



Visionary as the following tradition may seem, it has nevertheless withstood the obliterating touch of time, and may still be heard at many a fireside in Connaught. Spirit and body, the earthly and the unearthly are so strangely blended in it that it bears internal evidence of belonging to the Titanic age, when the Pagan progenitors of the Irish race had their own mythology, and such heroes or demi-gods as Fergus, Ossian and Fionn. Tradition, however, would assign the exploit recorded in the legend to a date not more remote than that of the battle of Fontenoy.

In the southwestern part of the county of Galway, almost within sound of its beautiful bay, there may yet be seen one of those wild ecclesiastical ruins which pillage, rather than time, has laid low. These are the ruins of the old church of Kilvarra (Anglice, Church by the Sea). They are at present, and have been for time immemorial, used as the parochial burying ground. The enclosing fence, now a crumbling wall, and its dilapidated iron gate, requiring

the ungainly prop of some loose stones, offer but an indifferent barrier to the stray cows and vagrant donkeys that browse on the highway. There is in the place and about it a something which produces a sense of desolation and decay. It has little of that scenic loveliness for which the Emerald Isle is remarkable. The character of the surroundings is equally uninviting, except where relieved by the glimpse one may catch, through the intervening trees of the Burren hills, with their constantly varying tints, or of the blue waters of the bay, upon whose buoyant bosom flash to and fro the brown sails of the fishing-smacks of the coast. The ruins themselves occupy the only green spot about—a veritable oasis in a desert of poor pasture and stony fields, with here and there the blackened remains of some fallen roof-tree, stern reminder of hopeless struggle with the ungrateful soil, and of a landlordism conscious only of its privileges. And yet, cheerless as is the place, it has associations which when recalled transform and glorify the old walls. But of these, few now-a-days think, save the historical student or antiquarian. To the ordinary observer the remains tell no tale but of the crumbling effect of time.