

THE MACQUILLINS OF THE ROUTE.

THE Paper which appeared in the last number of this *Journal*, entitled "The Clan of the MacQuillins of Antrim," is an interesting contribution to the history of a sept whose name is still remembered on the northern coast. The statements embodied in Hamilton's *Letters* and Dubour-dieu's *Survey*, respecting the ruin of this ancient family, had produced a pretty general impression that the old line of the MacQuillins had no representative at the present day. This conclusion, however, has been modified, if not entirely set aside by Mrs. Webb, who derives her materials from "private records and historical notices" of the family, and who affirms that Joseph MacQuillin, of Great Clonard, County of Wexford, is the lineal descendant of the well-known Rory Oge, and through him, of Fiacha (more correctly Fiachna,*) a renowned prince of Dalriada. The contrast between the representatives of this race in former and latter times is assuredly most remarkable. A much happier, if not so distinguished an era in the family history was inaugurated when its representatives were eased of the responsibilities involved in the possession of the Route, and took to manufacture linen and intermarry with members of the truly excellent Society of Friends. Here is, indeed, a curious family "vicissitude," but one for which those immediately concerned should feel especially grateful.

There can be little doubt as to the *Irish origin* of the MacQuillins. The genealogical account, "long as the third chapter of Luke," (mentioned in the article referred to) but unfortunately lost among the Jesuits of Marseilles, probably contained the names of the early princes or kings of Uladh, as recorded in the genealogical work of Duaid MacFirbis. That list contains the names of between sixty and seventy princes, the first of whom, Muireadhach Muinderg, ninth in descent from Fiatach Finn, died in the year 479; and the last, Rudhraighe MacDonnsleibhe, styled by the *Annals of Inisfallen*, "the last king of Uladh," was slain by Sir John de Courey, in the year 1200.^b Of these, forty-two died by violent means, some falling in battle, others put to death by their subjects, and not a few assassinated by their own brothers or near kinsmen. One, Aodh (Hugh) Manannach, was drowned in Loch Eathach (Lough Neagh). Only one, Leathlobhar, who died in 871, is spoken of as having attained to a good old age. His immediate predecessor, Madagan, died in

* "Fiachna is spoken of in the *Life of Comgall* as residing at Rathmor, in Moylinny, and a devoted friend of the saint. He was an enterprising chief, and in 573 won the battle of Tola, in the King's County. In 589, he became King of Uladh, and in 594 won the battle of Edan-mor from the Ciannachta of Meath. In 597, he won the

battle of Sliabh Cua, in Waterford; and in 602, that of Cuil-caol, in Down. In 623 he took Rath-Guala, in Uladh, and fell at the battle of Leth-Midhin, in 626."—*Adamnan's Life of St. Columba*, edited by the Rev. Dr. Reeves, pp. 253, 254.

^b Reeves' *Eccl. Antiq.*, pp. 353-357.

holy orders; and another prince, Bec Boirche, is recorded as having died while on a pilgrimage, A.D. 716, but to what particular shrine the annalist does not mention.

But, granting the Irish origin of the MacQuillins, there can be as little doubt respecting the fact that one branch of the family (not probably the main line) must have emigrated to Wales at some remote period, and reappeared in Ulster at the commencement of the thirteenth century. The fact of their having come from Wales is amply attested by both English and Irish authorities. The famous Irish genealogist, Duaid MacFirbis, was not influenced by any English or Scotch misrepresentations in this matter, and he asserts that the MacQuillins of the Route came from Wales about the time of the English invasion. He also records the belief prevalent, no doubt, in his own time, and traditionally preserved, that although coming from Wales at the time above-mentioned, the MacQuillins had descended from the old Dalriadic race of princes. The following are his words:—"There are families in Ireland whose history, for a great part, we have some doubts of. Thus did it happen to the greater part of them: viz., it is said that certain of the Nobles of Erin passed over the seas, as Gaedheals out of Erin, and that their descendants returned a long time after as Galls, or Britons, or other foreign tribes, into Erin." Among other families thus circumstanced, MacFirbis distinctly specifies more than once, the MacQuillins of the Route.^c At the commencement of the sixteenth century they are described by English writers as among the leading *English* rebels in Ulster, the others being the Bissetts and the Savages. In 1542, Sentleger writes to Henry VIII., thus:—"I, with other of your Highness's Counsell here, the 15th of this monethe, mette with Oneil, and dyvers other Irisshe captayns of the northe, and amongs them one *Maguyllen*, who having long strayed from the nature of his alleigeance (his ancestors being your subjectes, and came out of Wales) was growen to be as Irisshe as the worste, and was in the late conflycte with Oneil, in his ayde ageinste your Majestie. Albeit he hath nowe right humble submytted him self. . . . His countrey lyethe farre of from ayde of your Inglishe paale, which hath been a great cause of his long rebellion, beyng forced to adheare to som Irissmen for his defence againste som other of them; and, as he confessethe, none of his name, sithe the first conqueste of their lande, being capteyn, have dyed in their beddes, but all slain by Irissmen. I trust in God that from henceforthe, he will contynewe your Highnes subjecte. His countrey lyethe joynyng to the ryver Ban, where all the fisshing is for salmondess; and if he contynewe in his saide obedience, the same fisshing wilbe moch better to your Highnes than it hath bene for many yeris."^d In the same year the Lord Lieutenant writes to the King as follows:—

"Nowe, as to the farder occurantes of this, your Realme, for asmuche as one *Maguyllen*, whiche is an Inglissheman, and now submytted to your Majesttes obedyence, is invaded by one called Ochaan, by the ayde, it is said, of Odoneill his galoglas; we have therefore sent John Travers, master of your Ordynance here, and John Brereton, capteyn of your fotemen, with a con-

^c See Reeves' *Eccl. Antiq.*, pp. 326-327.

^d State Papers, vol. iii., p. 281.

venyente number of horsemen and fotemen, to the ayde of the same *Maguyllen*, as well for that the same Ochaan, whiche never yet showed any obedyence to your Majestie, should not distroye the same *Maguyllen*, as also to gayne corage to others, that have in like sorte submytted themselves to your obedyence, as *Maguyllen* hathe done, shall, in like case, be ayded, if they doe persiste in their dewe alleigance."^e The expedition to the north, referred to in this extract, was attended with complete success. In the month of August, 1542, Travers and Brereton returned to Dublin, "having bothe taken, aswell the saide Ocathan his castell from him, whiche standyth upon your ryver of the Ban, being an obstacle to your Highnes farmors, and other your Engliche subjectes, to fyshe there, as depredate and brent part of the sayde Ocathan's lands, and kyllled an hundred and more of the Scottes of the out Isles for certen traytorous deedes by them commytted, to the terryble example of such rebelles." This punishment decided Manus O'Cahan, not only to desist from attacking MacQuillin, but also to join with the latter in a form of submission to the English Government. A copy of this document is preserved in Lambeth Library, written in Latin, and containing the most ample promises on the part of the two northern chiefs, not only of submission but of active co-operation with the English agents, especially in making war on the salmon of the Bann.^f The form of submission is signed by Rory MacQuillin and Manus O'Cahan, the former surrendering to the English as hostages or sureties, Hugh O'Quine and Jenkin M^cGerrald M^cCullye, and the latter giving up for the same purpose, Donnell Ballow (Ballcah) and Ony (John) M^cRorye.^g

This Rory MacQuillin was the immediate predecessor of "old Edward," but whether his father or an elder brother, the MS. quoted by Mrs. Webb does not determine. The celebrated Rory Oge MacQuillin is stated in the MacQuillin MS. to have been born in the year 1567, but we have ample evidence that his birth must have occurred much earlier. It so happens that there is more than one reference to him in the State Papers of that very year. On the 6th of Oct., 1567, Captains Piers and Malbie wrote to the Lord Deputy Sidney, complaining that Rory Ogo MacQuillin, and "old MacQuillin," his grandfather, had become tardy in paying certain *cess* for which, the English authorities held them responsible.^h On the 24th of November, in the same year, Turlough Luinech O'Neill wrote to the Lords Justices and Council, stating that he had despatched messengers to the Earl of Argyle, in Scotland, for the purpose of urging that chieftain to attack the Scots of Clan Donnell, but that Rory Oge MacQuillin had spoiled his messengers. The latter is also mentioned in a communication written at Carrickfergus, on the 6th of December following,

^e State Papers, vol. iii., p. 399.

^f The following clause occurs in their Act of Submission:—"Item ulterius promittunt et concedunt prefati Boricus et Manus, quod quocunque tempore Johannes Travers, firmarius Domini Regis, ibidem, vel famuli, seu servientes sui venient illuc ad piscandum, habebunt usum

et commoditatem castri de Collranell, pro securitate piscatorum, cum libertate pro ipsis piscatoribus ad condiendum et salientum pisces, et trahendum retia super terram."

^g State Papers, vol. iii., p. 408.

^h Calendar of State Papers, edited by H. C. Hamilton Esq., p. 350.

by Captains Piers and Malbie, who speak at the same time of old MacQuillin's treachery and imprisonment. On the 19th of December, Malbie, in writing to the Lords Justices, stated that Rory Oge had assisted the Scots under Sorley Boy, in taking possession of Monery and Cary, two districts including the present parishes of Ramoan and Culfeightrin.¹

The MacQuillin MS. professes to give an account of a matrimonial alliance which took place between one of the MacDonnells and a daughter of old Edward MacQuillin. There is great confusion and uncertainty, however, in this account, both as to the date of the marriage and the name of the bridegroom. In the first place, the marriage is mentioned as having occurred in the year 1567, at which date, the chieftain of the MacQuillins is represented as dwelling in the Castle of Dunluce. But, as we shall hereafter prove, Sorley Boy MacDonnell had expelled the MacQuillins, and was himself in occupation of Dunluce much prior to the year now mentioned. In the next place, the MS. correctly states that *Colla MacDonnell* was the bridegroom, but Mrs. Webb adds, "or Alexander," and, unfortunately, the confusion of name thus introduced is continued throughout. Colla and Alexander MacDonnell were brothers, and sons of Alexander Carrach, but the Alexander MacDonnell who served under Lord Sussex, and received golden spurs for so doing, was not a member of this the principal family of the clan Donnell. The Alexander MacDonnell who was present at the slaying of Shane O'Neill, at Cushindun, was brother to Colla, as already stated, and also to James, Angus, and Sorley Boy, but there is no evidence that he was married to MacQuillin's daughter. Again, the Alexander MacDonnell who was slain by Captain Merriman, in 1586, was the second son of Sorley Boy, but he does not appear to have been married, or, at least, to have left any family.

The fact of the marriage is preserved also in a *MacDonnell Manuscript*, but whilst the latter document positively states that Colla MacDonnell was the husband of MacQuillin's daughter, it errs even more glaringly than the MacQuillin MS. as to the date of the transaction in question. The marriage could not have taken place later than the year 1550, if we may judge from certain circumstances recorded in connexion with the event. The following is the account preserved by the MacDonnell manuscript:—"Colla M'Donald came with a parcel of men from Cantire to Ireland, to assist Tyrconnell against great O'Neal,^x with whom he was then at war. In passing through the Root of the County Antrim, he was civilly received and hospitably entertained by M'Quillin, who was then lord and master of the Root. At that time there was a war between M'Quillin and the men beyond the river Bann, for the custom of this people was, to rob from every one, and the strongest party carried it, be it right or wrong. On the day when Colla M'Donald was taking his departure to proceed on his journey to Tyrconnell, M'Quillin, who was not equal in war to his savage neighbours, called together his militia, or galloglaghs, to revenge his affronts over the

¹ Hamilton's Calendar of State Papers, pp. 352, 355, 358.

^x Con, known as first Earl of Tyrone.

Bann, and M^cDonald, thinking it uncivil not to offer his service that day to M^cQuillin, after having been so kindly treated, sent one of his gentlemen with an offer of his service in the field. M^cQuillin was right well pleased with the offer, and declared it to be a perpetual obligation on him and his posterity. So M^cQuillin and the highlanders went against the enemy, and where there was a cow taken from M^cQuillin's people before, there were two restored back; after which, M^cQuillin and Colla M^cDonald returned with a great prey, and without the loss of a man. Winter then drawing nigh, M^cQuillin gave Colla M^cDonald an invitation to stay with him at his castle, advising him to settle himself until the spring, and to quarter his men up and down the Root. This Colla M^cDonald gladly accepted, and in the meantime seduced M^cQuillin's daughter, and privately married her; on which ground the Scots afterwards founded their claim to M^cQuillin's territories. The men were quartered two and two, through the Root, that is to say, one of M^cQuillin's galloglaghs and a highlander in every tenant's house. It so happened that the galloglagh, according to custom, besides his ordinary, was entitled to a meather of milk, as a privilege. This the highlander esteemed to be a great affront; and at last one asked his landlord, 'Why do you not give me milk, as you give to the other?' The galloglagh made answer, 'Would you, a highland beggar as you are, compare yourself to me or any of M^cQuillin's galloglaghs?' The poor honest tenant (who was heartily weary of them both) said, 'Pray, gentlemen, I'll open the two doors, and you may go and fight it out in the fair field, and he that has the victory let him take milk and all to himself.' The combat ended in the death of the galloglagh, after which the highlander came in again, and dined heartily. M^cQuillin's galloglaghs immediately assembled to demand satisfaction; and in a council which was held, where the conduct of the Scots was debated, their great and dangerous power, and the disgrace arising from the seduction of M^cQuillin's daughter, it was agreed, that each galloglagh should kill his comrade highlander by night, and their lord and master with them; but Colla M^cDonald's wife discovered the plot, and told it to her husband. So the highlanders fled in the night-time, and escaped to the island of Raghery."¹

The Colla MacDonnell specified in the above extract was one of the most distinguished of the eight warlike sons of Alexander Carrach. He was the constant associate and coadjutor of his eldest brother, James, in the subjugation of the Route; and when that severe task had been virtually accomplished, about the year 1555, Colla was appointed by his brother the governor of the newly-acquired territory. His principal place of residence was the castle built on *Kinbann*, 'the white headland,' about a mile and a-half westward from the present town of Ballycastle. The promontory of Kinbann is entirely composed of chalk, and, from its picturesque shape and dazzling whiteness, has always been viewed as one of the most attractive features of that very attractive coast. The

¹The manuscript of which the above extract is a part, was printed entire in the Rev. William Hamilton's *Letters concerning the Northern Coast of the County of Antrim*,

but that writer does not state on what authority the document is founded, or whether the original was written in Gaelic or English.

remains of Colla's castle still exist, and indicate a date of erection not earlier than the commencement of the sixteenth century. In 1551, Sir Thomas Cusake, Chancellor of Ireland, in writing to the Earl of Warwick an account of the Lord Deputy Croft's hosting against the Scots, states that Colla *Maelduv*, the second brother to James MacDonnell, had a strong castle named *Keanbaan*, which the Deputy ordered to be defaced.^m Colla was the *third*, not the second, brother, as Sir Thomas Cusake here states. He was surnamed *Maelduv*, an epithet which implied that he was *bald*, and *had a dark complexion*. He was also known as Colla *Dw nag-Capull*, or "Black Colla of the Horses," a name which may have been applied either to denote that he was a distinguished cavalry officer, or devoted to the sport of horse-racing. Local tradition still speaks of him as a man of gigantic size and great bodily strength and activity. He died in May, 1558, probably at Kinban castle, and his death is mentioned by the Lord Deputy Sussex, on the 3rd of June following, in a letter to Boxoll.ⁿ Sussex remarks that Colla was the *best man* of them all (that is, of all the brothers), and that he had always remained in Ireland, whilst the others frequently passed to and fro between this country and Scotland.^o He left at least one son, Alexander, who also resided at Kinban, and possessed some property in the Glynnns. Alexander's descendants were known in that locality as *MacAllisters*, and very many of them are still to be found on the coast. The bloods of the two rival races of MacQuillins and MacDonnells unite in these humble people's veins. The last descendant of the main line was a lady, who dwelt in Kinban castle, and married Hugh Boyd, Esq., of Ballycastle, so well known in connexion with the history of that town.

Mrs. Webb is under the impression that neither Sorley Boy nor any other member of the MacDonnell family excluded, or even wished to exclude, the MacQuillins from their ancient castle of Dunluce. The truth is, however, that *exclusion* is too mild a term to be employed in this instance. The MacQuillins were summarily expelled from their principal residence in or about the year 1555, and were never afterwards permitted to re-enter it. Local tradition affirms that Sorley Boy employed some deep manoeuvre to get possession of Dunluce, but it is more probable that the castle passed away from the MacQuillins, as a matter of course, on the fall of their authority in the Route. At all events, there is nothing more certain than that Sorley Boy occupied that great fortress previously to 1565, and that old MacQuillin, from the time of his expulsion, dwelt at *Ballynbeg*, or Ballinloughbeg, the modern name of the townland adjoining the ancient castle of *Baile-an-Locha*, (Ballylough), near the present town of Bushmills. On the 2nd of May, 1565, Shane O'Neill gained a great victory over the Scots, at *Gleann-taisi*, in the neighbourhood of Ballycastle. In this battle the two brothers, James and Sorley Boy, were taken prisoners, together with nineteen other officers

^m Hamilton's Calendar of State Papers, page 116,

ⁿ Hamilton's Calendar of State Papers, page 146.

^o The MacQuillin MS., or perhaps Mrs. Webb, speaks of Colonel MacDonald. How comes this comparatively

modern title in military rank to be applied in the present instance? Is it a mistaken extension of the simple Christian name *Colla*?

of the Clan Donnell. O'Neill's movements, both before and after the engagement, are minutely described in a letter written by "Gerot Flemyng," in the month of June, 1565, and addressed to the Chancellor, Sir Thomas Cusake. A copy of this letter lies before us, and from it we beg to submit the following extract, bearing, with sufficient clearness, on the point at issue. On the night of the day on which the battle of Gleann-taisi was fought, O'Neil encamped at *Boile Caislein* (Ballycastle). "In the morning after," says Flemyng, "he removed thence and came to Downesterick (probably the present Deffrick, near Dervock,^o) and *Downlisse* (Dunluce), in the Rott, being v. mile asonder, which were Sanhirly Boy is chiefe castells, and the chiefe defence and holt of all those partes, of the whiche he won the same day Downesterick, wherein he left certaine of his men to deffend it against the enymie. But the other he could not wyn in the space of thry daies after, till at last, partely through fear of Sanhirly Boy is dethe, who was kepte without meat or drinck to the end the castell might be the rather yeldid, and partely for saulfe gard of their owne liffis, seing the manifold and cruell skermishis and assaults contynaly on every, [*sic*] the warde were faine to yeld the castell in to his handes, which also he comittid to the saulfe kyping of such of his men as were moost able to defend the same."^p

Three years afterwards, in 1568, the Lord Justice Fitzwyllyams and Marshall Bagenall set out with a large force from Carrickfergus, with the purpose of preventing a combination of the troops of Turlough Luinech O'Neill with those of Sorley Boy, which were expected to land in Marketon (Ballycastle) Bay. On reaching the latter place, it was found that the Scottish leader had eluded them, and they were forced, from want of provisions, to continue their march to Dunluce, where they expected to obtain supplies. On their way, they called with old MacQuillin, at *Ballynbej*, but found his *house empty!* This fact bespoke a sad change in the circumstances of the aged chief. He now occupied simply a house in the vicinity of one of his minor castles, and even that domicile contained nothing that could be turned to account by the hungry strangers. These facts are detailed in a letter written by Sir Nicholas Bagenall, at Carrickfergus, on the 3rd of May, 1568, and addressed to the Lord Deputy.^a

Speaking of the expulsion of the MacQuillins from Dunluce, we may mention that the story, in its most harrowing shape, has been made the subject of a poem by a gentleman named *Edward*

^o There still exist the ruins of what had been an extensive fortress at Deffrick. It was of a circular form, and surrounded by a deep trench. The space occupied by this castle is ninety feet in diameter. There was a well in the centre, and a vast cave underneath.

^p See, also, Hamilton's *Calendar*, page 265.

^a Hamilton's *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 377. That MacQuillin did not occupy the castle of Ballylough is proved by the fact, that Turlough Brasselagh O'Neill,

cousin to Turlough Luinech, was in occupation of that fortress about the period referred to. (See page 413.) The name is spelled, in the State Papers, *Ballinlagh*, *Ballenelagh*, and *Ballelanaghe*: The castle stood in the present townland of Ballyloughmore, and MacQuillin's house in the adjoining townland of Ballyloughbeg, which, in documents of the seventeenth century, is called *Ballinloughbeg*—the *Ballynbej* of the State Papers.

Quillinan, who was an officer in the 3rd Dragoon Guards, and a descendant of "old Edward" MacQuillin, of the Route. His poem, entitled "Dunluce Castle," was printed at the *Private Press of Lee Priory*, in 1814, and edited by Sir Egerton Brydges. It was dedicated to Frederick Goulburn, Esq., captain in the 13th Regiment of Light Dragoons, and in the dedication, the author is described as "a young companion whose genius he (Goulburn) generously admires, and to the excellent qualities of whose heart and intellect he has stood firm in the hour of trial." Quillinan may have been an amiable and gallant officer, but he had little of the poet's spirit, and less of the archæologist's. He ventures on no details (either in prose or verse) connected with his subject, and does not hazard a date to tell us when the alleged grand catastrophe of his house occurred. He does not even record the *Christian* names of the rival chiefs who figured in his rhymes. At the *conclusion* we have simply the following announcement:—"The fact by which Dunluce Castle is here described to have been lost to the family of its original possessors is historical. The writer has added what fictitious circumstances he thought proper." And we must add that, were the "fictitious circumstances" abstracted, the *historical* portion of the affair would be very small indeed. Even the traditional account, or we are much mistaken, has been greatly distorted by Mr. Quillinan, for, instead of representing MacDonnell as seizing M^cQuillin at the banquet, he describes him as entering the castle by a private door, at dead of night, and murdering all the inmates, save one, whilst they slept!"

The accounts contained in the MacQuillan MS. respecting the date of the decisive engagement between the two rival sept, is open to serious objections. It represents the last battle as occurring in July, 1569, near Gilgorm, or *Gealgorm* Castle. The struggle, however, must have closed at least ten years earlier. On the death of Colla M^cDonnell, in 1558, James, the eldest brother,

Any amount of enormity against his ancestors could be easily imagined by the youthful guardsman as he clambered about the ruins of Dunluce, and resigned himself to such wrapt contemplation of the past as the following lines bespeak:—

"When shrinks the mind, instinctive taught,
From toil, and noise, and bustle;
And through the busy bowser of thought
Romantic fancies rustle."

As a further specimen of the poetry issued by the *Private Press of Lee Priory*, we submit the following novel account of the *Giant's Causeway*, by Mr. Quillinan:—

"Its polygons so perfect are,
And vertically regular,
And yet so dark, so fierce they seem,
That might imagination deem
(Each upward set, without its wain),
'Twas even Hell's artillery train,
Thus placed by demons with intent
To blast the crystal firmament."

One member of the MacQuillan family, at least, must have had a true poetical vein. James Charles Mangan has translated a very spirited and pathetic poem from the original Irish of *Charles Boy MacQuillin*, entitled the *Tragedy of Ruaghri and Dearbhorgilla*. Ruaghri, a prince of Oriel, had been guilty of some neglect towards his intended, amounting almost to breach of promise, which was summarily punished by the lady's father. Ruaghri committed suicide, and Dearbhorgilla died in a dungeon.

The poem, as translated by Mangan, concludes thus:—

"This is the tale of the Prince of Oriel,
And Darvorgilla, both sprung from kings;
I pen it here as a dark memorial
Of how much woe thoughtless folly brings."

The reader may see the entire poem in *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, vol. v., pp. 6-9.

who resided generally in Ysla, or Cantyre, offered the lordship of the Route to Alexander, the second brother, but the latter refused it, probably from the conviction that the governor of that territory would be required to hold it, not only in defiance of the English, but in opposition to occasional attempts on the part of the MacQuillins to regain their lost inheritance. James MacDonnell, next offered the post, with all its honours and responsibilities, to his fourth brother, Angus, who also declined it, and, probably, for the same reason. Angus was surnamed *Uaibhreach*, or "the Proud," but his ambition does not appear to have prompted him in this instance. On his refusal, the lordship of the Route was tendered to Sorley Boy, the seventh brother, who gladly accepted it, and who, indeed, from the time of his first coming to the Antrim Coast, had evidently determined to make his home there. His appointment was "a heavy blow" to the MacQuillins, and was, most probably, the moving cause of their final attempt to reinstate themselves as owners of the Route. During the few years that had elapsed from the time of their subjugation, Edward MacQuillin and his three sons were content to submit, partly because of their inability to renew the contest, and partly because Colla MacDonnell's wife was so intimately connected with themselves. So long as Colla lived, or was permitted by his brothers to have sole authority in the Route, it is not likely that his wife's father and brothers would have sought to risk the loss of the estates that still remained to them; but, on his death, and the appointment of his ambitious brother, Sorley Boy, to succeed him, they seem to have lost all hope of restoration from any agency other than their own efforts.

Hence the renewal of the deadly strife in the summer of 1558. As the English were not actively engaged in what had probably now assumed somewhat the appearance of a family quarrel, we have no traces in the State Papers of this final conflict between Sorley and the MacQuillins. In such cases, however, the authorities of the Pale were pretty sure to countenance the stronger party, and we find there was no departure from their established principle of policy in the present instance. James MacDonnell was now in a position which enabled him to sustain the Scottish cause in Ulster, as much by negotiation as by arms. He seems to have entered into such arrangements with the English as saved himself from the necessity of appearing once more in Antrim to reconquer the Route; and the struggle between Sorley Boy and the MacQuillins was thus left to be conducted by the two parties immediately concerned. In June, 1559, Queen Elizabeth wrote a complimentary letter to James MacDonnell, in which she speaks of his fidelity, and immediately afterwards the Lord Deputy Sussex was instructed to accept in good part the suit of his brother, Sorley Boy.* This suit had reference, doubtless, to his struggle with the MacQuillins, which was now drawing rapidly to a close. The concluding battle of Aura, we are strongly disposed to think, was fought in the autumn of 1559 instead of 1569. In addition to the reasons already stated in favour of this

* Hamilton's Calendar of State Papers, p. 154.

opinion, it must be observed that Edward MacQuillin's three sons had passed away many years previously to 1569, and, consequently, could not have been then engaged in mortal conflict with Sorley Boy. The only chiefs of the family alive at this period were old Edward and his grandson, Rory Oge, both of whom, particularly the latter, acted regularly in concert with the Scots, and in opposition to the English. A league had been formed against the Government by the Ulster chiefs, in the year 1568, the leading members of which were Brian MacPhelim O'Neill, Turlough Luinech O'Neill, and Sorley Boy. On the 3rd of Jan., 1568, Sir N. Bagenall wrote from Dundalk to the Lords Justices, informing them, among other matters, that Rory Oge MacQuillin had made peace with the Scots, and married Turlough Luinech O'Neill's daughter. These two acts implied that Rory had become a member of the Northern League. On the 22nd of the same month, Bagenall wrote a second letter to the Lords Justices, stating that Sorley Boy had gone into Scotland, and had left his forces in charge of Brian Carrach MacCormac MacDonnell and Rory Oge MacQuillin, all under the supreme command of Turlough Luinech O'Neill. On the 13th of February, Captain Malbie wrote to the Lord Deputy Sidney, that Rory Oge was one of the *naughtiest boys in this land*, an expression which strongly implied the nature of young MacQuillin's policy. Ten days subsequently, Captains Piers and Malbie, in writing to the Lords Justices, stated that no rebel leaders *were out but Rory Oge MacQuillin*. The Lord Justice Fitzwilliams and the Council, on the 16th of April, denounced Rory Oge for not having made known his complaints to them, instead of rebelliously withdrawing from his native place to join other insurgent chiefs west of the Bann. On the 1st of May, Fitzwilliams and Bagenall wrote to Queen Elizabeth, from Carrickfergus, that Captain Malbie was in the act of bringing into Glenarm 500 head of cattle from the MacQuillins. A joint letter from Captains Piers and Malbie to the Queen, written at Carrickfergus on the 7th of July, announced that Alexander Oge McAllister and Rory Oge MacQuillin had been driven clean out of their properties in the Route and Glynns, and that no less than 40,000 head of cattle had been collected from the rebels in various parts of Ulster, and placed at her Majesty's disposal. The two chiefs last named were cousins, Alexander Oge McAlister being a son of Colla MacDonnell. The notorious Terence Danyell, Dean of Armagh, wrote to an English agent named Flemyng, on the 9th of June previously, that "old MacQuillin had gone over to Sorley Boy," a fact with which the Government had been well acquainted at a much earlier date.[†]

Thus, we see plainly that the three sons of old Edward MacQuillin must have perished some years, at least, previously to 1568, as there is no trace of their existence throughout any of the transactions of that eventful year. But further, we have ample evidence that the great Scottish leader, Sorley Boy, ruled without a rival in the Route and Glynns during the year 1569, and, therefore, could have had no conflict with the MacQuillins at Aura or Galgorm, or anywhere else,

[†] Hamilton's *Calendar of State Papers*, pp. 359, 363, 365, 369, 375, 377, 381, 383.

so late as the period specified by the MacQuillin MS. He had then so firmly established himself on the Antrim coast as not only to bid defiance to the MacQuillins, but to the authorities in London and Dublin. The lines in which a late poet so forcibly describes the virtual supremacy of another well-known Scottish freebooter might be applied with equal truth in the present instance, by simply substituting the one name for the other:—

“ And thus, amid these hills, he reigned
Through summer's heat and winter's snow,—
The eagle, he was lord above,
And Sorley, lord below.”

The year 1569 was remarkable in the annals of Ulster as witnessing the arrival of greater numbers of Scottish forces in the North than any previous year. Indeed, the hardy soldiers of Argyleshire and the Isles came in such numbers, under the able leadership of Sorley Boy, as to overawe all opposition. We find that a certain Bristol merchant, named Leonard Sumpter, gave information to the Government, on the 12th of August, that Sorley Boy was preparing to sail from Islay to Lough Foyle, at the head of 4,000 men. The Islesmen were to be brought into Ulster by thirty-two gallies and a great number of boats. This invasion had, doubtless, taken place in due course, as on the 27th of the same month, Turlough Brasselagh O'Neill wrote to Dean Danyell, from Ballenielagh, (Ballylough), that Sorley and his brother Alexander intended to enter Clanneboy with a large force about Michaelmas. The Route and Glynnns had been long since perfectly established under Scottish authority, and Sorley was about to move southward into the territories now constituting the county of Down, for the purpose of lending a helping hand to his powerful ally, Sir Brian MacPhelim O'Neill. In this year, also, Turlough Luinech O'Neill married the widow of James MacDonnell, who was styled the 'Lady of Cantire,' and who brought to her husband a force of 3,000 Scottish Highlanders.^a

These facts prove that the MacQuillins had now become a comparatively unimportant clan, and that the decisive battle between them and the MacDonnells must have been fought many years before 1569. Local tradition distinctly affirms that it occurred in the immediate vicinity of the mountain named Aura, at the head of Glenshesk. One or two traditionary anecdotes relating to this battle may be here mentioned. The tenant-farmers in the parish of Culfeightrin tell of an individual in their own class named MacDonnell, who visited Glenarm castle for the purpose of obtaining the renewal of his lease from the fourth Earl of Antrim, on terms which only a member of the Clan Donnell could venture to ask. The Earl (Randall) was from home when the tenant arrived, but Lady Antrim (Rachel Clotworthy, daughter of Lord Massereene), on hearing the purport of the farmer's visit, and thinking, no doubt, that the clansmen generally presumed *rather* too much on the relationship in which they stood to her lord, hastily exclaimed, “ *Another MacDonnell!* ”

^a Hamilton's *Calendar of State Papers*, pp. 416, 418, 420.

you are all MacDonnells in the Low Glens!" "Aye," replied the tenant, "*too many MacDonnells to-day, but not one too many on the day of Aura!*" Local tradition, therefore, decides the question in favour of Aura, but it is not improbable that there may have been skirmishing and slaughter even so far southward as Galgorm. There is no doubt that the struggle was a desperate affair throughout. Sorley Boy is said to have regaled himself occasionally with *oatmeal and water, mixed in his shoe*, which he pronounced to be the sweetest repasts he had ever enjoyed! The MacDonnells were determined that no leader of the MacQuillins should escape. One of the latter fled from the field of battle after their defeat, and had reached the island of Loughlynch, but was hotly pursued by a powerful Scot from Islay, named Owen or John Magee, who swam after him and slew him.* The fate of Rory Oge MacQuillin was still more melancholy. His dependent position compelled him to unite with Sorley Boy against the English. He was treachously seized at Belfast, in 1574, together with his kinsman, Sir Brian MacPhelim O'Neill, by the Earl of Essex, and soon afterwards executed at Carrickfergus. Camden affirms that these two chiefs were half-brothers. Leland states, on the authority of an Irish manuscript, that they were taken to Dublin, and there "*cut up in quarters.*" Curry, in his *Review of the Civil Wars in Ireland*, has the same statement, which he derived, probably, from the same manuscript. A more reliable authority, however, was brought to light by M^cSkimmin, who discovered the following account of their death among the Records of the Town of Carrickfergus:—"June 1575. In this sayd month, Sur Brian M^cPhellime & Rowry Ogg M^cQuillin were executed in this Towne."† The only crime with which the latter could be charged was his alliance with Sorley Boy and the O'Neills, as already stated. In order to justify their arrest at Belfast, Essex thought it necessary to issue a Proclamation, in which treachery and murder are charged against Sir Brian MacPhelim, but nothing more serious than simple rebellion against Rory Oge. This proclamation is enclosed in a despatch to the Privy Council, dated 24th December, 1574.

The tradition contained in the MacQuillin MS. respecting the friendly protection afforded by Roderick and Richard MacQuillin to Colonel Hill, when pursued by MacDonnell, is preserved in a somewhat different form on the Antrim coast. Among the Hills and Magees, of Ramoan, there existed a feeling of cordial friendship for many generations after the year 1641, because of a certain alliance for mutual protection entered into by their respective ancestors during the internecine horrors of that eventful year. According to the terms of this agreement, the Magees, who were Roman Catholics, adopted the Hills, who were Protestants, as members of their own family, and thus preserved them from massacre; on the other hand, the Hills rendered the same signal services to the Magees, when circumstances changed, and the day of retaliation and retribution came. As these two traditions resemble each other in some points, they may have been originally the same. There are at least two reasons which would induce us to prefer the Ramoan tradition. The ancestor

* See Reeves's *Ecclesiastical Antiquities*, page 287.

† *History of Carrickfergus*, second edition, page 31.

of the Hills came with the Earl of Essex, but from the time of Essex's arrival in 1573, until the capture and death of Rory MacQuillin, the latter had been in league with the Ulster chiefs, and was not likely, therefore, to have had any opportunity, even if so inclined, to protect Hill from the wrath of MacDonnell. And, assuredly, such protection would not have been required in Island Magee, as the authority of the English was there, at least, paramount.

The MacQuillin MS. represents Randall MacDonnell—who became the first Earl of Antrim—as the grandson of old Edward MacQuillin, and as being influenced by “feelings of vengeful antipathy” against his cousin, Rory MacQuillin. Now, Randall aforesaid had sins enough to answer for in the exclusion of his brother James's children from their inheritance, without making him answerable for crimes in which he could have had no participation. For, in the first place, he was not grandson to old MacQuillin, nor cousin to Rory Oge, nor in any degree related to the MacQuillins at all. He was the third or fourth son of Sorley Boy MacDonnell, by Mary O'Neill, daughter of Con O'Neill, known as the first Earl of Tyrone. The sons of his uncle, Colla, were cousins of Rory Oge MacQuillin, and it is quite possible there may have existed jealousies between them and the MacQuillins, arising out of rival claims to properties in the Route; but Sorley Boy had established himself as the chief of the Clan Donnell in Ulster, from the year 1558, and his eldest surviving son, James, succeeded to the same dignity, on the death of his father, in 1590. When James died, or was poisoned, at Dunluce, in 1601, his children by Mary O'Neill (of the family of the O'Neills of the Bann) were minors, and as such, were overlooked or set aside in the arrangements entered into between their uncle, Randall, and the Government of James I.

With respect to the foundation of Bun-na-Mairge, we are disposed to think (for reasons already stated), that it was laid previously to the coming of the Welsh MacQuillins into the Route. No doubt, one of their chiefs may have rebuilt the abbey, or restored its revenues, and thus got the credit of being its original founder, just as a chief of the MacDonnells afterwards did, and came in for a similar favour, even among a host of antiquaries who wrote in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The MacQuillin manuscript affirms that Bun-na-Mairge was founded “in the latter end of the fifteenth century, by Charles, son of Donald MacQuillin,” but a manuscript list of Franciscan priories, preserved in the British Museum, states that it was built by *Rory MacQuillin*, in the first year of the sixteenth century. We attach greater authority to the latter statement, simply because no Charles or Donald MacQuillin appears at that period in the Annals of Ireland, or in any collection of State Papers already published, whereas, the *Rory MacQuillin* who submitted in 1542 was evidently an old man, and probably the restorer of Bun-na-Mairge. The name *Thula* is never used in local tradition to designate the Nun; her Irish name was simply *Sheelah Dhuv*, anglicised ‘Black Julia.’ *Nuala* was well known as a Christian name frequently given to women among the Irish, but we question whether the form *Thula* was so applied. Everything considered, we still hold by the opinion that the lady flourished about the middle of the seventeenth century.

An old and highly-respectable family, named *MacIvor*, still lives in Ballycastle. Their ancestor came to the Antrim coast with the MacDonnells, and the tradition has come down in this family to the present day, that Julia MacQuillin occasionally appeared at the castle during its occupation by the family of the first Earl of Antrim, in other words, between the years 1628 and 1642. The social position of the MacIvors secured their admission as welcome guests at the castle, where, in common with other visitors, they sometimes met Sheelah Dhuv, and were amazed (so the tradition tells) at her singularly antiquated dress and demeanour. Mrs. Webb supplies only a part of the story relating to the erring sister whose conduct so troubled the spirit of the 'abbess.' That unfortunate is reported to have been really Sheelah's sister, and to have occasionally dwelt with her, when wearied of wandering in the world. She had a son whose melancholy death drove her finally to Sheelah's cell, where she soon afterwards died. This son was caught up by the machinery of a wind-mill, in the vicinity of the present Bushmills, and thus dashed or crushed to death. His mother did not long survive the shock produced by seeing his mutilated remains. Sheelah is reported to have had little sympathy on this sad occasion, declaring that better could not have befallen mother and son!

The MacQuillin MS., drawn up probably about the beginning of the present century, is evidently open to serious objections respecting dates and names occurring in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The family records, however, in possession of the Wexford branch are highly interesting, and well worthy of being preserved and continued from generation to generation. The older series (collected and arranged by Edward MacQuillin) with all its faults, would be a most welcome document to many readers of the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*. It preserves many facts connected with this once powerful sept, which, if published entire, might enable us to explain various obscurities connected with the coming of the Scots to the Antrim coast in the sixteenth century.

BELFAST.

GEO. HILL.