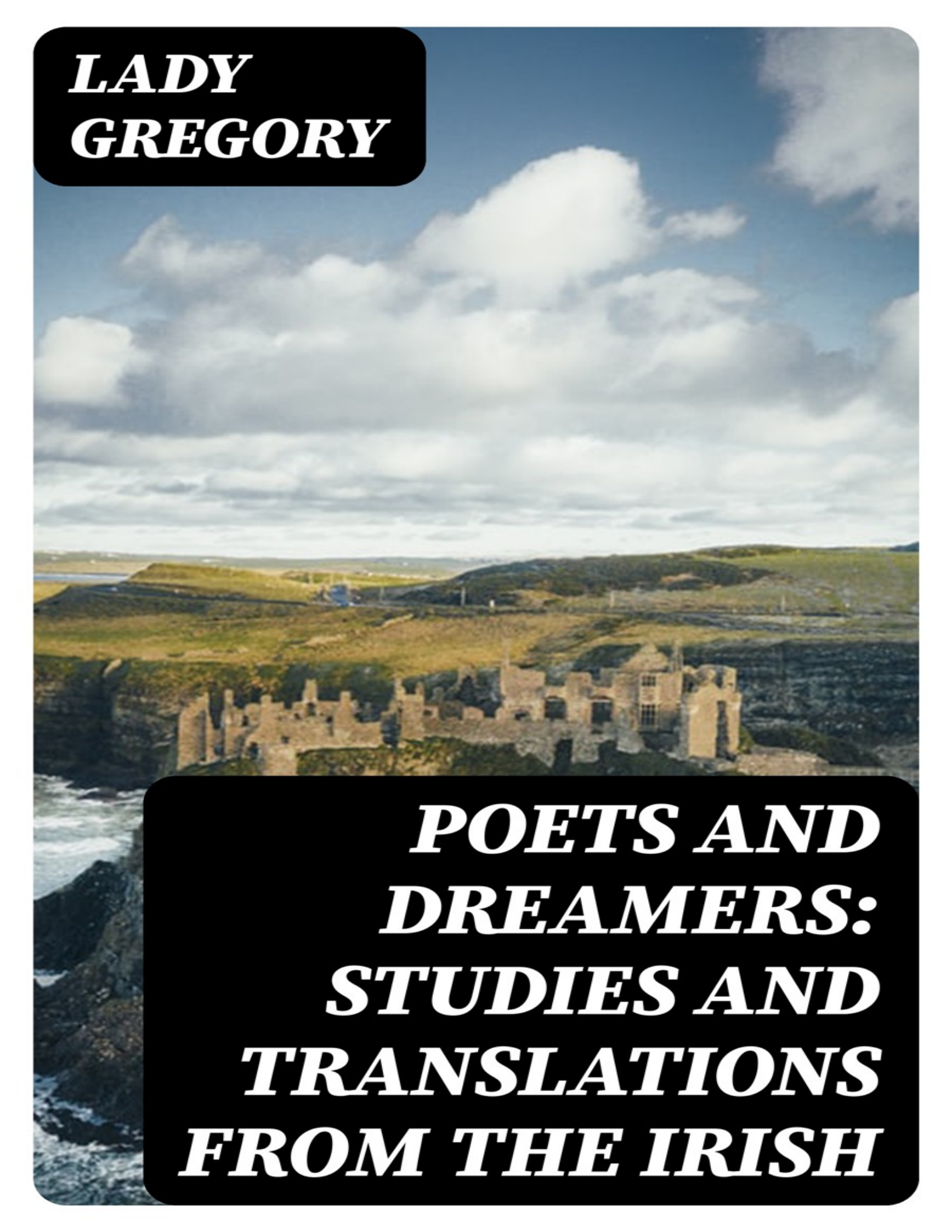




***LADY
GREGORY***

***POETS AND
DREAMERS:
STUDIES AND
TRANSLATIONS
FROM THE IRISH***

Lady Gregory

Poets and Dreamers: Studies and translations from the Irish

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RAFTERY

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I.

One winter afternoon as I sat by the fire in a ward of Gort Workhouse, I listened to two old women arguing about the merits of two rival poets they had seen and heard in their childhood.

One old woman, who was from Kilchreest, said: 'Raftery hadn't a stim of sight; and he travelled the whole nation; and he was the best poet that ever was, and the best fiddler. It was always at my father's house, opposite the big tree, that he used to stop when he was in Kilchreest. I often saw him; but I didn't take much notice of him then, being a child; it was after that I used to hear so much about him. Though he was blind, he could serve himself with his knife and fork as well as any man with his sight. I remember the way he used to cut the meat—across, like this. Callinan was nothing to him.'

The other old woman, who was from Craughwell, said: 'Callinan was a great deal better than him; and he could make songs in English as well as in Irish; Raftery would run from where Callinan was. And he was a nice respectable man, too, with cows and sheep, and a kind man. *He* would never put anything that wasn't nice into a poem, and *he* would never run anyone down; but if you were the worst in the world, he'd make you the best in it; and when his wife lost her beetle, he made a song of fifteen verses about it.'

'Well,' the Kilchreest old woman admitted, 'Raftery would run people down; he was someway bitter; and if he had anything against a person, he'd give him a great lacerating. But there were more for him than for Callinan; some used to say Callinan's songs were too long.'

'I tell you,' said the other, 'Callinan was a nice man and a nice neighbour. Raftery wasn't fit to put beside him. Callinan was a man that would go out of his own back door, and make a poem about the four quarters of the earth. I tell you, you would stand in the snow to listen to Callinan!' But, just then, a bedridden old woman suddenly sat up and began to sing Raftery's 'Bridget Vesach' as long as her breath lasted; so the last word was for him after all.

Raftery died over sixty years ago; but there are many old people still living, besides those two old women, who have seen him, and who keep his songs in their memory. What they tell of him shows how closely he was in the old tradition of the bards, the wandering poets of two thousand years or more. His satire, his praises, his competitions with other poets were the dread and the pride of many Galway and Mayo parishes. And now the songs that he never wrote down, being blind, are known, if not as our people say, 'all over the world,' at least in all places where Irish is spoken.

Raftery's satires, as I have heard them repeated by the country people, do not seem, even in their rhymed original—he only composed in Irish—to have the 'sharp spur' of some of his predecessors, such as O'Higinn, whose tongue was cut out by men from Sligo, who had suffered from it, or O'Daly, who criticised the poverty of the Irish chiefs in the sixteenth century until the servant of one of them stuck a

knife into his throat. Yet they were much dreaded. 'He was very sharp with anyone that didn't please him,' I have been told; 'and no one would like to be put in his songs.' And though it is said of his songs in praise of his friends that 'whoever he praised was well praised,' it was thought safer that one's own name should not appear in them. The man at whose house he died said to me: 'He used often to come and stop with us, but he never made a verse about us; my father wouldn't have liked that. Someway it doesn't bring luck.' And another man says: 'My father often told me about Raftery. He was someway gifted, and people were afraid of him. I was often told by men that gave him a lift in their car when they overtook him now and again, that if he asked their name, they wouldn't give it, for fear he might put it in a song.' And another man says: 'There was a friend of my father's was driving his car on the road one day, and he saw Raftery, but he didn't let on to see him. But when he was passing, Raftery said: "There was never a soldier marching but would get his billet. But the rabbit has an enemy in the ferret;" so then the man said in a hurry, "Oh, Mr. Raftery, I never knew it was you: won't you get up and take a seat in the car?"' A girl in whose praise he had made a song, Mary Hynes, of Ballylee, died young, and had a troubled life; and one of her neighbours says of her: 'No one that has a song made about them will ever live long;' and another says: 'She got a great tossing up and down; and at last she died in the middle of a bog.' They tell, too, of a bush that he once took shelter under from the rain, and how he 'praised it first; and then when it let the rain down, he dispraised it, and it withered up, and never put out leaf or branch after.' I have

seen his poem on the bush in a manuscript book, carefully written in the beautiful Irish character, and the great treasure of a stonecutter's cottage. This is the form of the curse: 'I pronounce ugliness upon you. That bloom or leaf may never grow on you, but the flame of the mountain fires and of bonfires be upon you. That you may get your punishment from Oscar's flail, to hack and to bruise you with the big sledge of a forge.'

There are some other verses made by him that have been less legendary in their effect. The story is:—'It was Anthony Daly, a carpenter, was hanged at Seefin. It was the two Z's got him put away. He was brought before a judge in Galway, and accused of being a Captain of Whiteboys, and it was sworn against him that he fired at Mr. X. He was a one-eyed man; and he said: "If I did, though I have but one eye, I would have hit him"—for he was a very good shot; and he asked that some object should be put up, and he would show the judge that he would hit it, but he said nothing else. Some were afraid he'd give up the names of the other Whiteboys; but he did not. There was a gallows put up at Seefin; and he was brought there sitting on his coffin in a cart. There were people all the way along the road, and they were calling on him to break through the crowd, and they'd save him; and some of the soldiers were Irish, and they called back that if he did they'd only fire their guns in the air; but he made no attempt, but went to the gallows quiet enough. There was a man in Gort was telling me he saw it, planting potatoes he was at Seefin that day. It was in the year 1820; and Raftery was there at the hanging, and he made a song about it. The first verse of the song said:

"Wasn't that the good tree, that wouldn't let any branch that was on it fall to the ground?" He meant by that that he didn't give up the names of the other Whiteboys. And at the end he called down judgment from God on the two Z's, and, if not on them, on their children. And they that had land and farms in all parts, lost it after; and all they had vanished; and the most of their children died—only two left, one a friar, and the other living in the town.' And quite lately I have been told by another neighbour, in corroboration, that a girl of the Z family married into a family near his home the other day, and was coldly received; and when my neighbour asked one of the family why this was, he was told that 'those of her people that went so high ought to have gone higher'—meaning that they themselves ought to have been on the gallows; and then he knew that Raftery's curse was still having its effect. And he had also heard that the grass had never grown again at Seefin.

This is a part of the song:—

'The evening of Friday of the Crucifixion, the Gael was under the mercy of the Gall. It was as heavy the same day as when the only Son of Mary was on the tree. I have hope in the Son of God, my grief! and it is of no use for me; and it was Conall and his wife hung Daly, and may they be paid for it!

'But oh! young woman, while I live, I put death on the village where you will be; plague and death on it; and may the flood rise over it; that much is no sin at all, O bright God; and I pray with longing it may fall on the man that hung Daly; that left his people and his children crying.

'O stretch out your limbs! The air is murky overhead; there is darkness on the sun, and the fish do not leap in the water; there is no dew on the grass, and the birds do not sing sweetly. With sorrow after you, Daly, till death, there never will be fruit on the trees.

'And that is the true man, that didn't humble himself or lower himself to the Gall; Anthony Daly, O Son of God! He was that with us always, without a lie. But he died a good Irishman; and he never bowed the head to any man; and it was with false swearing that Daly was hung, and with the strength of the Gall.

'If I were a clerk—kind, light, cheerful with the pen—it is I would write your ways in clear Irish on a flag above your head. A thousand and eight hundred and sixteen, and four put to that, from the coming of the Son of God, to the death of Daly at the Castle of Seefin.'

I have heard, and have also seen in manuscript, a terrible list of curses that he hurled at the head of another poet, Seaghan Burke. But these were, I think, looked on as a mere professional display, and do not seem to have any ill effect.

Here are some of them:—

'That God may perish you on the mountain-side, without a priest, bishop, or clerk. Seven years may you be senseless and without wit, going from door to door as an unfortunate creature.

'May you have a mouth that will go back to your ear, and may your lips be turned back like gums; that

your legs may lose feeling from the knee down, your eyes lose their sight, and your hands lose their strength.

'Deformity and lameness and corruption upon you; flight and defeat and the hatred of your kin. That shivering fever may stretch you nine times, and that particularly at the time of Easter ('because,' it is explained, 'it was at Easter time our Lord was put to death, and it is the time He can best hear the curses of the poor').

'May a sore heart and cold flesh be upon you; may there be no marrow or moisture in your bones. That clay may never be put over your coffin-boards, but wind and a sharp blast on you from the north.

'Baldness and nakedness come upon you, judgment from above, and the curses of the crowd. May dragon's gall and poison mixed through it be your best drink at the hour of death.'

Sometimes he left a scathing verse on a place where he was not well treated, as: 'Oranmore without merriment. A little town in scarce fields—a broken little town, with its back to the water, and with women that have no understanding.'

He did not spare persons any more than places, especially if they were well-to-do, for his gentleness was for the poor. An old woman who remembers him says: 'He didn't care much about big houses. Just if they were people he liked, and that he was friendly with them, he would be kind enough to go in and see them.' A Mr. Burke, who met him going from his house, asked how he had fared, and he said in a scornful verse:—

'Potatoes that were softer than the fog,
And with neither butter nor meat,
And milk that was sourer than apples in harvest

—

That's what Raftery got from Burke of Kilfinn.'

'And Mr. Burke begged him to rhyme no more, but to come back, and he would be well taken care of.' I am told of another house he abused and that is now deserted: 'Frenchforth of the soot, that was wedded to the smoke, that is all that remains of the property.... There were some of them on mules, and some of them unruly, and the biggest of them were smaller than asses, and the master cracking them with a stick;' 'but he went no further than that, because he remembered the good treatment used to be there in former times, and he wouldn't have said that much if it wasn't for the servants that vexed him.' A satire, that is remembered in Aran, was made with the better intention of helping a barefooted girl, who had been kept waiting a long time for a pair of shoes she had ordered. Raftery came, and sat down before the shoemaker's house, and began:—

'A young little girl without sense, the ground
tearing her feet, is not satisfied yet by the lying Peter
Glynn. Peter Glynn, the liar, in his little house by the
side of the road, is without the strength in his arms to
slip together a pair of brogues.'

'And, before he had finished the lines, Peter Glynn ran out and called to him to stop, and he set at work on the shoes then and there.' He even ventured to poke a little

satire at a priest sometimes. 'He went into the chapel at Kilchreest one time, and there was some cabbage after being stolen from a garden, and the priest was speaking about it. Raftery was at the bottom of the chapel, and at last he called out in verse:—"What a lot of talk about cabbage! If there was meat with it, it would feed the whole parish!" The priest didn't mind, but afterwards he came down, and said: "Where is the cabbage man?" and asked him to make some more verses about it; but whether he did or not I don't know.' And another time, I am told: 'A priest wanted to teach him the rite of lay baptism; for there were scattered houses a priest might take a long time getting to, away from the roads, and certain persons were authorized to give the rite. So the priest put his hat in Raftery's hand, and told him the words to say; but it is what he said: "I baptize you without either foot or hand, without salt or tow, beer or drink. Your father was a ram and your mother was a sheep, and your like never came to be baptized before." He was put under a curse, too, one time by a priest, and he made a song about him; but he said he put his frock out of the bargain, and it was only the priest's own body he would speak about. And the priest let him alone after that.' And an old basket-maker, who had told me some of these things, said at the end: 'That is why the poets had to be banished before in the time of St. Columcill. Sure no one could stand the satire of them.'

II.

Irish history having been forbidden in schools, has been, to a great extent, learned from Raftery's poems by the

people of Mayo, where he was born, and of Galway, where he spent his later years. It is hard to say where history ends in them and religion and politics begin; for history, religion, and politics grow on one stem in Ireland, an eternal trefoil. 'He was a great historian,' it is said; 'for every book he'd get hold of, he'd get it read out to him.' And a neighbour tells me: 'He used to stop with my uncle that was a hedge schoolmaster in those times in Ballylee, and that was very fond of drink; and when he was drunk, he'd take his clothes off, and run naked through the country. But at evening he'd open the school; and the neighbours that would be working all day would gather in to him, and he'd teach them through the night; and there Raftery would be in the middle of them.' His chief historical poem is the 'Talk with the Bush,' of over three hundred lines. Many of the people can repeat it, or a part of it, and some possess it in manuscript. The bush, a forerunner of the 'Talking Oak' or the 'Father of the Forest,' gives its recollections, which go back to the times of the Firbolgs, the Tuatha De Danaan, 'without heart, without humanity'; the Sons of the Gael; the heroic Fianna, who 'would never put more than one man to fight against one'; Cuchulain 'of the Grey Sword, that broke every gap'; till at last it comes to 'O'Rourke's wife that brought a blow to Ireland': for it was on her account the English were first called in. Then come the crimes of the English, made redder by the crime of Martin Luther. Henry VIII 'turned his back on God and denied his first wife.' Elizabeth 'routed the bishops and the Irish Church. James and Charles laid sharp scourges on Ireland.... Then Cromwell and his hosts swept through Ireland, cutting before him all he could. He gave estates and

lands to Cromwellians, and he put those that had a right to them on mountains.' Whenever he brings history into his poems, the same strings are touched. 'At the great judgment, Cromwell will be hiding, and O'Neill in the corner. And I think if William can manage it at all, he won't stand his ground against Sarsfield.' And a moral often comes at the end, such as: 'Don't be without courage, but join together; God is stronger than the Cromwellians, and the cards may turn yet.'

For Raftery had lived through the '98 Rebellion, and the struggle for Catholic Emancipation; and he saw the Tithe War, and the Repeal movement; and it is natural that his poems, like those of the poets before him, should reflect the desire of his people for 'the mayntenance of their own lewde libertye,' that had troubled Spenser in his time.

Here are some verses from his '*Cuis da ple*,' 'cause to plead,' composed at the time of the Tithe War:—

'The two provinces of Munster are afoot, and will not stop till tithes are overthrown, and rents accordingly; and if help were given them, and we to stand by Ireland, the English guard would be feeble, and every gap made easy. The Gall (English) will be on their back without ever returning again; and the Orangemen bruised in the borders of every town, a judge and jury in the courthouse for the Catholics, England dead, and the crown upon the Gael....

'There is many a fine man at this time sentenced, from Cork to Ennis and the town of Roscrea, and fair-haired boys wandering and departing from the streets of Kilkenny to Bantry Bay. But the cards will turn, and

we'll have a good hand: the trump shall stand on the board we play at.... Let ye have courage. It is a fine story I have. Ye shall gain the day in every quarter from the Sassanach. Strike ye the board, and the cards will be coming to you. Drink out of hand now a health to Raftery: it is he would put success for you on the *Cuis da ple*.'

This is part of another song:—

'I have a hope in Christ that a gap will be opened again for us.... The day is not far off, the Gall will be stretched without anyone to cry after them; but with us there will be a bonfire lighted up on high.... The music of the world entirely, and Orpheus playing along with it. I'd sooner than all that, the Sassanach to be cut down.'

But with all this, he had plenty of common sense, and an old man at Ballylee tells me:—'One time there were a sort of nightwalkers—Moonlighters as we'd call them now, Ribbonmen they were then—making some plan against the Government; and they asked Raftery to come to their meeting. And he went; but what he said was this, in a verse, that they should look at the English Government, and think of all the soldiers it had, and all the police—no, there were no police in those days, but gaugers and such like—and they should think how full up England was of guns and arms, so that it could put down Buonaparty; and that it had conquered Spain, and took Gibraltar from it; and the same in America, fighting for twenty-one years. And he asked

them what they had to fight with against all those guns and arms?—nothing but a stump of a stick that they might cut down below in the wood. So he bid them give up their nightwalking, and come out and agitate in the daylight.'

I have been told—but I do not know if it is true—that he was once sent to Galway Gaol for three months for a song he made against the Protestant Church, 'saying it was like a wall slipping, where it wasn't built solid.'

III.

When at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the poets O'Lewy and O'Clery and their supporters held a 'Contention,' the results were written down in a volume containing 7,000 lines. I think the greater number of the 'Contentions' between Raftery and his fellow-poets were never written down; but the country people still discuss them with all the eagerness of partisans. An old man from Athenry says: 'Raftery travelled Ireland, challenging all the poets of that time. There were hundreds of country poets in those days, and a welcome for them all. Raftery had enough to do to beat them, but he was the best; his poetry was the gift of God, and his poems are sung as far away as Limerick and Dublin.' There is a story of his knocking at a door one night, when he was looking for the house of a poet he had heard of and wanted to challenge, and saying: 'I am a poet seeking shelter'; and a girl answered him from within with a verse, saying he must be a blind man to be out so late looking for shelter; and then he knew it was the house he was looking for. And it is said that the daughter of another poet was on his way to see in Clare, gave him such a sharp

answer when he met her outside the house that he turned back and would not contend with her father at all. And he is said to have 'hunted another poet Daly—hunted him all through Ireland.' But these other poets do not seem to have left a great name. There was a Connemara poet, Sweeny, that was put under a curse by the priests 'because he used to make so much fun at the wakes'; and in one of Raftery's poems he thanks Sweeny for having come to his help in some dispute; and there was 'one John Burke, who was a good poet, too; he and Raftery would meet at fairs and weddings, and be trying which would put down the other.' I am told of an 'attack' they made on each other one day on the fair green of Cappaghtagle. Burke said: 'After all your walk of land and callows, Burke is before you at the fair of Cappagh.' And Raftery said: 'You are not Burke but a breed of *scatties*, That's all over the country gathering *praties*; When I'm at the table filling glasses, You are in the corner with your feet in the ashes.' Then Burke said: 'Raftery a poet, and he with bracked (speckled) shins, And he playing music with catgut; Raftery the poet, and his back to the wall, And he playing music for empty pockets. There's no one cares for his music at all, but he does be always craving money.' For he was sometimes accused of love of money; 'he wouldn't play for empty pockets, and he'd make the plate rattle at the end of a dance.'

But his most serious rival in his own part of the country was Callinan, the well-to-do farmer who lived near Craughwell, of whom the old women in the workhouse spoke. I have heard some of Callinan's poems and songs; but I do not find the imaginative power of Raftery in them.

He seems, in distinction to him, to be the poet of the domestic affections, of the settled classes. His songs have melody and good sentiments; and they are often accompanied by a rhymed English version, made by his brother, a lesser poet. The favourite among them is a song on a wooden beetle, lost by his wife when washing clothes at the river. She is made to lament the loss of 'so good a servant' in a sort of allegory; and then its journey is traced from the river to the sea. An old man gives me a little memory of him: 'I saw Callinan one time when we went to dig potatoes for him at his own place, the other side of Craughwell. We went into the house for dinner; and we were in a hurry, and he was sitting by the hearth talking all the time; for he was a great talker, so that the veins of his neck swelled up. And he was telling us about the song he made about his own Missus when she was out washing by the river. He was up to eighty years at that time.' And there are accounts of the making of some of his songs that show his kindly disposition and amiability. 'One time there was a baby in the house, and there was a dance going on near, and Mrs. Callinan was a young woman; and she said she'd go for a bit to the dance-house; and she bid Callinan rock the cradle till she'd come back. But she never came back till morning, and there he was rocking the cradle still; and he had a song composed while she was away about the time of a man's life, and the hours of the day, and the seasons of the year; how when a man is young he is strong, and then he grows old and passes away, and goes to the feast of the Saviour; and about the day, how bright the morning is, and the birds singing; and a man goes out to work, and he comes in tired

out, and sits by the fire to talk with his neighbour; and the night comes on, and he says his prayers, and thinks of the feast of the Saviour; and about the seasons, the spring so nice, and the summer for work; and autumn brings the harvest, and winter brings Christmas, the feast of the Saviour. In Irish and English he made that.' And this is another story: 'A carpenter made a plough for Callinan one time, and when it came, it was the worst ever made; and he said to his brother: "I'll make a song that will cut him down altogether." But his brother said: "Do not, for if you cut him down, it will take his means of living from him, but make a song in his praise." And he did so, for he wouldn't like to do him any harm.' I have asked if he made any love-songs, and was told of one he had made 'about a girl he met going to a bog. He praised herself first, and then he said he had information as well that she had fifty gold guineas saved up.'

His having been well off seems to make his poetic merit the greater in the eyes of farmers; for one says: 'He was as good a poet, for he had a plough and horses and a good way of living, and never sang in any public-house; but Raftery had no way of living but to go round and to mark some house to go to, and then all the neighbours would gather in to hear him.' Another says: 'Raftery was the best poet, for he had nothing else to do, and laid his mind to it; but Callinan was a strong farmer, and had other things to think of;' and another says: 'Callinan was very apt: it was all Raftery could do to beat him;' and another sums up by saying: 'The both of them was great.' But a supporter of

Raftery says: 'He was the best; he put his words so strong and stiff, following one another.'

I had been often told, by supporters of either side, that there was one contest between the two, at which Callinan 'made Raftery cry tears down;' and I wondered how it was that his wit had so far betrayed him. It has been explained to me lately. Raftery had made a long poem, 'The Hunt,' in which he puts 'a Writer' in the place of the fox, and calls on all the gentlemen of Galway and Mayo, and even on 'Sarsfield from Limerick,' to come and hunt him through their respective neighbourhoods with a pack of hounds. It contains many verses; and he seems to have improvised others in the different places where he sang it. In the written copy I have seen, Burke is the 'Writer' who is thus hunted. But he probably put in the name of any other rival from time to time. This is the story: 'He and the Callinans were sometimes vexed with one another, but they'd make friends after; but there was one day he was put down by them. There was a funeral going on at Killeenan, and Raftery was there; and he was asked into the corpse-house afterwards, and the people asked him for the song about Callinan, and he began hunting him all through the country, and the people were laughing and making him go on; but Callinan's brother had come in, and was listening to him, and Raftery didn't see him, being blind; and he brought him to Killeenan at last, and he said: "Where can the rogue go now, unless he'll swim the turlough?" And at that Callinan's brother stood up and said, "Who is it you are calling a rogue?" And Raftery tried to laugh it off, and he said, "You mustn't expect poetry and truth to go together." But Callinan said: "I'll give

you poetry that's truth as well;" and he began to say off some verses his brother had made on Raftery; and Raftery was choked up that time, and hadn't a word.' This story is corroborated by an eye-witness who said to me: 'It was in this house he was on the night Callinan made him cry. My father was away at the time; if he had been there, he never would have let Callinan come into the house unknown to Raftery.' I have not heard all of Callinan's poem, but this is part of it:—

'He left the County Mayo; he was hunted up from the country of the brothons' (thick bed-coverings, then made in Mayo) 'without any for the night, nor any shift for bedding, but with an old yellow blanket with a thousand patches; he had a black trouser down to the ground with two hundred holes and forty pieces; he had long legs like the shank of a pipe, and a long great coat, for it is many the dab he put in his pocket. His coat was greasy, and it was no wonder, and an old grey hat as grey as snuff as it was many the day it was in the dunghill.'

It is said that 'Raftery could have answered that song better, but he had no back here; and Callinan was well-to-do, and had so many of his family and so many friends.' But others say there were some allusions in it to the poverty of his home, that had become known through a servant girl from Raftery's birth-place. But I think even Callinan's friends are sorry now that Raftery was ever made to 'cry tears down.'

IV.

A man near Oranmore says: 'There used to be great talk of the Fianna; and everyone had the poems about them till Raftery came, and he put them out. For when the people got Raftery's songs in their heads, they could think of nothing else: his songs put out everything else. I remember when I was a boy of ten, I was so taken up with his rhymes and songs, I had them all off. And I heard he was coming one night to a stage he had below there where he used to come now and again. And I begged my father to bring me with him that night, and he did; but whatever happened, Raftery didn't come that time, and the next year he died.'

But it is hard to judge of the quality of Raftery's poems. Some of them have probably been lost altogether. There are already different versions of those written out in manuscript books, and of these books many have disappeared or been destroyed, and some have been taken to America by emigrants. It is said that when he was on his deathbed, he was very sorry that his songs had not all been taken down; and that he dictated one he composed there to a young man who wrote it down in Irish, but could not read his own writing when he had done, and that vexed Raftery; and then a man came in, and he asked him to take down all his songs, and he could have them for himself; but he said, 'If I did, I'd always be called Raftery,' and he went out again.

I hear the people say now and then: 'If he had had education, he would have been the greatest poet in the world.' I cannot but be sorry that his education went so far as it did, for 'he used to carry a book about with him—a Pantheon—about the heathen gods and goddesses; and

whoever he'd get that was able to read, he'd get him to read it to him, and then he'd keep them in his mind, and use them as he wanted them.' If he had been born a few decades later, he would have been caught, like other poets of the time, in the formulas of English verse. As it was, both his love poems and his religious poems were caught in the formulas imported from Greece and from Rome; and any formula must make a veil between the prophet who has been on the mountain top, and the people who are waiting at its foot for his message. The dreams of beauty that formed themselves in the mind of the blind poet become flat and vapid when he embodies them in the well-worn names of Helen and Venus. The truths of God that he strove in his last years, as he says, 'to have written in the book of the people,' left those unkindled whose ears were already wearied with the well-known words 'the keys of Heaven,' 'penance, fasts, and alms,' to whom it was an old tale to hear of hell as a furnace, and the grave as a dish for worms. When he gets away from the formulas, he has often a fine line on death or on judgment; the cheeks of the dead are 'cold as the snow that is at the back of the sun;' the careless—those who 'go out looking at their sheep on Sunday instead of going to Mass'—are warned that 'on the side of the hill of the tears there will be Ochone!'

His love songs are many; and they were not always thought to bring ill luck; for I am told of a girl 'that was not handsome at all, but ugly, that he made a song about her for civility; for she used to be in a house where he used to lodge, and the song got her a husband; and there is a son of hers living now down in Clare-Galway.' And an old woman

tells me, with a sigh of regret for what might have been, that she saw Raftery one time at a dance, and he spoke to her and said: 'Well planed you are; the carpenter that planed you knew his trade.' 'And I said: "Better than you know yours;" for there were two or three of the strings of his fiddle broke. And then he said something about O'Meara, that lived near us; and my father got vexed at what he said, and would let him speak no more with me. And if it wasn't for him speaking about O'Meara, and my father getting vexed, he might have made words about me like he did for Mary Hynes and for Mary Brown.'

'Bridget Vesach,' which I have heard in many cottages, as well as from the old woman in Gort Workhouse, begins: 'I would wed courteous Bridget without coat, shoe, or shirt. Treasure of my heart, if it were possible for me, I would fast for you nine meals, without food, without drink, without any share of anything, on an island of Lough Erne, with desire for you and me to be together till we should settle our case.... My heart started with trouble, and I was frightened nine times that morning that I heard you were not to be found.... I would sooner be stretched by you with nothing under us but heather and rushes, than be listening to the cuckoos that are stirring at the break of day.... I am in grief and in sorrow since you slipped from me across the mearings.'

Another love poem, 'Mairin Stanton,' shows his habit of mixing comparisons drawn from the classics with those drawn from nature:—

'There's a bright flower by the side of the road, and
she beats Deirdre in the beauty of her voice; or I