

## Chapter VI

### O'NEILLS OF ULSTER

THE MOST illustrious name in Irish history is that of O'Neill. With an irrefragable genealogical descent from Milesius through his son Heremon *circa* 1700 B.C., the O'Neills and their ancestors were kings of Ireland down through twenty-eight centuries, and kings of Ulster until early in the seventeenth century. The following history is based on bardic legend, but has as great a claim to authenticity as the Old Testament, certainly.

The Milesian colony reached Ireland from Spain, where they had sojourned for two or three centuries in the course of their wanderings across half a hemisphere. They were directly descended from Gadelius, who was the son of Niul, a younger son of Fenius Farsa, King of Scythia. Once when the child Gadelius lay asleep he was bitten by a venomous serpent. His frantic father Niul rushed with him in his arms to a nearby encampment of Israelites and entreated their leader to cure the lad. Moses prayed over him, then touched the wound with his rod, The boy was miraculously cured. Then Moses prophesied that Gadelius' descendants would someday come to occupy a country where there were no venomous reptiles. They never forgot their mystic destiny, and the Sacred Banner of the Milesians bore the device of the rod of Moses and a dead serpent.

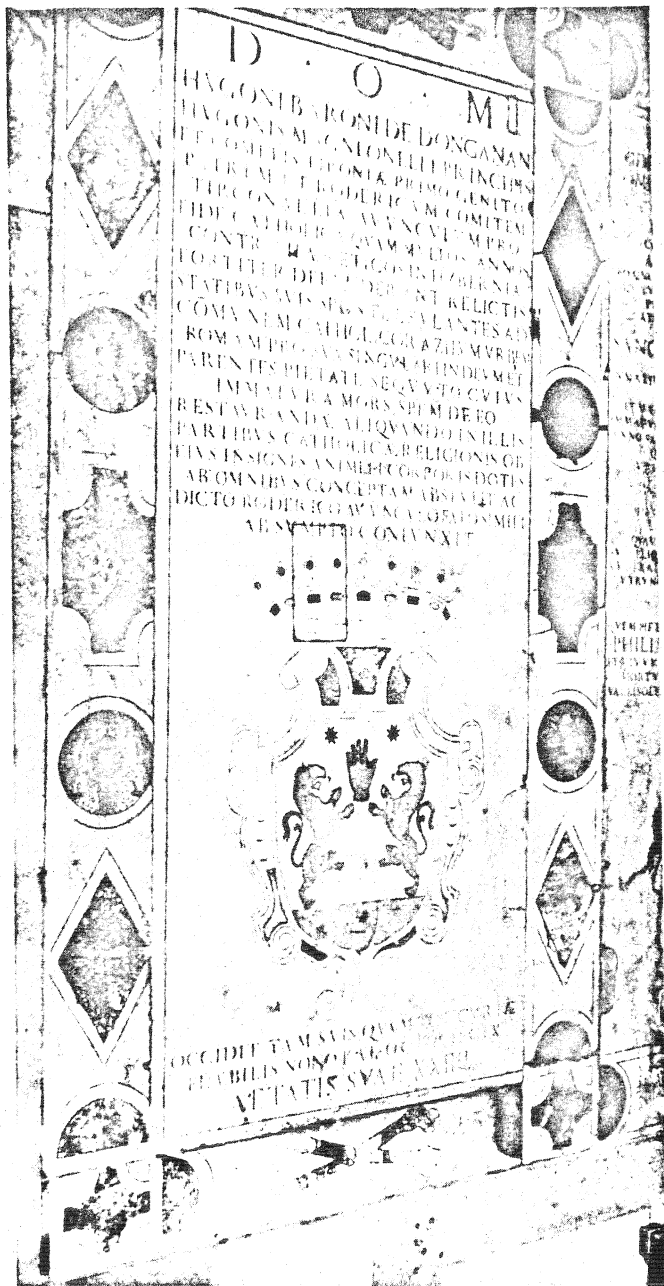
Ith (pronounced 'Eeh'), an uncle of Milesius, first sighted Innisfail, the Isle of Destiny, during an exploration outward from Brigantia, Spain, a city built by the descendants of Gadelius. They were styled Milesians after their conquest of Ireland. Ith and a landing party were attacked on their exploratory trip by the native Tuatha de Danaans. Ith was mortally wounded and died before reaching Spain. In the meantime Milesius had also died, leaving his queen Scota. She was Pharaoh Nectonebus' daughter. She and her sons Heremon, Heber Fionn, Ir, Amergin, Aireagh, Heber Donn, Arannan, and Colpa set sail with sixty vessels for The Isle of Destiny.

One elusive bardic tradition, very probably a poetical invention, relates that the brothers had agreed among themselves that the first of them to touch the land should have first choice of the portion over which he should rule. As they approached the island Ir perceived that one of the other boats was sure to beach ahead of his. He drew his sword, cut off his left hand, and hurled the gory messenger ashore, thus to become the first to touch land. His descendants adopted the Red Hand as the symbol of their ancestor's determination and valour. It is known as the Red Hand of Eirinn, but because it later became the emblem of the O'Neills of Ulster, it is even better known to this day as the Red Hand of Ulster. The armorial bearings of the O'Neills carry the Gaelic motto *Lamh dearg Eirinn*, The Red Hand of Eirinn, and the Red Hand. The O'Reillys also carry the Red Hand, supported by two lions, with the motto 'Fortitudine et prudentia', on their armorial bearings, and it is a charge on those of the Mackays of Strathnaver and cadet branches of that ancient and mighty clan. This is particularized in the chapter *The Mackays of Scotland*. There are other possible sources of the birth of the Red Hand armorial charge. One for example that suggested itself to the present author is as follows, and it at any rate has a certain inherent plausibility about it that the legend just related does not seem to possess :

3542 A.M. Oilíoll Finn, son of Art, son of Lughaidh Laimhdhearg, after having been eleven years in the sovereignty of Ireland, fell by Airgeatmhar and Duach Ladghair in the battle of Odhbha.



A TRUE PORTRAIT OF  
 HUGH O'NEILL, PRINCE AND EARL OF TYRONE  
 BY DESCENT KING AND LORD OF IRELAND  
 DIED AT ROME, A. D. 1616.



ARMS OF HUGH O'NEILL  
 From his Tomb in Rome

Comment : "Laimhdearg" means Red Hand in Gaelic. "Odhbha" is the burial place of Odhbha, first wife of Heremon, whom he put aside to marry Tea, in Spain. Odhbha was the lordship of O'h-Aedha, a name usually anglicised Hughes, but which in Gaelic would also be written O'Aedha and McAedha, gradually becoming McHugh, McKee, and McKay.

In an article entitled "*The Antrim Boy O'Cahan*", *Belfast News-Letter*, April 30, 1926, Francis Joseph Bigger, M.R.I.A., adverts to the three upended fish that are the principal charges on the O'Cahan arms 'from an old seal, depicting Three Salmon from the Rivers Bush and Bann and Roe. This device may have had a much older significance, as it symbolized the Blessed Trinity, as the *Red Right Hand of the O'Neills, one of the oldest badges in the world, was the symbol of the Right Hand of God*'.

On page 258 of Vol. I of *The Ulster Journal of Archaeology* (1853) the following comment is made in an article by Rev. William Reeves, D.D. entitled *The Seal of Hugh O'Neill* : "At 1364 (anno domini) the same Annals (*of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters*) thus record his death : 'Hugh O'Neill, the best man of the Irish of his time, died, having gained the palm for humanity, hospitality, valour, and renown'. The legend upon his seal is

S. ODONIS ONEILL REGIS HYBERNICOR UM ULTONIE

The Irish, 'Aodh', is Latinized by 'Odo' and pronounced, as has been observed, *Ee*.

This beautiful specimen of spheric art is the finest work of the kind, connected with Ireland, which remains, and far exceeds in elegance the other seals of the O'Neill family. The high relief of the scutcheon, and the beveled edge *with the small quatrefoils* running round the margin, are very remarkable. It is to be observed too, that the Hand, as in other early seals of the family, is a Dexter one, the same as that which now appears in the arms of the present Lord. 'Argent, a hand Gules' was the heraldic characteristic of Baronetcy when created in 1611, and 1619, in consideration of O'Neill's extermination ; and it was remarkable to find Sir Bryan O'Neill, of Bakerstown, in 1642, and Sir Henry O'Neill, of Killelagh, in 1666, the one in the English, and the other in the Irish Baronetage, *adopting an achievement which they were supposed to win from themselves*".

There has been considerable controversy anent the rightful users of the Red Hand. The noted antiquarian Eugene O'Curry, M.R.I.A. touches the subject briefly in his *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish*, Dublin, 1873, pages 264-268 :

"About the year 1680, a controversy sprang up among some of the bards of Ulster, as to what race, by ancient right, the armorial bearing of Ulster, the Red Hand, belonged. Some person named Cormac, said or wrote something, which I have never seen, to the effect that the Red Hand belonged by right to the Clann Neill ; but he was called to account for saying so by Diarmait, the son of Laoighseal Mac an Bhaire (called in English Louis Ward), who wrote a poem of seventeen quatrains, in which he adduces many historical reasons to prove that the Red Hand of Ulster belonged by right to the Ulidians of the Rudrician or Irian race, of whom Mac Enis (or Magenis) of the County Down was the chief. This poem begins :

'O Cormac ! Remember what is right ;  
Take not from the Irian blood its honour.  
Justice is the best argument :  
The race is not now in bountiful affluence'.

To this poem an answer was given by Eoghan O'Donnghaile, or O'Donnely, in a very clever poem of many stanzas, but of which I have never been able to procure more than the first thirty. O'Donnely claims the Red Hand for the Clann Neill . . . . ."

Mr. O'Curry is examining the authenticity of the Harp of Brian Borumha when he makes the following comment :

“ This statement is, that on the front arm of the harp ‘ are chased in silver the arms of the O'Brien family, the bloody hand supported by lions ’. As already remarked by Mr. Moore, the circumstance of arms being on an instrument is fatal to its reputed antiquity, as the hereditary use of armorial ensigns was not introduced into Europe until the time of the crusades, and was not established in England until the reign of Henry the Third. The statement is altogether erroneous. The supporters are not lions, but dogs, probably wolf dogs, and the arms are not those of the O'Brien family, but of the more illustrious sept of O'Neill ; and it is an interesting circumstance in the history of this harp, that the person who last awoke its long dormant harmonies, was a minstrel descended from the same royal race to whom it originally owed its existence, the celebrated Arthur O'Neill having played it through the streets of Limerick in the year 1760 ”.

Jeoffrey Keating, in his *General History of Ireland* (London, 1723) is of a different and of course anterior opinion concerning the antiquity of *coats of arms*, and the present author discovers Reverend Keating to be of the correct opinion, since the very early Mackays of Strathnaver used charges on their arms indigenous to very early Ireland, for example the Red Hand employed originally by the House of Ir, then by the O'Neills of the House of Heremon, and the three stars that derived from the Royal House of Moray. On page 135 *et sequa* he describes an Assembly of the provincial kings, princes, and other nobility at Tara in ancient days, which he specifically denotes as the custom before the coming of St. Patrick, which occurred early in the fifth century. His narration bears some internal evidence of having been founded on early Irish poems and manuscripts. He says : “ At the first sound (of a trumpet) all the Shield Bearers, that belonged to the Princes and the chief of the Nobility, came to the Door, and there delivered their Shields to the Grand Marshal, who by the Direction of the *King at Arms*, hung them up in their due Places upon the Wall on the right side of the long Table, where the Princes and Nobility of the greatest Quality had their Seats. When he blew the second Blast, the *Target Bearers*, that attended upon the General, and the commanding Officers of the Army and of the Militia of the Kingdom, advanced to the Door, and delivered their Targets in the same manner, which were hung in their proper Order upon the other side of the Table : Upon the third Summons, the Princes, the Nobility, the Generals, the Officers and principal Gentry of the Kingdom, entered the Hall, and took their Places each under his own Shield or Target, which were easily distinguished by the Coat of Arms that was curiously blazon'd upon the Outside of them, and thus the whole Assembly were seated regularly without any Dispute about Precedency or the least Disorder. No Person was admitted beside the Attendants that waited, who stood on the Outside of the Table. One End of the Table was appointed for the Antiquaries and the Historians, who understood, and were perfectly skill'd in the Records and ancient Monuments of the Kingdom ; the other End was filled by the chief Officers of the Court : and Care was particularly taken that their Debates should be kept secret, *for which Reason no Woman was ever to be admitted* ”.

In the *Book of Mackay*, by Angus Mackay, M.A., St. Andrews University (Wick, 1906), page 284, we find this significant commentary :

“ The sinister hand which is so characteristic of Mackay arms is not a common device on Highland coats of arms. It seems, however, to have been a charge borne by M'Neil of Gigha, one of whose daughters married Donald Mackay III of Strathnaver in or about 1300 A.D. ‘ Lauchlan M'Neil of Tearfergus (apparently a variant of the Gaelic Tir-Fergus, that is ‘ land of Fergus ’.—R.W.M.), descended of the family of M'Neil of Geigh ’, as Nisbet informs us, bore ‘ *a sinister hand couped fesse-ways in chief* ’. The Neilsons and O'Neill of Ulster also carried

a somewhat similar hand. The arms of O'Neill, according to Woodward and Burnett, were, 'Argent, a hand appaume (*i.e.* open, showing the palm) couped, gules'. It is just possible that the hand passed from O'Neill of Ulster to M'Neil of Gigha, and from the latter to Mackay".

Further on, in his Appendix, he reproduces in Gaelic on page 372, the Charter by Macdonald of the Isles to Brian Vicar Mackay, of lands in Isla, dated 1408. He proceeds :

'This Gaelic charter, the oldest extant in that language, was found in the possession of John Magee, county Antrim, a descendant of a family of Macgees who were once followers of the MacDonalds of Antrim. It is now preserved in the Register House, Edinburgh'.

The charter is signed by M'Domhnail (MacDonald) and witnessed, else accepted, by Eoin T. Mac Domhnaill, Pat. III M'Abhruin, Fercos Mac Beth, and Aodh M'Ceil. Here, in these two items, a somewhat perplexed comment on an armorial bearing, and the famous charter granted by MacDonald of the Isles to Brian Vicar Mackay, we find strangely corroborative evidence that the O'Neill's of Ulster and the MacAodhs of Antrim were connected in some definite way with the Mackays of Scotland, and with the Macdonalds of the Isles, as well.

The arms of Hugh O'Neill, Third Earl of Tyrone, as they appear on his tomb in Rome, of which the present writer has a photograph, contain the three mystic stars and the couped hand. The purport and the supposed origin of the Red Hand of Erin are explained in the present chapter, but the origin of the three stars is obscure ; Angus Mackay conjectures they may have been inherited or arrogated from the allied and predecessor House of Moray.

But then another device creeps in, that is the galley. Now, a galley is an uncommon vessel, and it was uncommon even in the 12th and 13th centuries. Folk who employed it on their armorial bearings were trying to record an historical fact important to the entire clan ; and the fact bore on its origin or its travails. Here is what Angus Mackay commented on the three stars and a galley half-a-century back :

'As for the three stars or mullets on the shield of Mackay of Strathnaver, 1503, they may indicate the Moray connection, for it is generally supposed that the old family of Moray bore three stars and that these charges are now borne by the Douglasses, Sutherlands, Inneses, Brodies, and so forth, because they have entered into the ancient inheritance of that family. Something of the same kind happened when the family of MacDonald of the Isles stepped into the shoes of the Norwegian earls of Caithness and the Isles. On the outside board of the *Book of Clan Donald* the old arms of Macdonald are stamped, *viz.*, a galley with a crowned mast. We beg to tell the Macdonalds that they 'lifted' this device. We have been permitted to examine a number of plaster-casts at Thurso, taken by the late Dr. Sinclair, about sixty years ago, from seals attached to ancient documents lying in Barrogill Castle, and belonging to the old earls of Caithness. Among these casts there is one labelled of the 13th century, and representing the seal of the Earl of Caithness, which is an exact facsimile of what appears on the *Book of Clan Donald* to the minutest detail. The explanation is simple. When the Lords of the Isles obtained the sovereignty of the western seas, after the disappearance of the Norse earls of Caithness, they took the seal and arms of their predecessors, a galley with a crowned mast".

The reader is reminded that the coat of arms attributed to the Irish McKees *displays both the Red Hand of Eirinn and a galley*. The connection is not clear, if there is indeed a connection, but a mere coincidence would be most extraordinary, it seems to the author.

<sup>1</sup> Unless the reader clearly apprehends that Mackay, Mac Eth, M'Ghie, MKy, Mkie, Mackie, MacGee, Magee, MacKee, McKee, and so forth are *only variant spellings* of Mac Aodh, an item of this character will completely escape him, and its fundamental significance forever be lost to him.

It should be borne in mind constantly that Mac Eth, Mac Heth, Mackay, MacKee, McKee, Mky, McKy, McKie, Magee, Macgee, and so forth are but variant anglicisations or scotticisations of the surname Mac Aodh, MacAedh, or Mac Aoidh, itself derived from the clan name Cinel Aodha, or O'hAodha. Of this, the present author entertains no doubt.

Several early Scottish kings descended from Fergus were named Cianaodha, as can be noted from the list included in the present volume ; moreover, Cianaodha was anglicised Kineth, which pretty definitely identifies *aodh* and *eth*, hence MacAodh and MacEth.

In the chapter *The Mackays of Scotland* reference is made to a curious circumstance first noted by the great historian of Scottish history, William F. Skene, who however appears never to have set it down in any of his works, but merely to have mentioned it in a conversation with Reverend William Reeves around 1850 ; Mr. Skene gave it as his conviction that the Island Tiree near Iona got its name as a contraction of Tir-aodha, that is *land of Aodh*. Ussher and Adamnan both mention it as Tir Heth as early as 514 A.D., and there is no doubt that it was inhabited by the Irish clergy much earlier. Heth, Eth, and Aodh are variants of the same personal name, which as is often mentioned herein means ' fire ' in Gaelic. Here we have not only a definite linking of Heth and Eth with one of the Western Isles, but from a manuscript in the Royal Irish Academy comes the following tremendously significant mention of Tiree :

' Cormac son of Airbheartach occupied twelve houses in Fionnlochlan, namely Greagraighe of the Heroes, which is named Muile (Mull) and *Tir Aodha* (Tiree) and Cruibh-inis or Craobh-inis ' (probably Coll).

To return from the digression concerning the Red Hand of Eirinn, and resume the bardic legend that relates the landing of Heremon's forces in Ireland :

The Tuatha de Danaan forces drawn up to oppose the landing Milesians were quickly overcome, but called for a parley. By some mysterious chicanery they persuaded the Milesians to retire to their vessels, retreat beyond the ninth wave, and then make a second landing. Amergin, druid for the Milesians, strangely enough approved the plan. A storm arose, separated and wrecked many of the vessels, and only Scota, Heremon, Heber, and Amergin landed successfully. Again they overcame the occupants, but lost Queen Scota in the battle. Solomon was King of Jerusalem when the Milesian landing took place in Ireland.

The name Aodh O'Neill occurs dozens of times during the last 600 years of Ireland's independence. Aodh cannot be translated from Gaelic, but it is sometimes pronounced somewhat like ' ugh ', so has been anglicized as Hugh. The tribal chiefs who selected the name O'Neill undoubtedly reverted to the great warrior-king Niall Noigiallach who was King of Ireland 379-405 A.D., but some authors refer it back only to Niall Glundubh, King 915 to 919. These were direct ancestors of the O'Neill tribe. So was Niall Frassach, King 759 to 766. Noigiallach (noi giallach) means nine hostages, or prisoners. The custom prevailed for thousands of years of taking hostages from a conquered foe, to insure against reprisals and to induce continued obedience. Usually the hostage was a close relative, often a son. Violation of the terms of the agreement by the giver-of-hostages generally resulted in their being put to death, although occasionally they were blinded. Niall Noigiallach, or Niall of the Nine Hostages, exacted a hostage from each of the nine provincial kings who were not sworn adherents, and thus acquired a soubriquet that has come down through 1,500 years of Irish history.

Niall Glundubh means Champion of the Black Knee, Niall being ' champion ', Glun equalling ' knee ', and ' dubh ' signifying black. This probably referred to a physical defect,

although I have not found the reason noted by Keating, O'Flaherty, or other early authors. Niall Frassach means simply Niall of the Showers, alluding to unusual rains that occurred in his reign.

It is my opinion that several small and unrelated clues, which individually would have little persuasive force, but which when valued together acquire considerable weight, point to the possibility that at least one, and perhaps two, McKee lines descend from Hugh O'Neill, who was born in 1540 in Ulster and died July 20, 1616, in Rome. He was known as the Great O'Neill, and was actually the rightful heir to the throne of Ireland as well as Ulster. Although Elizabeth permitted him to succeed to the earldom of Tyrone, the title was an English one, and not half so ennobling as to be elected and crowned The O'Neill, which tribal honor he also received. His grandfather Conn Baccagh was created the first Earl of Tyrone by Henry VIII, Elizabeth's father by Anne Boleyn.

Sean, Hugh's uncle, known as Sean the Proud, was the second earl. A fierce, often barbarous, always clever, hard-drinking, hard-fighting Irish chieftain was this Sean O'Neill. He gave Elizabeth and her armies powerful armed resistance, but murdered his brother Feardorcha, whom the English called Matthew, and who was Hugh O'Neill's father. He also encompassed the murder of the (then) boy Hugh O'Neill's older brother Brian. Had not Elizabeth sagely whisked our Hugh O'Neill to England at this point there is reason to believe Sean would have expunged him also. After a crushing defeat by the O'Donnells of Tirconnell in 1567, Sean O'Neill sought desperate refuge with the MacDonnells of Antrim under the command of Allaster (*i.e.* Alexander) MacDonald of the Isles. (MacDonnell and MacDonald are variant spellings of the same name.) They cut him to pieces in revenge for his heinous imprisonment of Calvagh O'Donnell, whose wife he also imprisoned and forced to become his mistress. She was his own wife's step-mother. She bore him Hugh Geimhleach O'Neill, whose name means Hugh of the Fetters. He was so called because he was born in Sean's Castle Benburb where his mother was imprisoned. Hugh O'Neill was obliged later to hang this cousin for treason, he having turned informer to the English during the fight O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell were carrying on against Elizabeth's army.

Sean O'Neill sired many children, including seven boys : Hugh of the Fetters, Henry, Conn, Toirdelbach, Brian, Art, and Sean Oge. Oge means 'the younger', equal to the English word 'junior'.

John Mitchel in his *Life and Times of Aodh O'Neill*, Dublin, 1874, page 40, has this commentary on the character of the tumultuous Shane O'Neill :

"On the south of O'Neill's territory also the English had begun to encroach, and the venerable Cathedral of Armagh was occupied by their troops ; unfailing harbingers of the Reformation in Ireland. But now Sean (Shane) threw off all reserve with these insidious allies. He could not endure this new garrison of Armagh. His blood was up ; his standard was unfurled ; and he swore by St. Malachy, and by the crosier of blessed Patrick, that the holy fanes of Drumsailech hill should be no shelter for the reforming bishop and his troops. He burst upon Armagh like a thunderbolt, and laid both church and city in ashes".

"For this Loftus (Adam Loftus, a young Englishman who had made a favourable impression on the queen at a public act in Cambridge by the 'elegance of his oratory, and the comeliness of his person, and his graceful address', was raised at the age of twenty-eight to the nominal dignity of Archbishop of Armagh) solemnly cursed him, and in Dublin pronounced sentence of excommunication against him, not with bell, or book, or candle (which might savour of superstition), yet with sufficient unction and heartiness notwithstanding".



"But Shane was little affected by this cursing. With the troops of Tyr-owen he swept southward like a hailstorm, ravaging the settlements of the English and razing the castles of the Pale. He laid siege to Dundalk, where he met a stout resistance ; and Sarsfield, mayor of Dublin, having marched to its relief with a large body of citizens, he raised the siege and retired northwards, after laying waste half a province".

"The whole power of the English government was now concentrated against O'Neill. Even the Earl of Desmond, on whom he had relied for support, joined with the Deputy in defense of the Pale. Sydney, with the usual English policy, laboured to raise an Irish party against him in Ulster, and for that purpose supported O'Donnell, his bitter enemy, with troops and arms. The North was laid desolate by a furious war ; and although O'Neill was generally victorious in the field, and especially in the battle of the 'Red Coats' (na Gassogues dearg), where four hundred of O'Donnell's English auxiliaries were cut to pieces, yet his power gradually declined. Mac Guire and some Connaught chieftains, whom his pride and ferocity had made his enemies, joined O'Donnell against him. His territories were wasted by incessant attacks ; his troops, who rather feared than loved him, fled in large bodies from his standard ; and at last, abandoned by all his allies, and reduced nearly to extremity, he resolved to betake himself to his former enemies, the Scots of Antrim, who were then encamped in north Clan-hugh-buidhe, under Alister Oge Mac Donnell. As a propitiary offering, he sent home in freedom the Yellow-haired Sorley, whom he had taken prisoner two years before ; and shortly after, Shane himself, with his concubine (the wife of Calvagh O'Donnell), his secretary, and a poor train of but fifty horsemen, proceeded to the encampment of Mac Donnell".

"Here again he was met by the treachery of the English. An officer named Piers, and agent of the Deputy, had been negotiating with the Scots ; and on the news of Shane's approach, took care to remind them of that pitiless raid upon the glynns, of the slaughter of their chief, and all their ancient enmity to the haughty prince of Ulster. O'Neill arrived, and was entertained with seeming hospitality, until some dispute, as previously concerted, arose between the followers of the two chiefs, which ended in the Mac Donnells falling upon Shane and all his company, and hewing them to pieces. The chieftain's head was appropriated to Piers, the contriver of this base slaughter, who sent it, as an acceptable offering to the Lord Deputy, 'pickled in a pipkin', and received for the price of it, one thousand marks".

"That ghastly head was gibbeted high upon a pole, and long grinned upon the towers of Dublin Castle, a new monument and visible sign of that inalienable legacy of hatred to the stranger bequeathed by an O'Neill two hundred years before : 'hatred produced by lengthened recollections of injustice, by the murder of our fathers, brothers, and kindred, and which will not be extinguished in our time, nor in that of our sons'. (Letter of Donald O'Neill to the Pope). The headless trunk of Shane the Proud was buried where it fell ; and they still show his grave, about three miles from the little village of Cushendun, upon the coast of Antrim".

"English writers have painted this Shane as a hideous monster of sensual brutality ; and strange tales are current of his wine cellars at Dundrum castle, on the coast of Down ; of his two hundred tuns of Spanish wine and hogsheads of usquebaugh stored in the vaults of that fortress ; of his deep carouses and loathsome drunkenness ; and that unheard-of course of earth-bathing, burying himself to the ears in cold clay, to cool the raging fever of his blood. But it is the painting of an enemy. He was no stupid drunkard who for so many years defied the armies and defeated the policy of Elizabeth ; and his countrymen have only to lament that by his indomitable pride and cruelty he armed so many Irish chiefs against him, and against their native land ; and further to regret that he did not import from Spain, instead of wines of Malaga, some thousand blades of the Toledo tempering, and Spanish soldiers, then the best troops in Europe, to wield them against the deadly enemies of his race".

The events immediately surrounding Shane O'Neill's assassination had such a profound effect on Ulster's history that they are worth detailing.

In April, 1567, Sir Henry Sidney reported to Queen Elizabeth, "Shane is driven into the woods". He had already been deserted by his principal *urriaghs* (*i.e.* vassals), and his very Tanist or lieutenant, Turlough Luineach O'Neill. During the dark winter months extensive plundering incursions had been carried into the country of the Kinel-Owen by their ancient enemies, the Kinel-Connell, and these repeated ravages having aroused the shattered clansmen, their undaunted chief led a strong force on a retaliatory expedition, in which 2,000 foot and 400 horse followed the banner displaying 'that terrible cognizance' the Bloody Hand.—(S. P. O., 9 May, 1567). Sir Hugh O'Donnell was unprepared for this attack, and could muster only 400 men, inclusive of a few horse and a band of galloglasses under the McSweyns, who came rapidly to his assistance. The hostile clans encountered at Garriston, on the passage of the Swilly. Shane-an-Diomais—John of the Pride or Ambition—would rather have defeated Ua Domhnaill (*i.e.* O'Donnell) than have vanquished the Lord Deputy. But he was totally routed, losing 1,300 men, including the captain of his galloglasses and nearly all the band, those doughty warriors on whom his dependence lay. He likewise was forced to fly, guarded by half-a-dozen horsemen, and was nearly caught. So overwhelming a blow deprived the proud chieftain of reason, and he became deranged. He got back, by unfrequented passages, and almost unattended, into his own woods; but could not rest until some desperate plan for obtaining aid was decided on, and, in an evil hour, the distracted man sent off messengers to Scotland to invite assistance from McDonnell. The annalists say it was to James McDonnell (*i.e.* Macdonald) that he sent; but this Lord of the Isles had lately died of his wounds, upon whose decease his second brother, Alaster-Oge, became head of the house, and was steward of Cantire, whither it is probable the message came. He was second son of Alexander Carragh McDonnell.

Sidney had been in frequent communication with Alaster, knowing him, as he says (S. P. O., 10 June, 1567) to be the 'mortal enemy' of Shane O'Neill; and the lord deputy about this time sent a man in his service, named Douglas, to Cantire, by whom, as he subsequently states (*Collins*, 35) 'the Scotts that killed O'Neill were brought over'. Alaster saw that his opportunity for revenge was come, and, anxious to have a claim upon the viceroy for possession of the Irish estate in the Glynns, and burning to avenge the death of his brothers, James who died of wounds received in a previous battle with O'Neill's forces, and Angus who was slain in the same fight, he hastily assembled some 600 men, set sail, and brought his galleys to anchor in the mouth of the Dun. In a letter to the lord deputy dated 'from the Glynns' 20th May, and signed Alexander Oig McConail (Mac-Conal was the tribal name of the Macdonalds, Lords of the Isles; Alaster is a variant of Alexander, while Oge denotes 'the younger'.—R.W.M.), Stewart of Kintire, he states he is about to march into Tyrone, "to do such service as he be able for the Queen". O'Neill, as soon as he was told the Scots had landed, rode to their camp at Cushendun, accompanied by Sorley-buidhe McDonnell whom he had captured in the previous battle at which Angus McDonnell was slain, himself attended only by his secretary O'Hagan and fifty horsemen. Thus he placed himself at the absolute mercy of his enemies, so eager was he to gain any aid by which he might 'wreak his vengeance on the Kinel-Connell' (*i.e.* the McDonnells or Macdonalds.—R.W.M.)—(*Four Masters*). Campion, who wrote only four years subsequent to the actual occurrence of these events, says O'Neill was betrayed by one Mac-gilly-Aspuck, who had his father's and uncle's quarrels to avenge, being the son, by a sister to Alaster McDonnell, of a leader who fell at Glenshesk. Shane and his secretary O'Hagan were entertained with 'great cheer' in the Scots Captain's tent, and everyone drank abundantly. After two days spent thus, and in warm discussion, after dinner on the third a hot dispute was raised, the argument of which is characteristic of the times, the country, and Shane-an-diomais. Owen O'Hagan, the secretary, was accused

by the young Scot of being the originator of a 'dishonourable report' that James McDonnell's widow, his aunt, Lady Agnes Campbell, had offered to forsake her country and friends and wed with Shane O'Neill, 'her husband's destruction'; to which O'Hagan retorted that were she the Queen of Scotland 'it would become her well to seek marriage with O'Neill'. The unfortunate Queen of Scotland was a widow at this time, and indeed might almost as well have espoused the *Tighearna* of Tyrone, Shane O'Neill, as Bothwell. To this wrangling brawl, says the chronicler Campion, 'O'Neill gave ear, upheld his man, and advanced his own degree. The comparison bred a fray between the soldiours', whereupon the young Scot sprang up, and presently brought his men into the tent, 'where the souldiours with their slaughter-knives killed the secretary and Shane O'Neill, mangled him cruelly, lapped him in an old Irish shirt, and tumbled him into a pit within an old chappell hard by'. The annalist Dowling fixes the site of this butchery, 'at the key of Ybuyg', the name probably of some island, Gaelice I. Campion and Hooker describe Captain Piers, 'by whose device the tragedie was practised', as exhuming the corpse after it had lain buried four days, in order to cut off its head, which, after being 'pickled in a pipkin', was despatched to the camp of the lord deputy, who 'sent it before him, staked on a pole, to Dublin Castle, where, wrote Campion, *anno* 1571, 'it now standeth'. Sidney had offered by proclamation £1,000 for Shane O'Neill's 'bodie', 1,000 markes for his 'heade', and 500 'to him that shall kill him though he bring neither head nor bodie'. (*Council Book*, M.S.). Alaster Oge obtained no more than his revenge, for the reward was received by Sir William Piers, and Sidney made him quit the country; yet he seems to have returned, for Fynes Moryson says Turlough Luineach made war on and slew him in battle. Excerpted from *Illustrative Notes to Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir*, p. 101, Vol 3, *The Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 1855.

Those readers acquainted with Ireland's history in the 16th and 17th centuries will remember that Sean (Shane) was Hugh O'Neill's uncle, and that he had been elected The O'Neill by his clan, to succeed his father Conn, with impressive inauguration ceremonies at Tullyhoge, where he sat upon the ancient stone chair while the golden sandal was tossed over his head and then the white wand of his authority was handed him by the O'Hagan. He had been confirmed Earl of Tyrone by Queen Elizabeth, the second O'Neill to bear the title. He probably made as great an impression on Irish history as either of his ancestors, Conn of the Hundred Battles or Niall of the Nine Hostages, but not so great as was made by his nephew.

Practically nothing is known of the childhood and boyhood of Hugh O'Neill. His grandfather Conn Baccagh was born *circa* 1480 and died in 1559. Hugh's father Feardorcha was Conn's illegitimate son by Alison O'Kelly, the wife of a Dundalk blacksmith. Feardorcha married Siobhan, a daughter of Cuchonnacht the Comharba Maguidhir, and by her had Hugh O'Neill. The O'Kellys are fully as ancient as the O'Neills, so that this blending of two great families' blood was doubtless salutary to the progeny and descendants of the union, if Alison was of the O'Kelly tribe. English historians maintain that Feardorcha (Matthew) O'Neill, hence his son Hugh, was actually an O'Kelly; that Alison O'Kelly's husband was his father, not Conn Baccagh. This seems highly improbable.

Hugh's mother Siobhan first married his father Feardorcha (Matthew), the Baron of Dungannon. After Sean murdered Feardorcha in 1558 she married Henry O'Neill of the Fewes, son of Feidlimidh Ruadh O'Neill. After his death she again married, this time to Sir Eoin Mac Tuathail I Ghallchubhair. She died in 1600 and was buried in the monastery of Donegal.

Elizabeth commanded Henry Sidney to bring young Hugh O'Neill to England, there to be educated and trained in English manners, customs, and statecraft. State papers disclose that her principal object was to prepare him to succeed his uncle Sean as Earl of Tyrone, *her* Earl. Thus she hoped to control Ulster and through it Ireland, without continual conflict. At the time, young Hugh was probably still at fosterage. Fostering children out with reliable subject-families was a common custom in 16th century Ireland, and often children bore greater love and respect for foster-parents and foster brothers and sisters than for their own parents and the blood brothers and sisters they sometimes scarcely knew. Hugh O'Neill's foster parents were the O'Hagans. This family from ancient times had charge of the ceremonies attendant on the crowning of The O'Neill on the ancient stone at Tullyhogue. Henry O'Hagan was Hugh O'Neill's secretary for years.

There is not even an agreement among historians as to Hugh O'Neill's year of birth. Some say 1540, others 1550. The former seems more likely. Meehan mentions that he was in his seventy-sixth year when he died, July 20, 1616 (p. 473). At any rate, his obscure childhood is impenetrable. The fact that his wholly uninhibited uncle Sean murdered Hugh's father Feardorcha, made war on his own father Conn Baccagh, whom he unseated and succeeded as The O'Neill, then caused the murder of Hugh's brother Brian, gives grave cause to surmise that young Hugh was fostered out to keep him in hiding from his determined and ferocious uncle. After all, he was the obvious heir to the earldom if Elizabeth could but conquer Sean.

Anyone acquainted with the customs of Elizabethan England and the practices of warfare in that and contiguous centuries knows that it involved the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women, children, babes in arms, and even the very animals of the field. Man's inhumanity to man reached its culmination here. It was common practice to blind your captured enemy, sometimes a cousin, nephew, brother, or even son, by poking needles in his eyes. Emasculation usually was but a taste of tortures to come. Legs roasted in iron boots in red hot coals; pressing to death in a machine ingeniously devised for just that purpose; drawing-and-quartering, which meant just that. First, the torturer slit open his victim's stomach and removed his convulsing viscera before his eyes. Then as merciful oblivion overcame him, or her, the quartering quickly took place; the head, the trunk, then the legs. In Elizabeth's time the head generally adorned Dublin Castle, a grisly reminder to the 'rebel' Irish that they should surrender their ancient ways, their lands, their laws, and their liberties to the more 'progressive' substitutes the English offered. Let it be recorded here that in reading every authentic volume bearing on Irish history I have failed to find one word that charged Hugh O'Neill with similar barbarities. Sean undoubtedly practised them, tutored in their refinements by English 'nobles' and 'knights'. But Hugh O'Neill was pretty clearly composed of war-making propensities not quite so savage.

Youthful Hugh O'Neill went to England with Sidney. He did not depart, I feel certain, from the family's castle of Dungannon but, rather, with the clever stealth of his fosterers, from their secret abodes in the fastnesses of Tyrone. Tyrone, Tir Owen, Land of Eoghan, son of Niall the Great. A thousand years between, and young Hugh must leave the land of his forebears, to become an imprisoned guest of the Queen of England, whose minister-directed armies had Ireland in thrall, though not quite conquered.

Henry Sidney was at the time Lord President of Wales, so first Hugh was taken there, to Ludlow Castle; thence to London, and then to Kent and Sidney's country home Penshurst. His other patron the Earl of Leicester of whom he in later years spoke affectionately was

immortalized by Scott in *Kenilworth*, a fair compendium of the intrigues, duplicity, rapacity, and lusts of the age.

In 1567 Hugh O'Neill, new Baron of Dungannon, was in Ireland. By some accounts he was only seventeen now; other records make him twenty-seven. However that may be, it is the year the O'Donnells crushed Sean O'Neill's forces.

It was not until 1587 (John Mitchel's 'Life of Hugh O'Neill') that Hugh O'Neill was formally invested with the title of Earl of Tyrone and the concomitant estates. Before proceeding with a narrative of his exploits, his betrayal by Philip of Spain, and his final sad self-exile, I will set down the various clues that lead me to believe one or two McKee lines possibly descend from Hugh O'Neill. The first intimation that reached me in this respect came in a letter from John McKee of Brooklyn, N.Y., to a California McKee. It was dated April 25, 1931, and read in part as follows:

"McKEE is an Irish Gaelic name spelled MacAodh and pronounced Mac Weeh, meaning son of Hugh (O'Neill), Earl of Tyrone, anglicized into McGee, McHugh, and McKee. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth from 1558 to 1603 the O'Neills were driven out of Ireland and fled to Scotland, whose inhabitants were of the same race and spoke the same language. They were there during the Reformation and became Scotch Presbyterians, but still wanted to go back to Ireland, having heard their fathers tell what a beautiful country it was compared to Scotland. After Cromwell's massacre of the Irish in 1649 and 1650, your ancestors went back to Ireland and settled around Derry. My ancestors joined the army of King William III in Scotland, fought at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, and settled in Lisburn, near Saintfield, County Down, Ireland".

The first thing a reader notices about the foregoing is that the writer was perfectly self-assured. Whether or not he actually knew what he was talking about, he certainly believed he did. I investigated the background of the writer, who had died a short time after he wrote the letter. By rare good fortune I learned from some McKees at Boardmills, Ireland, that John McKee had been born near there, and had in late life caused a McKee Monument to be erected at Boardmills. In addition he at that time gave funds to build a town meeting house named McKee Hall. They and Mrs. Elizabeth McKee of Saintfield were good enough to transcribe the material on the monument for me, as well as to photograph it. My conclusion is that John McKee did some early research into the origin of the McKees, and thus came into possession of information he believed to be authentic that his line descended from Hugh O'Neill. I have tried to learn from his only living daughter whether he left papers and records bearing on his ancestry, but received an unresponsive reply. The matter that John McKee put into the letter just quoted, however, was unequivocal, and I believe it was founded on more than a guess, a hope, or an aspiration, because of what I have learned of the character of the man.

About the next odd clue that turned up in this quest after the origin of the McKees came from a distant cousin I discovered in Kahoka, Missouri, Albert J. McKee. On March 25, 1954, he wrote to tell me that when George and Elizabeth of England were visiting America a man came into his store and introduced himself as a McKee. During the course of their conversation the visitor stated that the McKees were related to them. This is the first intimation that an earlier McKee had learned or sensed that the McKees are somehow descended from Heremon, hence related to descendants of Fergus the Great.

In a letter dated July 22, 1954, Harry E. McKee, president of Teleweld, Inc., Chicago, stated that a cousin Harriet McKee had in her possession a family tree tracing his branch

back to Mary Queen of Scots. This Mary Stuart, whom Bothwell betrayed hideously, was descended from Heremon through Conn of the Hundred Battles, thence through Fergus the Great.

O'Hart in *Irish Pedigrees*, Dublin, 1876, ref. 80, page 27 (see 374 Appendix), says :

"It will be seen that the present Royal Family of Great Britain and Ireland derives its lineal descent from the Blood of the illustrious Irish monarch Conn of the Hundred Battles. May the knowledge of this fact conduce in the future to greater harmony between the people of England and Ireland than has unhappily obtained between these two nations for the last seven hundred years ; and, as our present gracious Sovereign (Victoria) cannot justly be held responsible for the bitter past in Ireland, may the knowledge of Her Majesty's Irish lineal descent endear Her Majesty to the Irish people and the Irish race all over the world".

Walter L. Riggs, Attorney-at-Law, 517 Walnut, McKeesport, Pa., wrote as follows on March 16, 1956 : "Possibly twenty-five or more years ago when I became interested in the McKee family, I heard of a man who worked in a dry goods store in Pittsburgh who was supposed to know all about that family . . . . I distinctly remember the statement in his memorandum that David McKee, the head of the family which located in McKeesport, had a title of nobility but never used it".

Various volumes I have consulted on the subject of Irish pedigrees and names uniformly trace the origin of the name McKee to the Gaelic name Mac Aodh. For example, O'Hart's *Irish Pedigrees*, Dublin, 1876, page 206, groups the names thus :

MacHugh (Mac Kay, Mackey ; Irish Mac Aodh (Mac-ee)).

Rev. Patrick Woulfe in *Irish Names and Surnames*, Dublin, 1923, page 123, groups them in this manner :

MacKee, (Mac Aodh, Mac-an-Caoch).

Here we have two origins noted : (1) Mac Aodh, or Son of Aodh ('ee' or 'ugh') and, (2) Mac-an-Caoch or Son of Caoch ('Kee'). The first would cover Son of Hugh (O'Neill) if we assume that premise of origin has merit, and the second clearly relates to Niall Caoch (one-eyed) O'Reilly who was slain in A.D. 1256. After him Clann-Kee of Cavan was named, a sept of the O'Reillys. On page 311 Rev. Woulfe has this item in Gaelic : Mac an Caoch—M'Echey, M'Ekey, M'Keegh, Mac Kee, and probably Keyes ; 'son of the blind man'. This was a designation of the O'Reillys in Cavan and the neighbouring counties, but was also found in other parts of Ireland, especially in Limerick and Tipperary.

With the ingenious aid of my good friend S. E. Allen Figgis, of the ancient house of Hodges, Figgis & Co., of Dublin, Ireland, I have obtained excellent copies of every one of the seven known portraits of Hugh O'Neill. Over a period of several years I have analyzed, studied, and compared them with portraits of my great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my father. This seems to be a groping, inconclusive way of seeking a solution to whether the McKees are in some lines descended from the Ulster O'Neills, but there is no direct method available. It is my conclusion that the strong family resemblance is more than a coincidence, but this in no way rises to the dignity of proof. Such unsupported surmise has no genealogical dignity, and without tremendous buttressing is utterly worthless. My opinion is that my own forebears derived from the same early ancestors as the O'Neills, but were in later centuries part of the Mac Eth, that is Mackay, clan of the northern part of Scotland.

John O'Donovan, in his introduction to his translation of the *Topographical Poems* of O'Dubhagain and O'Huidhrin (Dublin, 1862), says on page 42 :

“ Among the less distinguished Irish families, however, the translation and anglicizing of names have gone on to so great a degree as to leave no doubt that in the course of half a century (this would mean by 1912.—R.W.M.) it will be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish many families of Irish name and origin from those of English race, unless, indeed, enquirers shall be enabled to do so by the assistance of *history, family documents, or physiognomical characteristics*”. (Emphasis supplied).

In correspondence with H. Malcolm McKee, Solicitor, of the Supreme Courts of Northern Ireland and the Republic, he wrote to me on October 6, 1955, to say that “ a native Irish Dr. McKee told my brother (also Dr. McKee) that the translation of McKee was ‘ Conn the Kitter ’. What exactly ‘ Kitter ’ means I do not know ”.

He and I have discussed the several possibilities of ‘ Conn the Kitter ’. In another section I examined the possibility of ‘ Kitter ’ as an aberration of the Irish word meaning left-handed and pronounced ‘ Keetagh ’. This is the meaning H. Malcolm McKee assigns to it. Oddly, the king of Scotland 629–630 A.D. was Kenneth-Cear, or “ left-handed ”, O'Flaherty names him as Connad Kerr, but penetrating the anglicisations we find his true name in Gaelic to be Cian-Eth, *i.e.* *Cianaodh* the Left-handed. *Cianaodh* means ‘ descendant of aodh ’.

Before proceeding, it may be interesting to take notice here that the most illustrious Conn in the O'Neill lineage was Conn of the Hundred Battles (King of Ireland 174–212 A.D.), whose name in Gaelic was Conn Cedcathach, that is ‘ the hundred fighter ’. The name ‘ Conn ’ means hound, greyhound, fierce dog, and figuratively ‘ chieftain ’. ‘ Cedcathach ’, or ‘ hundred-fighter ’ is pronounced approximately ‘ Ced-Katagh ’. Keetagh, Katagh, Kitter ? I seriously doubt if a surname Mac Conn (nominative Mac Cu, pronounced Mac Kee) would revert to Conn of the Hundred Battles, because surnames commencing O' are much more ancient than those beginning with Mac.

But a son of a seventeenth-century Conn might very logically receive such a surname, if there were some good reason why he should not employ his father's surname. A grandson of Hugh O'Neill would have that reason. In 1567 the legislators of the Pale passed an act that abolished the name of The O'Neill and imposed the penalty of high treason on anyone who dared assume it. An even earlier law enacted in 1465 and known as the Statute of 5 Edward IV provided that every Irishman dwelling within the Pale, which consisted of the counties Dublin, Meath, Louth, and Kildare, should take an English surname.

‘ Conn the Kitter ’ might also conceivably be a way of distinguishing Conn the son of Catherine. Catherine Magennis was Hugh O'Neill's fourth wife, whom he married in 1597. The boy was captured by the English shortly after the ‘ flight of the earls ’, sent to Eton for awhile, then committed to the Tower on August 16, 1622. Meehan says of him merely that there is no further trace of him. Hill, in *Macdonnells of Antrim*, p. 228, says, “ So far as we are aware, nothing is known of this youthful prisoner's fate. He is never heard of subsequently to his imprisonment ”.

Young Conn was known as Conn na Creige. In a letter dated September 7, 1607, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, Chichester, wrote to the English Privy Council :

“ I have given warrant likewise to Sir Tobias Caulfield to make search for Con O'Neill, one of the Earl's children, among his fosterers in Tyrone, and to take him into safe custody,

Resolved that it is the opinion of this Committee, that Arthur Magan Esq. is not duly elected and returned as a Burgess to serve in this present Parliament for the Borough of Newtown Limavady, in the county of Londonderry.

To which Resolution, the question being put, the House did agree.

Ordered, that Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown, to make out a new writ for electing a Burgess to serve in this present Parliament for the said Borough of Newtown Limavady, in the room of the said Arthur Magan."

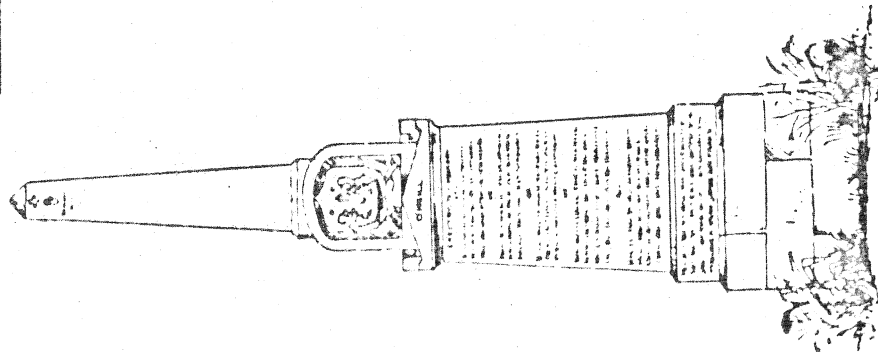
The result of the new election was the return of Captain Staples. Colonel Burton was the other sitting member for the borough.

(To be continued.)

## The O'Neill Monument, Donaghmore.

BY WILLIAM J. FENNELL.

WE reproduce a sketch of the monument erected to the descendants of Hugh O'Neill of the Red Hand, which stands in the sadly neglected and unkempt graveyard at the head of the cheery little village of Donaghmore, County Tyrone. This memorial, which is anything but Irish in its design, bears near the apex a sham-rock and the "red hand," below which are the words "Erected by Professor P. O'Neill, Dundee," and the armorial bearings lower down contain the motto "LAMH DEARG ERINN" and the name "O'NEILL" on the gablet underneath. The inscription on the lower panels reads as follows:



ERECTED TO THE MEMORY

OF  
HUGH O'NEILL OF THE RED HAND OF ULSTER CREATED EARL OF TYRONE  
BY HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH AND AFTERWARDS  
ELEVATED KING OF ALL IRELAND BY THE KINGS CHIEFS AND EARLS AND  
WITH THE UNANIMOUS GOOD WILL OF THE COMMON PEOPLE OF HIS COUNTRY  
WHO

INTERRED WITH THE RIGHTS AND CEREMONIES OF HIS CREED, AND ALSO THE POMP THAT HEREDITARILY BELONGED TO HIS NOBLE NAME AND ROYAL STATION IN LIFE

AND

OF HIS FOREFATHERS AND DESCENDANTS, WHO ARE INTERRED HERE IN DONAGHMORE, COUNTY OF TYRONE, IRELAND, HE HAD FIVE SONS HUGH, HENRY, JOHN, BRIEN AND CON.

OF

CON O'NEILL FIFTH SON OF THE KING WHO DIED AT GORTINACOLLY PARISH OF DONAGHMORE, TYRONE, IRELAND ON THE 16th MARCH 1670 AGED 65 AND IS INTERRED HERE IN DONAGHMORE; HE HAD FOUR SONS BORN TO HIM AT GORTINACOLLY, PARISH OF DONAGHMORE, NAMELY FELIMY, HUGH SHAN AND HENRY.

OF

FELIMY O'NEILL, ELDEST SON OF CON, WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON 15th AUGUST 1723 AGED 51 YEARS AND IS INTERRED HERE IN DONAGHMORE HE HAD THREE SONS BORN TO HIM AT GORTINACOLLY NAMELY TURLOUGH SHAN AND CORMAC.

OF

TURLOUGH BAGHA O'NEILL ELDEST SON OF HUGH WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON 6th MARCH 1817 AND IS INTERRED HERE IN DONAGHMORE HE HAD FOUR SONS BORN TO HIM AT GORTINACOLLY NAMELY CON, SHAN BAIG KNOWN BY THE BYNAME OF STOUT OR YELLOW JOHN, FRANK AND JAMES

OF

CON O'NEILL ELDEST SON OF TURLOUGH BAGHA, WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE AT ALTMORE ON 23rd DEC. 1841 AGED 51 YEARS AND IS INTERRED HERE IN DONAGHMORE, HE HAD SEVEN SONS BORN TO HIM AT GORTINDARRAGH PARISH OF DONAGHMORE COUNTY OF TYRONE IRELAND NAMELY TURLOUGH, JAMES, SHAN, CHARLES, CON, PATRICK AND FRANCIS NAKED CAME I OUT OF MY MOTHER'S WOMB AND NAKED SHALL I RETURN THITHER, THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY AS IT HATH PLEASED THE LORD SO IT IS DONE, BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD. JOB. I. 1. 21.

THE ABOVE IS AN EXACT COPY OF THE FAMILY STONE IN BALCOY CEMETERY ERECTED BY PROFESSOR O'NEILL DUNDEE ELDEST SON OF SHAN BAIG OR STOUT OR YELLOW JOHN TO THE MEMORY OF HIS FOREFATHERS WHO ARE INTERRED IN DONAGHMORE, AND TO HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND FAMILY IN DUNDEE.

JOHN O'NEILL OR SHAN BAIG, KNOWN BY THE BYNAME OF STOUT THE SECOND SON OF TURLOUGH BORN AT GORTINACOLLY PARISH OF DONAGHMORE TYRONE IRELAND, WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON 7th MAY 1857 AGED 77 YEARS AND IS INTERRED IN THE CONSTITUTION BURYING GROUND DUNDEE HE HAD FIVE SONS BORN TO HIM AT GORTINDARRAGH AND ALTMORE PARISH OF POMEROY AND DONAGHMORE NAMELY PATRICK, TURLOUGH, SHAN, JAMES AND FRANK.

The graveyard is fully equal, in its neglected state, to many others in Ireland. In the yard, half-covered by gigantic nettles, is a curiously hollowed stone, which at times catches a little rain-water, much sought after as a cure for warts, the seeker leaving a pin in the cavity as a token or tribute of gratitude.

Outside the graveyard, facing the village street, is a fine old Irish cross, a reproduction of which would have been much more appropriate as a monument to an Irish prince than the mixture of an attempt at an Egyptian obelisk on a classic pedestal.





until he receive other direction in his behalf. This child was by accident left behind, for the Earl sought him diligently, but by reason he was overtaken with shortness of time, and that the people of those parts do follow their creates, as they call them, in solitary places, and where they best like their pastures (after the manner of the Tartars), they are not, therefore, always ready to be found". Calendar of State Papers, p. 261.

According to Rev. Paul Walsh, in *The Will and Family of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone*, p. 32 :

"Caulfield captured the child after some time, and kept him under close surveillance lest any near relative of the Earl should remain at liberty, and so possibly interfere with the Plantation then in progress. In a letter to the Privy Council dated Dublin, July 4, 1609, Chichester suggested that the children of O'Neill and Caffar O'Donnell should be sent to England and put to trades, that they might thus 'forget their fierceness and pride'. In his notes touching the escheated lands in Ulster, he states that 'there is a son of the Earl of Tyrone of some seven or eight years old, and another of Caffar O'Donel, brother of the Earl of Tyrconnel, both of whom he has committed to two captains in Ulster'. After seriously pondering what he ought to do with them, he declares the best course would be 'to send them to some remote parts of England or Scotland to be kept from the knowledge of friends or acquaintances'. It was alleged that part of the object of the Ulster conspiracy of 1615 was 'to take away Conn ne Kreigy O'Neile, son of the Earl of Tyrone, from Charlemont'. In order to avoid all risk of his release, his keepers transported him to England, and on July 6, 1615, we learn 'as to Conn O'Neil, Tyrone's son, his majesty has disposed of him and sent him to Eton College'. On August 12, 1622, he was committed to the Tower of London. We hear no more of him".

The Chief Herald at Dublin Castle assured me, though, that the boy died in the Tower in 1622. However, it appears that there is an O'Neill monument at Donaghmore, in County Tyrone, as reported in the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* in the January, 1903, issue, a copy of which my good and assiduous friend S. E. Allen Figgis of Dublin miraculously found for me. The inscription on the monument says :

"Erected to the memory of Hugh O'Neill of the Red Hand of Ulster created Earl of Tyrone by her majesty Queen Elizabeth and afterwards elected King of all Ireland by the kings, chiefs, and earls and with the unanimous good will of the common people of his country, who died in exile at Rome on the 20th July, 1616, aged 76 years. He was interred with the rights and ceremonies of his creed, and also the pomp that hereditarily belonged to his noble name and royal station in life, and of his forefathers and descendants, who are interred here in Donaghmore, County of Tyrone, Ireland. He had five sons Hugh, Henry, John, Brien, and Con.

Con O'Neill, fifth son of the King, who died at Gortinacolly, Parish of Donaghmore, Tyrone, Ireland, on the 16th March, 1670, aged 65 and is interred here in Donaghmore. He had four sons born to him at Gortinacolly, Parish of Donaghmore, namely Felimy, Hugh, Shane, and Henry".

It seems improbable folly to erect a solemnly worded monument inscribed with false facts. The Conn O'Neill memorialized on the Donaghmore monument could be no other person than Conn, the son of the Great Earl, Hugh O'Neill, and his Countess Catherine Magennis O'Neill. Unless we assume that the monument is a joke or a fraud the boy Conn did not die in the Tower, but died in 1670 at the age of 65. It fits rather well as to dates, too ; not precisely, but rather well.

When Hugh O'Neill and Koderick O'Donnell departed from Ireland September 14, 1607, to exile themselves forever from the land their ancestors settled more than 3,000 years

earlier, they were accompanied by 97 members of their family and followers. Hugh O'Neill's youngest son Conn, as elsewhere noted, was with his foster parents at the time, and as they were back in the fastnesses of Ulster, following their herds at this season of the year, they could not be found in time for the lad to accompany his parents.

“Fostering”, says Sir John Davies, “hath always been a stronger alliance than blood; and the foster-children so love and are loved of their foster-fathers and sept more than of their own natural parents and kindred; and so partake of their means more frankly, and so adhere unto them, in all fortunes, with more affection and constancy. Such a general custom in a kingdom, in giving and taking children to foster, making such a firm alliance as it doth in Ireland, was never seen nor heard of in any other country of the world besides”. Meehan, p. 113, *Fate and Fortunes of Hugh O'Neill*, etc., Dublin, 1870.

Since it seems pretty clear that this youngest Conn of Hugh O'Neill's, and it will be seen from the list which follows that he named two sons Conn, lived to be (at least) 65 years of age, we have a wobbly foundation for our thesis. I conjecture that he was released from the Tower prison with the admonition that he must not return to Ireland or use the name O'Neill. From the preceding comment of Chichester it clearly appears that he *would have been permitted to settle in Scotland*. At that time, 1616–1625, the presence of a son of Hugh O'Neill in Ireland would have been more dangerous to England's interests than a force of 10,000 Spaniards. Indeed, his older brother Brian was strangled by an English agent in Brussels August 16, 1617.

If such a release took place and Conn O'Neill afterward sired children, before his subsequent and apparently unhindered return to Ireland, it would have been the most natural impulse to employ the name Conn Mac Aodh, thus obliquely claiming his illustrious parentage for himself and his children. It must be recognized that we are on very flimsy ground here, and that our thesis rests on pure conjecture. But it would be a way of accounting for the mysterious phrase ‘Conn the Kitter’.

John O'Donovan, in his scholarly translation of *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*, by the Four Masters (Hodges & Smith, Dublin, 1851) says in the Appendix, page 2,422 :

“It has been pretty clearly ascertained that the race of Shane-an-diomais, or John the Proud O'Neill, as well as that of Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, has been for a long time extinct . . . . But various poor families living in the mountains of Tyrone *claim descent from the same stock* (emphasis supplied), as was determined some years since by an impostor who forged a document purporting to be the Will of a Count O'Neill, who died abroad without issue, leaving a large sum of money to be divided in certain proportions among his relatives in Ireland, according to their nearness or remoteness to him in paternal or maternal consanguinity. Of this document the fabricator sold many copies in the mountains of Tyrone and Derry, and it created more avidity for determining the descents of the various surviving families of the O'Neills than had existed since the flight of the Earls. All the traditions were most anxiously revived, and stories were wrung from the memories of old men and women who had long forgotten to boast of their royal ancestors. Generations were counted with great skill, and the pedigrees of almost all the legitimate branches of the great fallen family were attested by affidavits before the local magistrates. Such was the power of money, the shadow of a shade of an expectation of which created so much interest in family history on this occasion! The delusion was carried on until the impostor had supplied all the houses and nearly all the cabins belonging to persons of the name O'Neill in Tyrone with copies of this document, when he suddenly disappeared, leaving the O'Neills in a state of excitement and delusion, from which the magistrates and priests could with difficulty remove them. The Editor was told this in 1834, by several of the O'Neills them-

selves, who acknowledged that none of the families then living attempted to name their ancestors beyond the sixth generation.

The Editor has been most anxiously inquiring for the last fourteen years to ascertain whether any of the race of Con Bacagh O'Neill, first Earl of Tyrone, still exist in Ireland, and he has satisfied himself that there are at least three septs of his descendants now in Ireland, whose descents will appear from the following pedigree" : (Mr. O'Donovan than accounts for the progeny of Con Bacagh O'Neill by stating (1) that his natural son Matthew, or Feardorcha, father of Hugh O'Neill, had also Shane the Proud, and Felim Caech. While he is sure Hugh O'Neill left numerous descendants in Tyrone under the name Mac Baron, because in his youth he was Baron of Dungannon, he believes Shane's race is extinct (Shane was reputed to have sired dozens of offspring), but does account for numerous descendants of Felim Caech O'Neill, right down to his own time in the middle of the nineteenth century).

The present author has only the deepest respect and regard for the talents, scholarly attainments, and certainly the probity of the great John O'Donovan. Nevertheless, he feels obliged to point out that this dissertation on the O'Neills, and in particular the conclusions Mr. O'Donovan reached concerning his anecdote of the forged will, are prejudiced in favor of a decision that the facts do not support. Oddly enough, on page 2377 of this same Appendix, he writes concerning the mighty O'Donnel clan :

" The O'Donnels who remained in Ireland after the flight of the Earls, lapsed to poverty, and but few of them have preserved any authentic traces of their descent "

We have already noted that nearly *all* of the ancient families of Ireland lost their record-of-pedigree in the bleak oblivion of centuries when they were fortunate not to starve, and grateful to God daily that they and their infants were not murdered in cold blood. Under English rule they were deemed ' meere Irish ', and in such low esteem were their lives held that the only punishment an Englishman might suffer for killing an Irish man, woman, or child was to be fined one mark ! How can Mr. O'Donovan seriously express wonder that none of these poor oppressed wretches ' attempted to name their ancestors beyond the sixth generation ' ? Mr. O'Donovan's proud ancestry can be traced without a break back through 3,500 years to Heremon. But how many average English or American families can reach backward even six generations and name their agnatic and/or cognatic ancestors ? That would be your great-great-great-great grandparents ! In the course of deriving the information contained in the present volume I discovered that the average person today *does not know his grandfather's name*.

Examine what Mr. O'Donovan's dissertation contains. First, he states that it has been pretty well ascertained, at a period more than 100 years ago, by the way, that the race of Shane O'Neill, the second Earl of Tyrone, and Hugh O'Neill, the third Earl of Tyrone, ' has been for a long time extinct '. This could scarcely be ascertained without knowing how many children each begat, and their identity. Historians of considerable stature state unequivocally that Shane O'Neill sired many children, among them Hugh Gaveloch O'Neill by his captive-concubine, O'Donnell's wife, and whom Hugh O'Neill caused to be hanged for treason. There certainly is no sound reason to assume that all of these children, even though illegitimate, expired without issue.

As to the great Hugh O'Neill himself, we already have ascertained that he had six legitimate sons and seven daughters. We also have discovered somewhat persuasive evidence

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II, No. 1, *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, October, 1895, p. 216 : " Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tir-owen.—A gentleman living in the city of Mexico, named Gonzala O'Neill, claims to be descended from the great Hugh O'Neill, whose seal is in the possession of his father, the Marquis del-Norte. At his (Gonzalo's) baptism, in Spain, the Te Deum was played in the Cathedral in recognition of his regal descent "

that Conn Ruadh did not die in the Tower Prison, but is buried in Tyrone. The monument at Donaghmore, the inscriptions of which are reproduced herein, definitely indicates a growing line of progeny. Not only is it highly probable that several of the Earl's sons and daughters had issue, but it is also exceedingly likely that his illegitimate children also founded lines that have descended to the present.

Nothing that Mr. O'Donovan included in his anecdote proved the man who supplied copies of the supposed will was an impostor. For all we know he may have been quite honest in his professions, and they *may have been based on a fact*. Certainly, the meagre sums he could collect from these impoverished families for a copy of the will would hardly compensate a first-class swindler. Moreover, his method ill assorts with an intent to extort substantial amounts, as the usual approach is to collect a fee for filing a claim under the mythical will, plus travelling expenses.

In reading what Mr. O'Donovan says I gained the distinct impression that the pretensions of these mountain people of Tyrone and Londonderry (formerly Coleraine before the Plantation) to descent from Shane O'Neill and Hugh O'Neill existed long before the stranger appeared among them. '*Traditions were most anxiously revived*' and '*stories were wrung from the memories of old men and women who had long forgotten to boast of their royal ancestors*'! 'Generations were counted with great skill, and the pedigrees of almost all the *legitimate* branches of the great fallen family were attested by affidavits before the local magistrates'.

Either I am obtuse in my effort to prove the Great Earl may have sired one or two McKee lines, or else the folk Mr. O'Donovan describes *believed* they were descended from him, or in some cases Shane, perhaps. A false affidavit in an effort to collect part of an estate can be punishable as perjury, and we may assume the affiants knew this. Is it not more reasonable to assume *they were telling the simple truth*?

If it were not for the traditions that live in the memories of old men and women, we would have little *written* history today, because history is not often recorded contemporaneously, but rather posthumously.

Hugh O'Neill's four marriages were interspersed by several love affairs, some of which were fruitful.

His first marriage was to a daughter of Sir Brian Mac Feilim O'Neill, Chieftain of Clannaboy, Clann-na-Aodh-Buidhe, which means clan of yellow Hugh. Historians without exception have failed to learn her name, but from an item contained in Rev. Paul Walsh's excellent little volume (p. 45) I infer that her name was Brighid. Sir Brian was treacherously and brutally murdered by the Earl of Essex in 1574. Essex was one of the most ruthless of Elizabeth's minion-lovers, but later she executed him, too. This Brighid O'Neill was so closely related to Hugh O'Neill that their marriage fell within the forbidden degree of consanguinity, and was dissolved with the church's approval. She later married Neill Mac Brian Faghartach O'Neill. He was appointed lord of Upper (Southern) Clannaboy in 1590, and died *circa* 1601. Historians are of the opinion that there were several children from this marriage, but they only guess at their identity. Under English law at the time, children of the dissolved marriage, as I have noted elsewhere, were considered to be illegitimate, since children of the next marriage could not inherit lands and titles otherwise.

The *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* by the Four Masters at the year 1607 name the elder Conn thus:

Conn Mac Aodha mic Firdorcha mic Cuinn Bhacaigh.

A reader who has never read Irish history will be a little surprised to learn that names of people and places are spelled differently by various authors, and often by the same author in the same volume. Conn's name cannot of course be translated into English, but it can be crudely anglicized as :

Chieftain (or champion), son of Hugh, grandson of Matthew (Feardorcha),  
great-grandson of the lame Chieftain (Conn Baccagh).

It should also be noticed that Conn MacAodha would be pronounced 'Conn MacKee' in English. The Four Masters further depict this elder Conn as illegitimate. This probably means he was a child of the dissolved marriage with Brighid O'Neill, although it is barely possible the boy was begotten out of wedlock.

This Conn O'Neill was a gallant captain in his father the Earl's forces in 1595, from which we may infer he was born *circa* 1570. He died in Tyrone December 9, 1601. It is known that he had one son Feardorcha who accompanied his grandfather the Earl into exile in 1607. It seems probable there was other issue, and here again we are confronted by the same English ogre. While the Great O'Neill was in rebellion, a period somewhat over eight years, an O'Neill was fair game for any English soldier or sympathiser. In these circumstances it would not be surprising if Conn's offspring, even at fosterage where the warlike condition of his household would perforce place them, would be safer as MacAodhs than as O'Neills. But again we are on the queasy ground of conjecture, with nothing to support us but 'Con the Kitter' and the unassailable fact that McKee is the anglicized way of pronouncing the untranslatable Gaelic name MacAodh.

In December, 1875, John O'Hart wrote from Ringsend, Dublin, Ireland, as follows (*Origin and Stem of the Irish Nation*, Vol. I, p. 122) :

'I am informed that, in the humble but honourable position of Teacher of a National School, the lineal representative of the monarch Niall Glundubh now resides in a secluded part of the County Cork, *under a name which some of his forefathers had to assume*, in order to preserve a portion of their estates . . . . .'

Hugh O'Neill's second marriage, following his divorce from Brighid O'Neill, was to Siobhan (Joan, Johan, Judith) O'Donnell. The O'Neills and O'Donnells, both tribes descended from Heremon, alternately fought shoulder-to-shoulder, then nose-to-nose. This girl was a sister of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, whose mother Inghean Dubh was married to Sir Hugh O'Donnell, but who in her own right was from the powerful MacDonnell clan of Scotland. Inghean Dubh (dubh means black) hated the English, and everything English with a deep and abiding hatred that took its principal form in her means and methods of thwarting them or supporting attacks against them. She was a particularly painful barb in the flesh of arrogant Elizabeth, this Dark Girl Inghean. Judith O'Donnell and Hugh O'Neill were married on or about June 14, 1574. She is reputed to have been a beautiful girl, but history does not tell us whether she was a red-head like her groom, and her brother Hugh Roe (Ruadh, red).

She bore Hugh O'Neill two sons Hugh and Henry. Peter Lombard's *De Hibernia Commentarius* states that she bore several children. She died sometime before the end of January, 1591.

There is room for suspicion that Hugh O'Neill was at least aware of the existence of Mabel Bagenal, his next wife, before Judith died. Mabel was about 20 when they married

in August, 1591, while the Earl was 51. They were married by the Protestant Bishop of Meath, Jones, so that there could be no cavil by Elizabeth ; it was done according to English law. But later Mabel, sometimes called Ursula, adopted the Catholic faith of her husband. There were no children from this marriage, so far as history notes. On one occasion Mabel left the castle at Dungannon for what seemed to her husband a trivial and rather absurd reason : " Because I affected two other gentlewomen ! " as O'Neill is said by one historian to have expressed it, in mild astonishment. She returned, and died there December 22, 1595, however.

Mabel's brother raised a considerable storm of protest over the marriage of his sister to Hugh O'Neill, finally involving even Queen Elizabeth herself. He made all manner of wild charges, the most serious of which was that O'Neill was never divorced from his first wife. Hugh O'Neill deftly flung this lie back in his teeth, and Marshal Bagenal subsided like a punctured bladder. His real reason for opposing the marriage with such unreasoning fury was that he was trustee of Mabel's dowry and could not afford to pay it over. So far as I have been able to find he never did pay the sum.

While Hugh O'Neill was married to his second wife Judith O'Donnell, there is strong evidence that he had a serious affair with a daughter of Turlough Lynagh O'Neill *circa* 1579. In several state papers it is even stated that he divorced Judith and married this girl, but this is refuted by the fact that such a marriage was not urged against him by Mabel Bagenal's brother, when he was so bitterly attacking the legality of the match, and urging every shred of damaging material he could unearth to annul it. It is probable, though, that there were children by this love affair, because state papers mention that Turlough Lynagh was threatening to march against Hugh O'Neill to compel him to marry his daughter. Turlough commenced to decline in health, force, and power about this time, however, while Hugh O'Neill's star was ascending. Somehow, the matter was composed. Children of that affair, whether we like it or not, would probably have become Mac Aodhs. Under Irish law both illegitimate and legitimate sons shared in the estate of a deceased father ; girls received only a dowry of cattle and other valuable personal goods. It must be recognized, though, that Ireland at this time was operating under English law, and that Hugh O'Neill endeavoured to be meticulous in this regard. He was only Baron of Dungannon, the weight and income of which English creation were scant. Every course of his now embodied acumen meant to gain him in the end the Earldom of Tyrone, with millions of acres of land, hundreds of thousands of cattle, and power such as few men know today.

His fourth and last marriage was to Catherine Magennis, daughter of Sir Hugh Magennis. She was in her teens when she married the Earl in 1597, while in my opinion he was 57, having been 76 when he died in 1616. He was a vigorous man, and Countess Catherine bore him three sons, including Conn Ruadh (Red), known also as Conn na Creige. Conn Ruadh would simply refer to the color of his hair, while na Creige probably indicates the locality in which he was fostered.

From letters the Earl wrote during the last two or three years of his life, when his fortunes had fallen to a low ebb, it is clear that Countess Catherine resented the financial restraints under which she must now live, and was somewhat extravagant when there was an opportunity. She died in Rome March 15, 1618, less than two years after the Earl passed to his ancestors.

The tabulation that follows contains all of the vital information I have been able to

discover about Hugh O'Neill's sons and daughters. There is not the shadow of a doubt that there were others, both legitimate and illegitimate :

SONS OF HUGH O'NEILL (1540-1616)

NAME		MOTHER
Hugh	B. 1585 D. 9.24.1609	Judith O'Donnell O'Neill
Henry	B. D. c. 1626	Judith O'Donnell O'Neill
Conn	B. c. 1570 D. 12.9.1601 (Four Masters at 1607 : Conn Mac Aodha mic Firdorcha mic Cuinn Bhacaigh)	Illegitimate ; hence, probably Brighid O'Neill
Sean (John)	B. Oct. 1599 D. 1.27.1641 Sean had one son whom he named Hugh O'Neill. His genealogy is shown following the list of Hugh O'Neill's daughters.	Catherine Magennis O'Neill
Conn Ruadh	B. c. 1600 D. 3.16.1670 This second son named Conn was also known as Conn na Creige. He was committed to the Tower Prison but later secretly released (in my opinion) since a monument bearing his name in Donaghmore shows he died in Tyrone in 1670.	Catherine Magennis O'Neill
Brian	B. D. 8.16.1617 Strangled by an English agent while a page to Archduke in Brussels.	Catherine Magennis O'Neill

DAUGHTERS OF HUGH O'NEILL (1540-1616)

NAME	HUSBAND	MOTHER
Mary	Brian Mac Aodh Og Mac Mahon	Brighid
Catherine	Sir Henry Og O'Neill	
Margaret	Richard Butler, the Viscount Mountgarret	
Rose	Hugh Roe O'Donnell, who divorced her for barrenness. She later married Domhnall Ballach O'Cahan.	
Sorcha (Sarah)	Sir Arthur Magennis	
Alice (Ellis) B. 1583	Sir Randall Mac Sorley Mac Donnell	Judith
Brighid		Brighid

There were at least two other daughters, as a beautiful unmarried daughter lived with the Earl and Countess Catherine in Rome between 1607 and 1616, and another is elsewhere noticed. For example, on page 571 of Hill's *Plantation in Ulster*, A.D., 1642, it is said, "they also seized the castle at Carlingford, in which they found the old Lady Iveagh, a daughter of the Earl of Tyrone ; she had taken refuge at Carlingford as a place supposed to be safer and of greater strength than her own residence at Castlewellaan".

The following genealogy of Hugh O'Neill's illegitimate grandson by his son Sean traces his ancestry back only three centuries, but it is quite simple to trace it through 3,200 years to Heremon, which I have done :



GENEALOGY OF HUGH O'NEILL'S GRANDSON WHO WAS ALSO NAMED  
HUGH O'NEILL

				KING OF TYRONE
	AODH (HUGH) O'NEILL (*illegitimate)	B. 1632	D. 1660	
Son of	Sean (John)	1599	1641	
„ „	AODH (HUGH) O'NEILL (Earl of Tyrone)	1540	1616	1588-1616
„ „	Feardorcha (Matthew)		1558	
„ „	Cuinn (Conn Baccagh) (First Earl of Tyrone)		1559	
„ „	Cuinn (Conn Mor)		1493	1483-1493
„ „	Henry		1489	1455-1483
„ „	Eoghan		1456	1432-1455
„ „	Neill Og		1403	1395-1403
„ „	Niall Mor O'Neill		?	

\* Granted papers of legitimation by the King of Spain.

There is a separate chapter devoted to the meteoric career of Aodh (Hugh) O'Neill, The O'Neill, rightful heir to the throne of Ireland, admitted by predacious Elizabeth to the English invention 'Earl of Tyrone'. The material therein was written by Abbé Mac Geoghegan, a member of that ancient sept, about 1750 A.D. He relied on *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* by The Four Masters (O'Clery *et ux*), and some manuscripts to which he had access. He did a masterful and scholarly job, so that it seemed idle to attempt to reconstruct a life story that has been written by Primo Damsachino (*La Spada D'Orione*), Gainsforde (a peculiarly prejudiced version by an Englishman, published in 1619), John Mitchel, 1851, Meehan, 1870, Sean O'Faolain's *The Great O'Neill*, an able and sympathetic yarn, in 1942, and *The Proud Man* by Elizabeth Linington in 1955. The author of the latter did not permit herself to be handicapped by historical facts, family relationships, dates, identities, or the lives of the individuals portrayed. Two people who read the book at my request say she spun a good yarn, notwithstanding.

I am going to be perfectly honest with the McKees who will read this : no one can say for certain from which line they derived in ancient times. There are several possible sources : Mac Aodhs, including the Mac Aodhs of Magee Isle, from one of the three Collas, the Mac Aodhs who may have descended from Aodh O'Neill, the Mac Caochs, the Mac Cons (Mac Cus), and certainly the Mackays of Scotland concerning whom the reader is referred to George Wilson McKee's book (1890). Of course, the Mackays were Mac Eths, or, more correctly spelled, *Mac Aoidhs* ! It is my persuasion that the branch that descended from the brothers who were in the army of William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 could very readily be a branch of the O'Neill sept, but I do doubt it. It seems indubitable to me that they were Mackays from Strathnaver, else from Larg or Balmaghie in Galloway, a cadet branch of the ancient Strathnaver Mackays (Mac Eths), and thus originally of the same clan as the O'Neills. Their origin could be Kintyre.

The very weighty piece of evidence that points to their membership in the Strathnaver branch of the Mackay clan is the fact that one of them was buried in 1706 at Carncastle Parish

<sup>1</sup> It finally became necessary regretfully to omit this chapter, for the obvious reason that the book was already bulging at the seams. Readers interested in reading more about the Great Earl should seek the books whose titles are given, for a true and sympathetic account of his career.—R.W.M. 1958.

Churchyard in Antrim, with a monument that had a coat of arms upon it ; the principal charge on the shield was *three bears' heads*, <sup>1</sup>identical with those on the Forbes-ified arms of Lord Reay, head of the Mackays of Strathnaver. Thus, it is evident that this veteran of the Boyne considered himself to be a member of that particular branch of the clan. In 1912, a descendant John Reginald McKee was granted arms in Ireland again bearing the same principal charge of three bears' heads. Again, in 1956, H. Malcolm McKee, a descendant of one of the four brothers who fought at the Boyne, was granted arms in Ireland, and the principal charge consists of the three bears' heads. For particulars of these brothers, see the details in the volume, *The Descendants of David McKee of Anahilt*, by Joseph D. and James Y. McKee, 1892.

We McKees should be tremendously grateful to these historians of our sept. But for what they have done, much of the McKee history would have been lost irretrievably. They have in a sense supplied the place of the ollaves of ancient Ireland, who carefully preserved the septs' history, their work to be audited annually at the convocation at Tara. If it has not already struck the reader's attention I invite him to comb his recollection, then correct me if I am wrong in assigning the following attributes as rather characteristic of a McKee :

1. A strong sense of family history and tradition, often embracing vital statistics in a family Bible and other written matter.
2. A rather fierce tribal spirit of friendship and family loyalty, unconsciously felt toward even an apparently unrelated McKee.
3. A stormy temper, not always kept under perfect control.
4. In earlier centuries a tendency toward large families.

It is fairly well established by repetitive discovery by different researchers that either five or eleven brothers McKee came to Pennsylvania in the great exodus from Ireland of 1737, through the port of Philadelphia, and settled temporarily in Lancaster. The restless nature of a McKee crowded them out into the wilderness, though, of Virginia ; then those of Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio, all only subsequent subdivisions of our original Virginia.

There is no question in my mind that my own line, which I believe descends through Alexander McKee, the veteran of the Battle of the Boyne ; then his son Thomas McKee, who with his father gave name to McKee's Half Falls (Pennsylvania), and married a Shawnee girl ; then their son Hugh McKee and his wife Mary Nesbit McKee ; then James and Agnes McKee ; then William and Cassie McKee ; then Henry and Mary McKee ; then Charles Edward and Sarah Ellen McKee, is very closely related to the line of which Colonel William McKee (1732-1816) of Rockbridge County, Virginia, was a member. His portrait, reproduced in George Wilson McKee's fine book '*The McKees of Virginia and Kentucky*' would be a *very good* likeness of my father Charles Edward McKee (1872-1924). Unfortunately, there is no existing *profile* portrait of the author's father, and the only known portrait of Colonel William McKee was sketched by an early artist in profile. However, to show the physiognomical resemblance between the two lines, there are included in the present volume the profile portrait of Colonel William McKee and a photograph in profile of the author. A few readers are sure to conclude from this action that the author is a conceited ass, but he hastens to assure them that nothing in his mirror justifies that conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> Identical, except that they are unmuzzled.

Three of the five or eleven McKee brothers who came to Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1738 were *John McKee*, *Robert McKee*, and *William McKee*. *Robert McKee* had two sons, *William* and *John*. The former was afterward Captain and finally Colonel *William McKee*, who married his cousin *Miriam McKee*.

*John McKee*, *Robert's* brother, had five sons and three daughters. The sons were *Robert*, *James*, *David*, *William*, and *John*; two of the girls were *Mary* and the *Miriam* who married Colonel *William McKee*, her cousin.

Colonel *William* and *Miriam* had thirteen children, named in the order of their seniority, *John*, *Nancy*, *Robert*, *William*, *James*, *Samuel*, and a second *Robert*; *Ebenezer*, *Jane*, *Mary*, *David*, *Hugh*, and a second *James*.

*William McKee*, one of the three above named members of the McKee brothers seems to have eventuated thus, quoting from *George Wilson McKee's 'McKees of Virginia and Kentucky'* :

"It is thought that *William McKee*, the pioneer, left Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and joined his brothers *Robert* and *John*, on *Kerr's Creek*, *Rockbridge County*, *Virginia*, about 1760 . . . . . *William* (one of the eleven) settled in *Augusta County*, or *Botetourt*, and his family moved to *Kentucky* about 1788 or 1790, and most of them live in *Montgomery County*, *Ky.* *William McKee*, with others, came to Pennsylvania from the *North of Ireland about 1736*, and moved from *Lancaster County, Pa.*, to *Botetourt County*, now *Rockbridge County, Va.*, about 1749 . . . . . I have little information as to details in his life, but only know that he had the reputation of being an upright, honorable gentleman and a good citizen in every respect. His descendants in *Kentucky* have always been noted as men of great integrity, and markedly strong character".

Many people have written or told me that their ancestors came from Scotland. While a few early McKees did emigrate here from Scotland, most pioneer McKee families came here from the North of Ireland: *County Down*, *Antrim*, *Tyrone*, *Londonderry* (ancient *Coleraine*) and *Cavan*, even though their fathers or grandfathers came to North Ireland from Scotland. It is my opinion hence that the McKees are originally Irish, not Scottish. It should never be forgotten that everything Scottish is actually Irish, even the name Scotland. The country was settled by the colony of *Fergus* in the early part of the Sixth Century. The following communications and references are fair specimens of the comment on this problem :

*George Wilson McKee* in '*The McKees of Virginia and Kentucky*', 1891, says :

"I sum up generally the Origin and History of the McKees as follows: First, they were of Irish, or Celtic, origin and the main body of them went into Scotland in the Twelfth century to assist *William the Lion* in driving the Danish pirates from *Caithness*, and the north generally".

"Second, a few of them probably joined *William of Normandy* in the Eleventh century when the latter, preparatory to his descent upon the *Sussex coast* of England, invited to his standard professional soldiers, free-lances, adventurers, and cut-throats from all parts of Europe".

"Third, tradition says of them that, from the earliest dawn of the Reformation, they have been Protestants. Early in the Sixteenth century, owing to the civil feuds of Scotland, their native land for centuries, they emigrated back to Ireland; thence, after a brief sojourn, to France. There they remained until the massacre of the Huguenots, on *St. Bartholomew's Day*, August 24, 1572. Being firm adherents of the Protestant faith, they experienced the utmost fury of the enemies of their religion on that day. But few were left to tell the tale of horror. These few fled to the *North of Ireland*, and there again, in 1641, under the reign of *Charles I*, the most infamous of the Stuarts, and, in 1688, under *James II*, the most pusillanimous, they again

experienced the fury of persecution on account of their religion. It is said that some of those who escaped the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day fled into Holland and marched into Ireland later with the forces of William, Prince of Orange".

"Fourth, in 1738 when a large migration of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians to Pennsylvania and the valley of Virginia took place, some brothers McKee, variously estimated from five to ten or eleven sons of one who had borne a part in the defense of 'Derry, arrived in America and first settled near Lancaster, Pa. There they separated, some settling near Wheeling, W. Va., and Pittsburgh, Pa., and some going to the far West. Two of the brothers, John and Robert, went almost directly to Virginia, about 1757, and settled on a portion of Borden's grant, on Kerr's Creek, in what is now Rockbridge County, about eight miles north-west of Lexington. In 1760, William, another of the brothers, also removed to Augusta County, Va."

Florence McCutcheon McKee's '*The McCutcheon Family Records*' (Grand Rapids, 1931) however says: 'The tradition is that the first McKee was suckled by a doe under a hawthorne bush in the Highlands of Scotland'.

I venture the opinion that this report, or tradition, is somewhat exaggerated. It does though tend to identify us with the Highlands rather than the Lowlands while we sojourned there. It might be apodictic to insert the information at this point concerning the esoteric meaning of the line, "O ye'll take the high road and I'll take the low road, but I'll be in Scotland afore ye". The ancient legend holds that Scots killed in foreign lands return to the land of their nativity by the 'low road', that their spirits may forever dwell in bonnie Scotland. The song concerns itself with two Scot warriors, prisoners of the English. One was sentenced to be executed, and it was he who composed the lyrics of the song; his more fortunate companion would take the high road home, but the doomed man would reach Scotland ahead of him by the low road. Both incidentally were in love with the same girl.

A letter from Hugh S. McKee of 4 Joanmount Park, Belfast, North Ireland, dated June 23, 1955, says:

"In the 1920's a McKee from McKeesport, Pa., tried to trace his ancestry back and concluded that most of us derived from four brothers who fought in the armies of King William of Orange. Be this as it may, when I mentioned this to an Irish-speaking friend of mine some years ago, he very solemnly assured me that if anyone called McKee crossed over to Ireland with King William or anyone else, they were merely returning home no matter how many years they or their forebears had been absent!"

"I was greatly interested in your remarks about the resemblance of the McKees to the O'Neills because, even in the course of my little life-time we have had remarkable examples of this with other McKees that we have met who were not in any way related to us so far as we could discover".

The following is excerpted from James Y. McKee's '*David McKee of Anahilt*':

"The bride and groom came home to Craigy . . . . ."

The reader is reminded of the odd fact that Conn Ruadh O'Neill, son of the Great O'Neill, was known to the English, at least, as 'Conn of Creige'. Irish place names are bewildering to the most learned of Irish antiquarians, so that without considerable research it is not possible to guess whether they were the same place.

<sup>1</sup> William of Orange sent relief to raise the siege of Derry only a short while before he landed at Carrickfergus to vanquish James II's army at the Battle of the Boyne, which was fought on July 1, 1690.

On January 14, 1955, Devah Adams, 32 East 57th Street, New York, 22, N.Y., wrote the following :

“ The only concrete information I can give you is that Grandfather Joseph McKee came from Edinburgh, was married to Lydia Dodd, and his eldest son, Joseph, was born in Edinburgh, educated in the University there, and three other sons, John, Alfred, and Oliver were born in Brooklyn.

On my grandmother's wedding certificate the name was spelled Mackie and subsequently changed in America to McKee. Also understand the Mackie or McKee's were of the Clan McKenzie ”.

These are of course the Scottish Mackies, who changed the spelling of their name to McKee. There is no doubt that her antecedents were a sept of the Clann MacKay, as are many McKee branches.

In a letter dated August 31, 1955, Hugh W. L. McKee, of 25 Bristow Park, Belfast, Ireland said :

“ My family go back to 1689 when four brothers McKee joined King William's army and came over from Scotland and fought James in 1690. Two of the brothers returned to Scotland and the other two were given grants of land and settled in Lisburn, County Antrim, and Saintfield, County Down. It is from the latter that I trace my ancestry. Now some of the McKees went to America ; in fact one of the descendants compiled a book on the family. The name “ Hugh ” runs right down this line, even to my son, myself, grandfather and great-grandfather ”.

Under date of April 10, 1877, Robert McKee of Granshaw, Ardaragh, Newry, Ireland, wrote to his nephew at Banbridge as follows :

“ The traditions I had from my grandfather reach into the past without passing through many interpolations.

The origin of the name McKee or its signification I know not . . . . . Our forefathers came from Scotland and settled first for a time in either county Derry (Londonderry) or Antrim. They then came and located in the southwest of the county Down, about one mile west of the village of Rathfriland in a place called Tullyquilly. After a time they considered it too low and marshy, and removed about a mile farther west into Granshaw where they remained . . . . .

My grandfather James McKee was one of three brothers, one killed by the fall of a horse, the other left a daughter who married Mulholland ; they went to South Carolina about the same time that the McKees settled there. Two families called Swan and Davison settled at the Knock, a little mountain 785 feet high about two miles east from here. My grandmother McKee was one of the latter family. She had three uncles in the memorable siege of Derry ”.

Elsewhere herein I have reproduced the letter in its entirety from which the foregoing was excerpted (pp. 114-5).

Whatever final inconclusive conclusion a McKee may reach concerning his origin, he may be reasonably sure his tribe is very ancient. The remote possibility even exists that he descends from Heremon, because his possible lines of O'Neill, O'Reilly, MacAodhs of Island Magee, or Mackays of Scotland, each has the aspect of perhaps taking him back to this same ancestor. I am afraid it must rest there until a more diligent and erudite investigator succeeds in pinpointing it. It is my hesitant suggestion, for whatever value it may prove to have, that the portraits of known agnatic ancestors be compared to existing portraits of members of the lines we know or suspect sired McKees. The McKee physiognomy is persistent.