cloud ;
And its proud head was torn and bowed
By the strong violence of law.

XV.

A Tudor sat on England's throne—
The last of that detested race—
And at her feet, in foul disgrace,
Religion, freedom, truth, lay prone.

XVI.

Her word went forth—a fiery sword—
To smite and burn this Irish land.
Too soon the faggot, axe, and brand,
Destroyed whate'er her heart abhorred.

XVII.

Gerald Aylmer sits in Drogheda ;
The choir is bare, the friars fled ;
No russet gown, no tonsured head,
Offends his eye, excites his awe.

XVIII.

The priests hide in the mountain caves,
In desert moors, by wind-blown tarns,
Or whisper Mass in huts and barns,
Whilst the brown peasant kneels and craves.

XIX.

Gerald Aylmer goes ; and in his place
 Stalks the cold-blooded Vandal, Hill,
 A Goth of grisly frame and will,
 Without one kindly, natural grace.

XX.

No reverence he for God, for man ;
 His beggar's instincts are his creed,
 Spawn of licentiousness and need,
 Chief tool in every ruffian plan.

XXI.

He tore the shrines and altars down,
 Defiled the temple's holy ground ;
 Men heard the cry of Mammon sound,
 Men saw the glitter of his crown,

XXII.

Within the peaceful walls, whence rose
 The incense of incessant prayer,
 Within the cloisters, cool and fair,
 And white with marbles as with snows.

XXIII.

Yet Mammon thrived not in his state ;
 Bankrupt and shamed, he issued forth
 Into the easy-virtued earth,
 To knock at some more prosperous gate.

XXIV.

His host shall yet avenge him well,
And each inhospitable stone,
Into some vulgar hostel grown,
A bitter history shall tell,

XXV.

Of justice blasted, wrong supreme,
God outraged in His chosen ark,
His saints for scoff and scorn a mark,
And their inheritance a dream.

XXVI.

Yet when the refectory fell,
And aisles and transepts, ruined soon,
Let in the glamour of the moon
On shattered choir and ruined cell,

XXVII.

Over the wreck the bell-tower stood,
As, after some fierce feat of war,
Stands an embattled warrior
Above a field of wrack and blood.

XXVIII.

St. Francis dearly loves his towers ;
The swallows whistle in their eaves,
Green ivies clothe them with their leaves,
And spring winds bring the seeds of flowers.

XXIX.

Who knows but his protecting hand—
He, looking from his home of peace—
Was stretched to bid the ruin cease,
And let the glorious belfry stand.

XXX.

Let cynics smile and fools deride,
They will not shake the child-like trust
Which holds that, even through this dust,
The saints walk with us side by side,

XXXI.

Watch us, and thus perpetuate
The long communion of pure souls,
Whose wave, howe'er, where'er, it rolls,
Breaks last upon the golden gate.

XXXII.

A century died out, and lo !
Again in ruined Drogheda,
The friars, banned by alien law,
Came back, whoe'er might bid them go.

XXXIII.

A little band, they toiled and prayed,
As in the pleasant, perished time,
When rose the vesper hymn sublime
Within the monastery's shade.

XXXIV.

Not rich, they gave what they could give—
Counsel, and hope, and fortitude—
They preached the shame and wrong of feud,
The right to suffer, yet forgive.

XXXV.

And from their poor and humble home,
Courage and constancy drew strength,
Even as the statue binds the plinth—
The silken clasp, the massive tome.

XXXVI.

But watchful eyes were on their ways,
And hungered for their modest store ;
Twice pillaged, they returned once more
To dare the worst, to toil, to praise.

XXXVII.

Not all the craft of Chichester
Could daunt them from the perilous war ;
Butchered at home, or scattered far,
Soldiers and saints they ever were.

XXXVIII.

And serving in those desperate years,
Their worth achieved, they passed away ;
We reap their harvest-fields to-day—
The fields they watered with their tears.

XXXIX.

So sang my heart what night I saw
The great, gold-shielded southern moon
Climb through the violet dark of June,
Above the streets of Drogheda.

MOYNE.

[Founded by Mac William Burke, in 1462.]

I.

WHERE flows the Moy, first winning strength
From upland torrents, to the sea,
Pouring its cool, sun-lighted length
Through lands emblazed with chivalry,
Rose Moyne upon the mountain's crest—
Rose Moyne above a fruitful land,
With every boon of nature blest—
Green wood, and silver-shining strand.

II.

Below, the wave with foam was white,
Above it stopped the mighty blue ;
From far-off seas there stole the light
Of barques that ploughed the billows through.
Night fell ; the brown-robed friar came,
Pressing his face to his cell's bars,
And marked upon a heaven of flame
The mystic motions of the stars.

43

III.

At times, the tawn Atlantic drew
 The tempest from the west and north,
 The air became one sea of dew,
 The salt fell whitely to the earth.
 There, by the tempest unappalled,
 The faithful friars knelt and prayed,
 For men by ocean mountains walled—
 Whose keels in troughs of foam were stayed.

IV.

De Burghos—though they came of blood
 That was not ours, yet blent and mixt,
 Till in the Irish-English mood
 None could say which was firmer fixed
 In the great race that called them theirs—
 Gave praise, and offering, and site
 Steeped in the pleasant mountain airs,
 To be, for good, St. Francis' right.

- V.

And so O'Donoghue arose,
 And with him rose porch, nave, and aisle,—
 The pillars on whose sculptured brows
 The clustered rose was wont to smile—
 The mighty windows whereupon,
 With all their strong lights from the sea,
 The moon stood still o'er Ajalon—
 Christ died upon the bitter Tree.

VI.

Blindly they err, who tell that then
 The architect was base and rude,
 That feeling had abandoned men,
 Moulded by battle, skirmish, feud,
 In these days men wore coats of mail,
 Yet loved not less the mighty art
 Which builds the cloister long and pale,
 And gems the shrine that moves the heart.

VII.

Pause close to Moyne when sunset flows,
 Fire-tormented, across the land,—
 When knitted column on column glows
 Like to some newly kindled brand.
 Age with each stone has waged rough war,
 The ivy winds it in its stole ;
 Still in the ruins as they are
 There breathes the presence of a soul.

VIII.

That soul is Irish ; and the heart
 Which made the arches leap to air—
 Set frieze and pillar thus apart
 With interspace of carving fair,
 Gessed at the future, saw his toil
 Mourned over by regretting eyes,
 Yet gave to God his blood's best spoil,
 And slept and dreamt of Paradise.

IX.

Hard were thy fortunes, lovely Moyne :
The treachery, the cowardice
Which aye for one attainment join,
Plundered thee by most vile device.
No more the oolite altars burn ;
No more the holy Mass is said,
At daylight's half-revealed return,
For saving of the quick and dead.

X.

Yet standest thou a monument
Of that stern Order, true as gold,
And shakeless as a continent,
And strong as hills the heavens enfold
In mighty grips of storm and calm—
Tried in convulsions—rent with pain—
Vast heights that blend the rose and palm,
And pour their perfume on the plain.

XI.

And I? I dream. I stand to-day
Beside the slow Atlantic swell ;
A sail bends forward to the bay,
It is a Spanish caravel.
I hear the sailors' merry cry,
As with the whistling wind they sing,
And from the church, and to the sky,
The bells of dear St. Francis ring.

XII.

The moment's pageant ! Lo ! the rain
 Swirls round the long-abandoned tower,
 And reels across the yellow grain
 Where still the poppies lift their flower.
 The huge east window darkens slow,
 The ivy clamors from the coign,
 The ocean wind moves soft and slow :
 Farewell ! thou holy house of Moyne !

 LIMERICK.

I.

DEAR city of the tributary wave,
 Rolled past thy bastions by the warring tide,
 From fields where fortune fell, and sleep the brave,
 Buried with trampled flag, and broken glaive,
 Under rent canopies which, waved aside,
 Show thee, as once thou wast, the citadel
 Within whose walls a nation dared to hope—
 Within whose walls a nation's soul found scope
 For conflict's farthest issue, good or ill.

II.

Thy towers upon the midmost torrent cast
 The lightnings, darknesses, of centuries,—
 War's pitiless and trebly-breasted blast,
 Heroic figures, shapen of the past,
 And counsellings of foreign lands and seas :

There rallied Ireland round her final stake,
Ringed by alliances that grudged no cost ;
'Twas thrown, 'twas doubly chanced, and it was
lost,
As one drop bosomed in the league-long lake.

III.

Slain was the cause, but thou remainest still,
Gray, by the white hem of the reflux flood,
Hiving in thee what years can never kill,
Strong courage, and inexorable will,
Challenge of sacrifice, and scorn of blood.
The storm dissolved, yet still St. Mary's threw
Her latticed splendors through the southern
air,—
A lance of iron-stone austerely bare—
Yet kindly kindled by the wind and dew.

IV.

And, as I pace each still and storied street,
The pageants of forgotten days arise ;
I feel the tumult and the gathering heat,
I hear the measured fall of warrior feet,
I see the banners in the narrow skies.
Cries and rejoicings burthen the warm air—
Some foe has perished, some good deed been
done,
Some toil has borrowed comfort of the sun,
And poured a moment's light upon despair.

V.

Lo! Rinuccini, pilgrim of the breeze,
 Hedged by the cavalry Confederate,
 Bronzed by the salt winds of the ruffian seas
 (Beaten by blasts and swarmed with enemies),
 Knocks for a king's admission at the gate.
 The valves roll inward, Richard Arthur* stands
 (Phalanxed behind him troops in long array,
 Whose clustered spears make lightning in the
 day),
 With benediction of uplifted hands.

VI.

Thence to the fair Cathedral porch they pass,
 And welcomings are said, and Mass is sung ;
 Gleams brightly in the many-colored glass
 Which glorifies the stately-pillared place,
 The crozier of the diamond-serpent tongue—
 The radiant mitre† which the heavens conferred
 On a true bishop, the august O'Dea,
 Through one who was not of the land or sea,
 Whose voice no man a second time had heard.

VII.

Shifts the clear scene; the black-veiled altars gloom
 Along the mighty length of columned aisles ;
 Down-stricken by inexorable doom;

* Bishop of Limerick, 1623-1646.

† See the Legend of O'Dea's mitre in the "Irish Hierarchy," p. 96.

Even whilst his brain and heart were full in bloom,
 O'Queely * falls amid the hills' defiles.
 A braver bishop never headed flock,
 With constancy and earnestness sublime;
 Amid the clouds and tempests of the time,
 He held his trust unshaken as the rock.

VIII.

But he is gone, and the sad Nuncio
 Sings doleful Miserere for his soul ;
 Gathering in intensity of woe,
 Weird as the ocean's voice in middle flow,
 The mournful psalms along the transepts roll.
 In the land's highest hour, a hope had fled—
 In the land's need, a leader disappeared :
 He whom the foemen and the factions feared,
 Went down to sleep with no inglorious dead.

IX.

Brief was the darkness : yet another burst
 Of sunshine for the Nation. Stern O'Neil,
 Essayed, achieved, the Englishrie to worst,
 On the high plains which his ambition nursed,
 And triumph blessed the onset of his steel.
 Again the gray Cathedral is relumed,
 Again the mighty glittering altars blaze,
 The windows make full splendors in the haze,
 As if fresh roses 'twixt their mullions bloomed.

* For memoir of this celebrated archbishop of Tuam, see
 "Irish Hierarchy," p. 104.

X.

Benburb is won—to God be all the praise—
 There the strong English chivalry went down,
 Like scarlet poppies in the murmuring maze
 Of wheat grown golden for the harvest days,
 When hooks are keen, and reapers' arms are
 brown.

The captured ensigns of the foemen hung
 Within St. Francis' chancel, till the day
 They trooped above the city's stern array,
 And cannon thundered and quick bells were rung.

XI.

Hark ye ! *Te Deum* ! 'Tis the Nuncio sings,
 And the embattled priesthood make reply ;
 How the steeled boot upon the pavement rings,
 And knees that never bent to tyrant kings,
 Are bent to-day in proud humility !
 The sun shall set, the hoary planets rise,
 And Limerick, happy in the nation's might,
 One quivering, surging sea of gradual light,
 Will make a second city in the skies.

XII.

Ah ! well for thee, O'Dwyer, if in that breath*
 Of sudden splendor, soon to be o'er cast,
 Thou, with thine ancient nobleness of faith,

* See "Irish Hierarchy."

Hadst met a glorious fall—a gallant death—
 Or, lived for us the true man that thou wast.
 But Ormond's wiles allured thee to the goal,
 Where stumbled broken Ireland, for a time—
 A ruined tenant of sea-wrack and slime :
 Still be the heavens the guardians of thy soul.

XIII.

For, in black hours and terrible, thou wert
 Crozier and scimitar, and cope and shield ;
 When factions sought the Nation's hosts to part,
 Thou, with unwrung fidelity of heart,
 Wept, strove, entreated, but refused to yield.
 Thy grave's in that white city of the north,*
 Around which warred the Leagues in other times,
 Close to the town of intermingling chimes,
 Where valor, art, and freedom leaped to birth.

XIV.

No hand of mine shall cast reproachful stone
 Against the door of thy dumb monument,
 Deep in St. James's crypts where flowers alone
 The dripping ooze to foliage finely blown.
 There thou reposest, silent and content ;
 Forgotten all the greatness of thy state—
 The councils, victories, that claimed thy name—
 Forgotten, too, the darkness of thy fame ;
 Sleep on ! few men deserved a better fate.

* Brussels.

XV.

Still thou, brave city ! hadst to fight the fight
 Of desperate valor, when, outside thy girth,
 Leaders, from apprehension weak and white,
 Beheld the baffled cause of battling Right
 Fade, or become the mockery of earth.
 Above thy walls, Right's ensigns latest flew,
 Nailed to thy bastions rent with racking fire,
 Until thy streets became a flaming pyre,
 Where perished liberty, and honor, too.

XVI.

I see O'Brien* in the thickest press—
 Pale are his lips, exhortive are his eyes ;
 'Tis his to scorn death's hail, encourage, bless,
 Whilst the defender's ranks grow less and less
 And nearer roll the foemen's thirsty cries.
 His gallant heart is worth a hundred guns,
 And Ireton knows it as he pales to see
 The headlong, surging Irish chivalry
 Led by the bravest of St. Dominic's sons.

XVII.

Spilt blood and sacrifice availed thee not,
 Dear city of the tributary wave !
 Shattered and blackened by destroying shot,
 Thy very shape became a smoking blot,

* See memoirs of this prelate in the "Irish Hierarchy of the Seventeenth Century."

Thy bastions, charnels ; and thy moat, a grave.
 Let Ireton sound his trumpets long and loud—
 He has achieved his stubborn purpose well ;
 Put out the lights and toll the passing bell—
 The head of valiant Limerick is bowed !

XVIII.

O'Brien dies, and with his latest word
 Comforts his people—blesses the great town.
 Now shall the sparkling brand assist the sword,
 And Shannon, with its freight of shame abhorred,
 Run red to where the sun goes redly down.
 But brief, O Ireton ! was thy victory :
 A prophet's voice had summoned thee to meet
 Thy just requital at God's awful feet,
 Whose soles are limits of the jasper sea.

XIX.

So flashed thy story by me, city mine,
 As leaning over Thomond's memoried bridge,
 I saw, gold-fired, upon the peaceful ridge,
 The banners and the spears of autumn shine,
 And heard behind me the town's murmurous tune,
 And watched afar, all violet, or bare,
 The sea-declining hills of breezy Clare,
 And deep in heaven, the shadow of the moon.

THE END.

