

The Spanish Armada.

A Spanish Captain's Experiences in Ulster in 1588:
a Reminiscence (with Notes).

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<https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=HeqRkThMOPAC&pg=GBS.PA178&hl=en>)

The publication of a work entitled *La Armada Invincible*, [Madrid, 1885] by Captain Cesareo Fernandez Duro, a Spanish naval officer, has brought to light many fresh and interesting particulars relating to this ill-fated venture; and though the incidents narrated are, as might be expected, viewed from the Spanish standpoint, yet the history is written with moderation, and shows very great research. Amongst the many valuable documents now first collected and printed by Captain Duro, that having for its title "Letter of one who was with the Armada for England, and an account of the Expedition," is of most lively interest to us, seeing that it presents a graphic picture of the North and North-West of Ireland in 1588, drawn by one who was an actual eye-witness of what he describes.

Before proceeding, it may be well to observe that these adventures have already been dealt with by several writers.* The present paper has been written with the desire to identify some of the places visited by Cuellar while in Ulster. His references to these places are in many instances obscure, and, in order to correctly trace them, an intimate acquaintance with local topography is essential. Sometimes the clue afforded by the narrative is so slender, that any one unfamiliar with the localities intended might easily miss the meaning, and be led to an entirely wrong conclusion. The present writer has to acknowledge the valuable assistance received from R. Crawford, C.E., late Professor of Engineering, T.C.D., a competent Spanish scholar possessing a practical acquaintance with the idioms of the language. Mr. Crawford has made a literal translation of the whole of the "Narrative," and has elucidated many obscure passages occurring therein. The exigencies of space forbid the reproduction of his translation, and we must confine our extracts to those passages directly bearing on the subject of our inquiry.

* The following papers on this subject have appeared:

An episode of the Armada by the Earl of Ducie (Nineteenth Century, Sept 1885)

The Spanish Story of the Armada, by J.A. Froude

Remarks on certain Passages in Cuellar's Story. &c. by Prof. J.P. O'Reilly (*Proceedings of the RIA*, December, 1893)

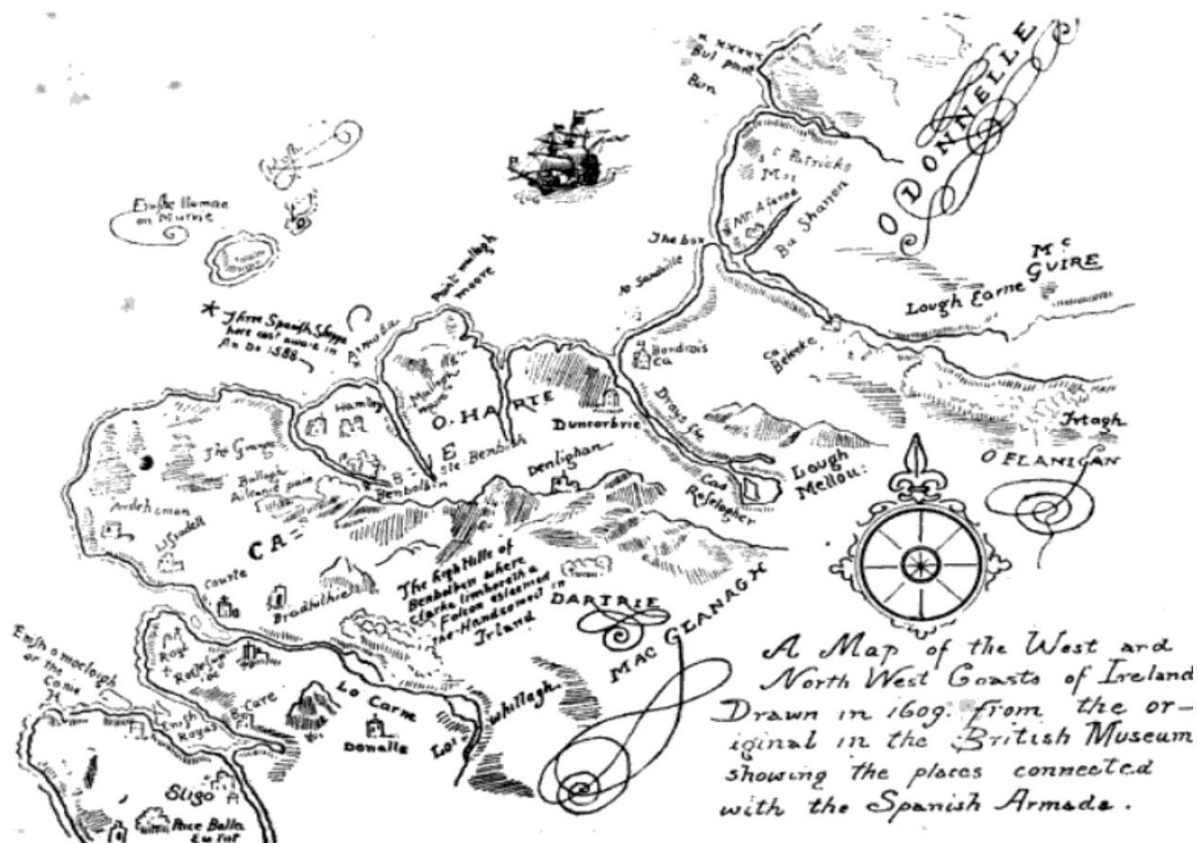
Don Francisco Cuellar was captain of the *San Pedro*, a galleon of twenty-four guns, which belonged to the squadron of Castile. The account of Cuellar's adventures, as detailed by himself, are related in a letter which was discovered in the archives of the Academia de la Historia, in Madrid. Passing over the first part, which chiefly deals with the Armada from the time it left Spain, we find Cuellar (after being deprived of the command of his vessel) on board the Provost Marshal's ship. Having passed round the north coast of Scotland, the vessel in which Cuellar was, in company with two other ships, encountered head winds and rough weather, and found themselves labouring off the west coast of Ireland. Cuellar says they were unable to clear a point which he calls "El Cabo de Clara." This name is evidently a mistake in his geography, the point of land he refers to being probably Erris Head, on the Mayo coast. The

vessels were now in a leaky condition, and the pumps, though constantly kept going, were hardly able to keep them afloat. Captain Duro, in his book, refers to the frequency of the opening of the seams in the old Spanish ships, which defect he attributes to the excessive weight and height of the masts, whose leverage, in heavy weather, caused a strain on the hulls, and necessitated the keeping of caulkers almost constantly at work.

Finding themselves unable to clear the land, they were forced to anchor more than half a league from the shore, where they remained "four days without being able to make any provision or do anything." "On the fifth day there sprang up so great a storm (he says) on our beam, with a sea up to the heavens, so that the cables could not hold, nor the sails serve us, and we were driven with all three ships upon a strand covered with very fine sand, shut in on one side and the other by great rocks, such as I have never seen before, for within space of an hour, all three ships were broken in pieces, so that there did not escape 300 men, and more than 1,000 were drowned, and amongst them many of importance—captains, gentlemen, and other officials." After relating particulars of the heartrending scenes which he witnessed, and referring to a large sum of money—upwards of 16,000 ducats—besides jewels and crown pieces, which, he says, were seized on by the natives, and taken out of the hold of one of the ships. [The truth of this statement is corroborated by independent testimony of other eye-witnesses], he proceeds to relate the manner of his own escape from the wreck, and how he and his companions in misfortune fared on the shore. He says he took a hatchway cover, about as large as a good-sized table, and having committed himself to the waves, succeeded, but not without getting himself wounded by floating timber, in reaching land, where he emerged, "unable to stand, all covered with blood, and very much injured."

It was in the month of September, 1588, when these three great galleons, in one of which Cuellar was, entered Donegal Bay, coming to anchor about a mile and a-half off shore. Here, according to the Spanish narrative, they continued for the space of four days without being able to procure fresh water or provisions, though in a famishing condition, nor were they, owing to the heavy sea that was running, able to make any effort for the safety of their ships. on the fifth day, a fresh gale of terrific violence sprang up from the south-west, and in a short time they parted their cables, and all three ships were driven on the strand at Streedagh, a part of the coast within two miles of the village of Grange, County Sligo.

The largest of the galleons struck on a reef of rock, close to the little island of Derninsh, and the rock is hence called to this day Carrig-na-Spaniagh, the Spaniard's rock. In a map of the coast, made A.D. 1609, the original of which is in the British Museum, this rock is marked—*"Three Spanish shipps here cast awaie in Ano. Dmi. 1588."* (See Map)



Fenton, writing to Burleigh (*State Papers*, 1588-9), says—"At my late being in Sligo, I found both by view of eye and credible report that the number of ships and men perished at these coasts was more than was advertised thither by the Lord Deputy and Council, for I numbered in one strand (Streedagh), of less than five miles in length, eleven hundred dead corpses of men which the sea had driven on the shore. Since the time of the advertisement, the country people told me the like was in other places, though not of like numbers; and the Lord Deputy, writing to the Council, says—"After leaving Sligo, I journeyed towards Bundrowse (Bundrowse) and so to Ballyshannon, the uttermost part of Connaught that way, and riding still along the sea-shore, I went to see the bay where some of these ships were wrecked, and where, as I heard not long before, lay twelve or thirteen hundred of the dead bodies. I rode along that strand near two miles (but left behind me a long mile and more), and then turned off that shore; in both which places, they said that had seen it, there lay as great store of timber of wrecked ships as was in that place which myself had viewed, being in my opinion (having small skill or judgment therein) more than would have built four of the greatest ships I ever saw, beside mighty great boats, cables, and other cordage answerable thereto, and some such masts, for bigness and length, as in my knowledge I never saw any two that could make the like."

According to the Government returns, twenty-three Spanish ships were wrecked at this period off the Ulster and Connacht coasts, and upwards of 7,000 men perished there. At Streedagh the tradition of this great shipwreck still lives in the minds of the country people, and some few years ago various war materials, cannon balls, and bones of the Spaniards, which had been buried in the sands, were brought to the surface in the locality.

The account given by the Lord Deputy of his journey from Sligo to Ballyshannon, though rather obscurely worded, points to the probability of there having been more than one spot on that coast which was a scene of disaster. It is evident that the entire shore from Streedagh to Bundrowse was littered with the wreckage of the Spanish vessels, and it could

hardly be expected that all the "flotsam and jetsam" referred to in the report we have quoted would have come from the three vessels described by Cuellar.

To return to the narrative. Cuellar now found himself in a desperate plight; wounded, half-naked, and starving with hunger, he managed to creep into a place of concealment during the remainder of the day, and at daybreak on the following morning, he says—"I began to walk little by little, searching for a Monastery of Monks that I might repair to it as best I could, the which I arrived at with sufficient trouble and toil, and I found it depopulated, and the Church and images of the Saints burned and completely ruined, and twelve Spaniards hanging within the Church by the art of the English Lutherans, who went about searching for us to make an end of all of us who had escaped to the woods for fear of the enemies." Some writers on this shipwreck have been unable to explain this reference to a monastery in the vicinity of the sea-shore at Streedagh; no such difficulty, however, exists in identifying the place indicated, for within sight of the strand stood the Abbey of Staad, which tradition says was founded By St. Molaise, the patron saint of the neighbouring island Inismurray. It was then to this monastery that Cuellar repaired, in the expectation of finding there a safe asylum in his dire necessity; he was, however, disappointed, for he found the place deserted, and several of his fellow-countrymen hanging from the iron bars of the windows. The ruins of Staad Abbey, which still remain, are inconsiderable, consisting of portions of the church, which was oblong in form, and measured, internally, 34 feet in length by 14 feet 5 inches in width. There are indications that a much older building once occupied the site of the existing ruin. Outside the walls of the old church it was customary to light beacons for the purpose of signalling with the inhabitants of Inismurray and elsewhere, and this mode of communication by fire-signals was adopted in Ireland from remote times, and its existence amongst us to the present day is an interesting survival of primitive life. Cuellar, sick at heart with the ghastly spectacle in the monastery, betook himself to a road "which lay through a great wood," and after wandering about without being able to procure any food, he turned his face once more to the sea-shore, in the hope of being able to pick up some provisions that might have been washed in from the wrecks.

Here he found, stretched on the strand in one spot, more than 400 Spaniards, and amongst them he recognised Don Enriquez and another honoured officer. He dug a hole in the sand and buried his two friends. After some time he was joined by two other Spaniards; they met a man who seemed rather friendly towards them. He directed them to take a road which led from the coast to a village, which Cuellar describes as "consisting of some huts of straw." This was probably the village of Grange, a couple of miles distant, and the huts he refers to were the cabins with thatched roofs, still a common feature in the country. From descriptions of these which are given by writers of the 16th century, there seems to be but slight difference in the mode of constructing cabins then and now. At Grange was a castle in which soldiers were stationed; it was an important outpost at the period, being on the highway between Connacht and Tyrconnell. From this outpost, bodies of soldiers used to sally forth, scouring the neighbourhood for Spanish fugitives and plunder. Fearing these military scouts, Cuellar turned off from the village and entered a wood, in which he had not gone far when a new misfortune befell him. He was set upon by an "old savage" more than seventy years of age, and by two young men, one English the other French; they wounded him in the leg, and stripped him of what little clothing was left to him. They took from him a gold chain of the value of a thousand reals, also 45 gold crown pieces he had sewed into his clothing, and some relics that had been given him at Lisbon. But for the interference of a young girl, whom Cuellar describes as of the age of twenty, "and most beautiful in the extreme," it would have gone hard with him in the hands of these men. Having robbed him of all he had, they went on their way in search of further prey, and the young girl, pitying the sad condition of the Spaniard, made a salve of herbs for his wounds, and gave him butter and milk, with oaten bread to eat.

Cuellar was directed to travel in the direction of some mountains, which appeared to be about six leagues distant, behind which there were good lands belonging to an "important savage," a very great friend of the King of Spain. The distances in leagues and miles given in the narrative, are in most cases considerably over-estimated, and cannot be relied on. Cuellar, it should be remembered, is describing events which happened to him in a strange country, wherein the names of the places and the distances from place to place were alike unknown to him, and the journeys he was forced to make in his lame and wretched condition, must have seemed to him very much longer than they were in reality. A right understanding of this part of the narrative is important, as some writers have fallen into the error of supposing that Cuellar's course was in the direction of the Donegal mountains, on the other side of the bay, visible, no doubt, from the locality of the wreck, but on the distant northern horizon. A careful reading of the text will show that this was not the direction he took. He says—"I began to walk as best I could, making for the north of the mountains, as the boy had told me." This means that he kept on the north, or sea-side of the Dartry Mountains, and behind them, i.e. on the south side, were good lands belonging to a friendly chief. The word north does not here refer to the cardinal point, but is used merely as a relative term, just as "right and left," "back and front" are used in familiar conversation. Besides, Cuellar plainly states the name of the chief he was seeking to reach; he speaks of him as "Senior de Ruerque," the Spanish for O'Rourke, whose territory lay in the direction of the mountain range he was travelling towards. He calls him an "important savage," a term which he applies to the Irish natives he met with, whether friendly or the reverse; it does not refer to their treatment of him personally, but he intends it to define what he considers their position in the scale of civilisation as compared with his own country. Journeying on in the direction pointed out to him, he came to a lake, in the vicinity of which were about thirty huts, all forsaken and untenanted. Going into one of these for shelter, he discovered three other naked men—Spaniards—who had met the same hard treatment as himself. The only food they could obtain here was blackberries and water-cresses. Covering themselves up with some straw, they passed the night in a hut by the lake side, resolving at daybreak to push forward towards O'Rourke's village.

The lake to which reference is here made is evidently Glenade Lough, from which it is an easy journey to O'Rourke's settlement at Glencar. O'Rourke had another "town" at Newtown, on the borders of the County of Sligo. It seems probable, however, that at this time he had removed his people to Glencar. In the Lough here he had a crannog, and such lacustrine habitations were usually resorted to by the Irish chiefs in times of disturbance, for within their stockaded lake dwellings they and their possessions were safest from the attack of the enemy. Having arrived at "the village," Cuellar found the chief absent, being at war with the English, who were at the time in occupation of Sligo. A number of Spaniards were in the village, and, from what Cuellar says, not very welcome guests there. Before many days passed, tidings came that a Spanish ship was standing off the coast, and on the look-out for any Spaniards who had escaped with their lives. Hearing this, Cuellar and nineteen others resolved to make an effort to reach the vessel. They, therefore, set off at once toward the coast. They met with many hindrances on the way, and Cuellar, probably owing to the wounded state of his leg, was unable to keep pace with the others, and was consequently left behind, while the others got on board the vessel. He regards this circumstance of his being left behind as a special interference of Providence on his behalf, for the ship, after setting sail, was, he says, "wrecked off the same coast, and more than 200 persons were drowned."

The *State Papers* at this date say that "John Festigan, who came out of the Barony of Carbrie, saw three great ships coming from the south-west, and bearing towards O'Donnell's country, and took their course right to the harbour of Killibeggs, the next haven to Donegal." It is probable that it was in one of these ships that Cuellar's comrades went to sea, having been

picked up somewhere off the coast between Mullaghmore and Bundrowse. We are also in possession of direct evidence of at least one of the Armada ships having been wrecked off the northern coast of Donegal. In the Rosses—a coast abounding in shoals and sunken rocks, impossible of safe navigation without the aid of a pilot—is a bay with an extensive strand called Mulladerg, and about four miles from the land is a rock called the "Spanish Rock." Here lies buried in the strand one of the great ships of the Armada, perhaps the last vestige of the fleet. A little more than a century ago, a man named Boyle, of Farnmore, in company with several other young men, went to the "Spanish Rock" for the purpose of looking for the "warship" which tradition said lay there. These young men were all good swimmers and expert divers, and the following is a verbatim account of the search, which was taken down from the lips of Boyle himself:—"Remembers, before he was twenty, diving with others down into the vessel at 'Spanish Rock,' off Mulladerg; saw the beams of the ship, and was on them. Supposes they were beams of the lowest deck [these 'tall Spaniards' were three-deckers], having got lead, which he supposes was ballast; a piece of lead a yard long, triangular, the sides being about 18 inches deep, and pointed towards the ends, getting thick in the middle; from its size and shape they called it a 'muck' (pig), and divided it into twelve shares. Three fathoms of water over the wreck at the time, being a good spring-tide. The remains of the ship first observed by a man going out in a curragh, who perceived it under him The cannon found, about 10 feet long, brass; tied the ropes round them in the hull, then made the ropes fast to the boats above; waited for high water, when the guns were thus floated. Got then five brass ones, clean and bright, each about ten feet long, as good as the first day; only a very strong man could lift the head off the ground. Plenty of metal [iron] guns lying 'through other,' supposed to be larger than the brass ones; easily broken." Boyle said he sold three cart-loads of brass at 4½d. per lb. Speaking of the size of the guns, he says—"You would think nothing of the cannon of Derry after them—they were so pretty made and pretty shaped." These relics were broken up by the country people, who were instructed how to do it by a travelling tinker. He says of one cannon which took threescore men to drag it through the strand—"They lifted up one end on stones, and, having arranged a fire consisting of fifteen to twenty backloads of turf, they lighted it, and when the gun grew hot, they smashed it up with sledges."

Resuming the course of Cuellar's fortunes, we find him pursuing his way by the most secluded routes for fear of the "Sassanagh horsemen," as he styles the English soldiers. He soon fell in with a clergyman, who entered into friendly converse with him in the Latin tongue—a language, it may be observed, that did not at that period in Ireland rank as a "dead" one—men and women of various degrees, both high and low, spoke it freely; of this there is abundant evidence from contemporary writers. The clergyman gave Cuellar some of the food he had with him, and directed him to take a road which would bring him to a castle which belonged to a "savage" gentleman, "a very brave soldier, and a great enemy of the Queen of England—a man who had never cared to obey her or pay tribute, attending only to his castle and mountains, which [latter] made it strong." Following the course pointed out to him, Cuellar met with an untoward circumstance which caused him much anxiety; he was met by a blacksmith who pursued his calling in a "deserted valley." Here he was forced to abide, and work in the forge. For more than a week he, the Spanish officer, had to blow the forge bellows, and, what was worse, submit to the rough words of the blacksmith's wife, whom he calls "an accursed old woman." At length, his friend the clergyman happened again to pass that way, and seeing Cuellar labouring in the forge he was displeased. He comforted Cuellar, assuring him he would speak to the chief of the castle to which he had directed him, and ask that an escort should be sent for him. The following day this promise was fulfilled and four men from the castle, and a Spanish soldier who had already found his way thither, arrived, and safely conducted him on his way. Here he seems at last to have found kind and humane treatment. He specially mentions

the extreme kindness shown him by the chief's wife, whom he describes as "beautiful in the extreme."

Cuellar, in taking the course pointed out to him by the clergyman, was travelling in an eastward direction, having his back turned on O'Rourke's village, whither he had first gone for succour. The "deserted valley," in which he fell in with the blacksmith, was doubtless the beautiful valley of Glenade, from which place to the island castle of Rossclougher was an easy journey. As this castle is a prominent feature in our narrative, some particulars regarding it may be here noted.

The Barony of Rossclougher, County Leitrim, formerly Brefeine-O'Rourke, derived its name from the principal castle of the MacClancies, chiefs of Dartraigh, an extensive territory, once formidable in its mountain fastnesses; this was called Dartraigh-MacClancy, and was a principality in itself, subject to O'Rourke, the chief of Brefeine. The castle of Rossclougher, the picturesque ruins of which are still a feature in the beautiful scenery of Lough Melvin, was built by one of the clan at a period—precise date not known—anterior to the reign of Henry VIII. In the Irish Annals the name of MacClancy, chief of Dartraigh, appears at A.D. 1241. The territory was held by the family for three hundred years, their property having been finally confiscated after the wars of 1641. The castle lies close to the southern shore of Lough Melvin, considerably to the westward of the island of Inisheher. (See ordnance Map.) It is a peculiar structure, being built on an artificial foundation, somewhat similar to the "Hag's Castle" in Lough Mask, and to Cloughoughter Castle in the neighbouring county of Cavan. Here may be noted a striking instance of the accuracy and appropriateness of Irish names of places. When the island of Inisheher (Inis Siar), i.e. western island, got its name, the site of Rossclougher Castle had not been laid, for where the castle stands is considerably further west than the last natural island, which, from its name, marks it as the most westerly island of the lough. It may be well also to observe that the castle of Rossclougher does not stand on the island of Iniskeen, as erroneously stated in several works. The large island of Iniskeen lies a considerable distance to the east, and on it the MacClancy had a crannog, which they used as a place of refuge and security, when the necessities of the hour demanded it.

The Castle of Rossclougher is built on a foundation of heavy stones laid in the bed of the lake, and filled in with smaller stones and earth to above water-level. The sub-structure was circular in form, and the entire was encompassed by a thick wall, probably never more than five feet in height. The walls of the castle are very thick, and composed of freestone, obtained from an adjacent quarry on the mainland. They are cemented together with the usual grouting of lime and coarse gravel, so generally used by the builders of old; the outside walls were coated with thick rough-cast, a feature not generally seen in old structures in the locality. Facing the south shore, which is about one hundred yards distant, are the remains of a bastion pierced for musketry. The water between the castle and the shore is deep, and goes down sheer from the foundation.

On the shore, close to the castle, are the remains of military earthworks, evidently constructed by some enemy seeking possession of the castle. On the summit of a hill immediately over this, is a circular enclosure about 220 feet in circumference; it is composed of earth, faced with stone-work. Here the MacClancy clan folded their flocks and herds, and from this ancient "cattle-booley" a bridle-path led to the mountains above. Portions of this pathway have recently been discovered; it was only two feet in width, and regularly paved with stones enclosed by a kerb.

On the mainland, close to the southern shore, and within speaking distance of the castle, stand the ruins of the old church which was built by MacClancy, and which is of about the same

date as the castle to which it was an appendage. In the immediate neighbourhood of the shore, guarded on one side by the lofty mountain range of Dartraigh, on the other, by the waters of Lough Melvin, was MacClancy's "town"—an assemblage of primitive huts, probably circular in shape, and of the simplest construction, where dwelt the followers and dependants of the chief, ready, by night or by day, to obey the call to arms, or, as Cuellar expresses it, *Go Santiago*, a slang expression in Spain meaning to attack.

Of the manners and customs of the natives, Cuellar makes sundry observations. Having described at length how he occupied his leisure in the castle by telling the fortunes of the ladies by palmistry, he mentions incidentally that their conversation was carried on in Latin. He goes on to speak of the natives, or "savages," as he calls them. He says—"Their custom is to live as the brute beasts among the mountains, which are very rugged in that part of Ireland where we lost ourselves. They live in huts made of straw; the men are all large-bodied, and of handsome features and limbs, active as the roe-deer. They do not eat oftener than once a day, and this is at night; and that which they usually eat is butter with oaten bread. They drink sour milk, for they have no other drink; they don't drink water, although it is the best in the world. On feast-days they eat some flesh, half-cooked, without bread or salt, for that is their custom. They clothe themselves, according to their habit, with tight trousers and short jackets of very coarse goats' hair. They cover themselves with blankets, and wear their hair down to their eyes. They are great walkers, and inured to toil. They carry on perpetual war with the English who here keep garrison for the Queen, from whom they defend themselves, and do not let them enter their territory, which is subject to inundation and marshy."

He also observes that the chief inclination of these people is to plunder their neighbours, capturing cattle and any other property obtainable, the raids being chiefly carried out at night. He also remarks that the English garrison were in the habit of making plundering expeditions into the territory of these natives, and the only refuge they had was, on the approach of the soldiers, to withdraw to the mountains with their families and cattle till the danger would be past. Speaking of the women, he says—"Most of them are very beautiful, but badly dressed. The head-dress of the women is a linen cloth, doubled over the head and tied in front." He remarks "the women are great workers and housekeepers, after their fashion." Speaking of the churches, &c., he says most of them have been demolished by the hands of the English, and by those natives who have joined them, who are as bad as they. He concludes his by-no-means flattering description in these words:—"In this kingdom there is neither justice nor right, and everyone does what he pleases."

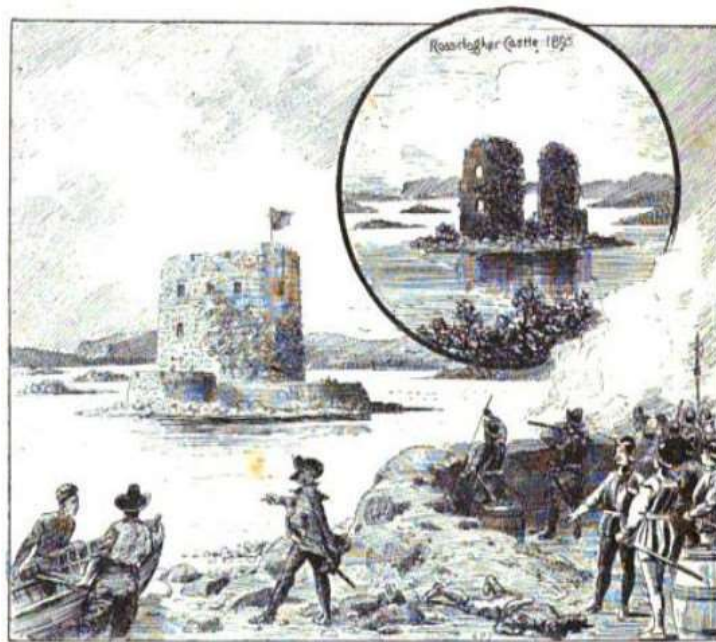
The sour milk Cuellar speaks of is buttermilk, as great a favourite here in the nineteenth century as in the sixteenth. The cloth which he calls "very coarse goats' hair" was the familiar homespun frieze, which from the earliest times was made by the Irish. The head-dress of the women—a linen cloth—is still adopted by elderly women here.

After enjoying a short period of rest in MacClancy's, or, as Cuellar styles him, Manglana's castle, rumours of an alarming nature reached them. The Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam, or, as he is called in the narrative, "the great governor of the Queen" (see Note 1), was marching from Dublin, with a force of 1,700 soldiers, to search for the lost ships and the people who had escaped the fury of the waves, and no quarter could be expected for either the Irish chiefs or the shipwrecked Spaniards; all that came within Fitzwilliam's grasp would certainly be hanged. Cuellar says the Lord Deputy marched along the whole coast till he arrived at the place where the shipwreck happened (at Streedagh), and from thence he came towards the castle of "Manglana." It is at this point of his narrative that he first mentions the name of the chief who had given him refuge. In the State Papers the name is variously given as M'Glannogh, M'Glanthie, &c.; in a map made a few years after this it is given as "Macglanagh," which in

sound closely resembles the Spaniard's rendering of the name. The Irish name of the family was Mac Fhlannchadha.

MacClancy, seeing the force that had come against him, felt himself unable to stand a siege, and decided to escape to the friendly shelter of his mountains. He called Cuellar aside and made known his determination, and advised that he and the other Spaniards should consider what they would do for their own safety. Cuellar consulted with his fellows, and they finally agreed that their only chance of life was to hold out in the castle as long as possible, trusting to its strength and isolated situation; and, leaving the result to the fortunes of war, they determined to stand or fall together.

Having communicated their decision to MacClancy, he willingly provided them with all the arms within his reach, and a sufficient store of provisions to last for six months. He made them take an oath to hold the castle till death, "and not to open the gates for Irishman, Spaniard, or anyone else till his return." Having made these preparations, and removed the furniture and relics out of the church on the shore, and deposited them within the castle, MacClancy, after embracing Cuellar, withdrew to the mountains, taking with him his family and followers, with their flocks and herds. Cuellar now provided himself with several boat-loads of stones, six muskets, and six crowbars, as well as a supply of ammunition. He gives a minute description of the place he was going to defend. He says—"The castle is very strong and very difficult to take, if they do not attack it with artillery, for it is founded in a lake of very deep water, which is more than a league wide at some parts and three or four leagues long, and has an outlet to the sea, and besides, with the rise of spring-tides it is not possible to enter it, for which reason the castle could not be taken by water nor by the shore of land which is nearest it, neither could injury be done it, because a league around the 'town,' which is established on the mainland, it is boggy, breast deep, so that even the inhabitants (natives) could not get to it except by paths." [These paths through bogs and shallow lakes were made of large stones in a hidden irregular way, unknown to any except those who had the key of their position.] Three centuries ago, the aspect of the country was very different from what it now is: the land was in a swampy, undrained condition, and beyond small patches here and there which had been cleared for growing corn, dense thickets of brushwood covered the surface everywhere, and as there were no roads or bridges, but merely narrow paths where two horsemen could not pass each other, the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of bringing troops, heavy baggage, and artillery across country, is apparent. That such a state of things existed in MacClancy's territory there is abundant evidence. The stones with which Cuellar provided himself were a favourite item in the war materials of that period; these were used with deadly effect from the towers of castles, and were also thrown from cannon instead of iron balls. Cuellar says—"our courage seemed good to the whole country, and the enemy was very indignant at it, and came upon the castle with his forces—about 1,800 men—and observed us from a distance of a mile and a-half from it, without being able to approach closer on account of the water [or marshy ground] which intervened." From this description, it is evident the Lord Deputy's forces had taken up their position on the shore of the opposite promontory of Rossfrier, a tongue of land which projects itself into the lough at the north-west end. From this point he says they exhibited "menaces and warnings," and hanged two Spanish fugitives they had laid hold of "to put the defenders in fear." The troops demanded by trumpet a surrender of the castle, but the Spaniards declined all proposals. For seventeen days, Cuellar says, the besiegers lay against them, but were unable to get a favourable position for attack; "at length a severe storm and a great fall of snow compelled them to withdraw without having accomplished anything."



THE SPANIARDS HOLDING ROSSCLOUGH CASTLE AGAINST THE LORD DEPUTY.

In the *State Papers*, under date 12 October, 1588, the Lord Deputy asks the Privy Council of England to send at once two thousand "sufficient and thoroughly appointed men" to join the service directed against the main body of 3,000 Spaniards in O'Donnell's country and the North. In the same month, Fenton writes to the Lord Deputy "that the Spaniards are marching towards Sligo, and are very near Lough Erne." There were, no doubt, a large number of Spaniards who had escaped the dangers of the sea, and had fled for refuge to O'Donnell and O'Neill, both of whom were very favourable to them; but the Lord Deputy, for his own ends, greatly exaggerated both their numbers and strength; they were merely fugitives acting on the defensive, and not then inclined to be aggressive. They well knew the fate of hundreds of their countrymen, and what they might expect if they fell into the hands of the Lord Deputy. In the County of Clare, at this time, was another MacClancy—Boethius—he was Elizabeth's High Sheriff there, and, unlike his namesake of Rossclough, he cruelly treated and killed a number of Spaniards of the Armada, who had been shipwrecked off that coast. In memory of his conduct then, he is cursed every seventh year in a church in Spain. In the *State Papers* no reference is made to this expedition against MacClancy's castle; all that is said is that the troops arrived at Athlone on 10 November, 1588, and returned to Dublin on 23 December following, "without loss of any one of her Majesty's army, neither brought I home, as the captains inform me, scarce twenty sick persons or thereabouts, neither found I the water, nor other great impediments which were objected before my going out, to have been dangerous, otherwise than very reasonable to pass." In these vague terms Fitzwilliam disposes of a disagreeable subject which he knew was more for his own credit not to enlarge upon. It seems probable that Cuellar has over-estimated the number of soldiers sent to storm the castle which he was defending; there is, however, no ground for doubting the general truth of his account of the transaction. MacClancy, we know, was the subject of peculiar hatred by the authorities; Bingham describes him as "an arch-rebel, and the most barbarous creature in Ireland," and the fact of his having given shelter to Spanish fugitives made him ten times worse in their eyes.

When the siege was raised, MacClancy and his followers returned from the mountains, and made much of Cuellar and his comrades, asking them to remain and throw in their lot with them. To Cuellar he offered his sister in marriage. This, however, the latter declined, saying he

was anxious to turn his face homewards. MacClancy would not hear of the Spaniard's leaving (see Note 2), and Cuellar, fearing he might be detained against his will, determined to leave unobserved, which he did two days after Christmas, when he and four Spanish soldiers left the castle before dawn, and went "travelling by the mountains and desolate places," and at the end of twenty days they came to Dunluce, where Alonzo de Leyva and the Count de Paredes and many other Spanish nobles had been lost, and there, he says, "they went to the huts of some 'savages,' who told us of the great misfortunes of our people who were drowned."

Cuellar does not indicate the course he took in travelling on foot from the castle in Lough Melvin to Dunluce; but it is evident, from the time spent on the journey, that it was the circuitous route round the coast of Donegal to Derry, and from thence to Dunluce. Their journey was one of danger, as military scouts were searching the country everywhere for Spaniards, and more than once he had narrow escapes. After some delay and considerable difficulty, Cuellar, through the friendly assistance of Sir James MacDonnell of Dunluce (see Note 3), succeeded in crossing over to Scotland, where he hoped to enjoy the protection of King James VI., who was then reported to favour the Spaniards.

Cuellar did not find things much better there, and, after some delay, he eventually took ship and arrived at Antwerp. His narrative is dated 4 October, 1589, and was evidently not written till his arrival on the Continent. In forming an estimate of its value, it should be remembered that the greater part, if not all, was written by him from memory. It is highly improbable he would have made notes, or kept a diary in Ireland, as the writing of his adventures never occurred to him (as his narrative shows) till afterwards. Bearing this in mind will account for any inaccuracies in his statements as to places, distances, &c.; and allowing for a probable tendency to exaggeration, Cuellar's narrative, corroborated, as it is, in all essential points by contemporary history, bears on its face the stamp of truth and authenticity.

Alonzo de Leyva, who met his end off Dunluce, was in command of a squadron of the Armada, and, being highly esteemed in Spain, to his care and keeping were entrusted many young nobles of the highest rank who had volunteered to serve in the expedition. De Leyva soon found these young aristocrats not only useless, but a source of anxiety to him. He had most of them in his own ship, the *Rata*, 1,000 tons burden. All his vessels had suffered much, both by storms and conflicts with the enemy, and the *Rata* had become so open in her seams, and the leakage so serious, that she was in danger of going down with all hands. In this condition, accompanied by three other vessels—the *Santa Anna*, the *Gerona* (a galleas), and another vessel, whose name is not known—they came by the Island of Raghery, on the Antrim Coast, to a place known as "Slog-na-mara" (swallowing hole of the sea). [This whirlpool lies between Raghery and Ballycastle.] From this they were swept onwards in a westerly direction, coming close to the shore off the Rosses, in Western Donegal. Perceiving a castle on the shore (probably MacSwine's Castle), De Leyva resolved, if possible, to land his crew here and leave the sinking ship. The *Rata* stranded and was burned, the *Santa Anna* kept afloat, the *Gerona* made her way into Killybegs harbour, and the nameless vessel sank a considerable distance from the shore. De Leyva succeeded in landing over 1,000 men, and in the old castle there, the flower of the Spanish nobility took shelter for some days. The jewellery and plate, of which there was a large store, was transferred to the *Santa Anna*, which once more set sail with the young Spaniards. They had not, however, proceeded far on their voyage when they encountered another fearful gale, which drove them back on the Donegal coast. Here, in a creek of the territory called Doe, the *Santa Anna* became a total wreck, but all on board escaped to shore. De Leyva, lame and wounded, still battled against fate, and again re-embarked with his nobles in the third vessel, the *Gerona*, intending to make for the Scottish coast; but the vessel being wholly unseaworthy, was unfit even for that short voyage. When they got once more opposite the Antrim coast, they again experienced rough weather, and the *Gerona's* seams, under the

heavy strain, re-opened, and she became utterly helpless and unmanageable. After labouring thus for a short space, she was cast on the rocks and dashed to pieces, when all on board perished, save five who sought and obtained the protection of MacDonnell at Dunluce (see Note 3). Local tradition points to a creek called Port-na-Spaniagh, close to the Giant's Causeway (see Note 4).

Of the singularly few relics of the Armada which are known to exist, considering the vast quantity of articles which must have been recovered from the wrecks on the Ulster coast alone, the most unique and interesting are undoubtedly the money chests or safes which were carried in the Spanish ships. Every vessel was provided with two chests—a large and a small one—each to contain one kind of coin, either gold or silver. One of these chests was recovered by the MacDonnells, Earls of Antrim, from a wreck at Dunluce, and is still in good preservation. It has been kept in Glenarm Castle for the past century and a half. Its sides are elaborately painted and decorated in colours, the subjects being largely naval; its length is 3 ft. 3 in., its breadth 1 ft. 9 in., and its height 1 ft. 11 in.

Another example, in a state of fine preservation, is in the Dundonald Meeting-House, where it has been used for more than two centuries for the safe custody of the Communion plate. The sides and lid are composed of strong plates of iron, encased with straps of the same material, which cross each other at right angles; underneath and attached to the lid is the lock, of very complex design, the works covering the entire underside. The key enters the lid at the centre, and simultaneously works the entire bolts. About thirty years ago, an iron lid, with a lock attached, was dug up beside the ruins of O'Clery's castle at Kilbarron, near Ballyshannon. This relic is still in existence, and was believed to have been a lock belonging to some part of O'Clery's stronghold. It has recently been lent to the writer by the owner, General Tredennick, Woodhill, Co. Donegal, and has been identified beyond question as a part of one of the Spanish chests. The fine figurehead still in existence at Sligo is the only one known to exist in Ireland. An anchor belonging to one of the Spanish ships was picked up some years ago off the Donegal coast, and is now preserved in London. A portion of one of the brass cannons recovered from De Leyva's vessels was in the Castle Caldwell Museum till the collection was disposed of. There is a bell now in the Parish Church of Cardonagh, in the Diocese of Derry, believed to have been recovered from one of the Armada vessels wrecked at Inishowen. It bears the following legend:—"SANCTA: MARIA: Ora: PRO: NoBIS RICARDUS POTTAR [his sign or trade-mark] DE VRUCIN ME FECIT ALLA (allelujah)."

NOTES

NOTE 1. Fitzwilliam, the Lord Deputy, was a covetous and merciless man. Not long after his arrival in Ireland the Spanish shipwrecks took place. Cox, in his *History of Ireland*, written in 1589, makes the following references to him:—Fitzwilliam, he says, had on a former occasion been entrusted with the government of Ireland, and on his return to Whitehall he asked for a reward for his services, and was told that "the government of Ireland was a preferment, not a service;" ever afterwards he endeavoured to make a secret profit out of it. Cox gives the following particulars of the ships lost:—"Shipwreck'd on the northern shoars of Ireland, 17 ships and 5,394 men." He adds—"By this shipwreck much treasure, which belonged to the Queen by her prerogative, fell into the hands of the natives. Fitzwilliam, wishing to secure a part at least of the spoil for himself, issued out a commission to make enquiry after it; it was thus worded—"To make inquiry by all good means, both of oaths and otherwise; to take all hulls of ships, stores, treasures, &c., into your hands, and to apprehend and execute all Spaniards of what quality soever . . . torture may be used in prosecuting this inquiry." This commission, however, proved ineffectual, and hence the expedition organised by Fitzwilliam (which has been already described). During this expedition he captured about 1,000 Spaniards,

most of whom he put to death; he also vented his rage on the native chiefs. Having, after his withdrawal from Lough Melvin, visited Ballyshannon and Belleek Castles, both of which were built on the River Erne, he seized on Sir Eoin MacToole O'Gallagher, O'Donnell's marshal, then in possession of these castles; O'Dougherty, another chief, also fell into his hands, and they were brought to Dublin, where they were imprisoned, the former for nine months, the latter for two years, when he purchased his freedom from the Lord Deputy.

NOTE 2. MacClancy at length paid dearly for his part in the Spanish affair; this we learn from a letter in the *State Papers*, under date 23 April, 1590—"The acceptable service performed by Sir George Bingham in cutting off M'Glanaghie, an arch-rebel . . . M'Glanghe's head brought in—M'Glanaghe ran for a lough and tried to save himself by swimming, but a shot broke his arm, and a gallowglass brought him ashore; he was the most barbarous creature in Ireland; his countrie extended from Grange till you come to Ballishannon; he was O'Rourke's right hand; he had fourteen Spaniards with him, some of whom were taken alive." The lough above referred to is Lough Melvin. MacClancy was endeavouring to reach his island fortress when he met his end.

NOTE 3.—There were at least two shipwrecks near Dunluce in 1558. One occurred at the place since called Spanish Port, very near the Castle. The name of this vessel is unknown, but it was from this wreck that the MacDonnells recovered three pieces of cannon, which were subsequently claimed by Sir John Chichester for the Government. These cannon could not have been recovered from the *Gerona*, as she had thrown overboard all her cannon at Killybegs to lighten her. Sir James MacDonnell (son of the renowned Sorley Boye) had mounted these three cannon on his Castle of Dunluce, and sturdily refused to hand them over to Chichester. This disagreement was one of the reasons for the subsequent meeting between MacDonnell and Chichester at Altfracken, near Carrickfergus, when Chichester treacherously tried to capture MacDonnell, but the wily Scot foiled him, inflicting a disastrous defeat upon the English forces, who fled in all directions. Chichester was killed, and his head cut off and sent to the camp of O'Neill and O'Donnell in Tyrone. Sir Moses Hill, then an unknown lieutenant, found a hiding-place in a cave in Island Magee still known by his name. Lieutenant Dobbs, the first of his name in the district, hid under a bridge till the danger was over, whilst Lieut. John Dalway hid himself in the dry ooze between Island Magee and the mainland. MacDonnell had rescued eleven Spaniards from this wreck, and these also he humanely refused to hand over to the Government, but sent them and the five from the *Gerona*, with Cuellar—18 in all—in a boat to Scotland.

Note 4. In regard to the *Gerona*, Prof. O'Reilly states, quoting a State paper, which gave the depositions of an Irish sailor, named James M'Grath, who had been impressed at Lisbon into the service of a Spanish ship, and was a witness to what he states, that the *Gerona* was wrecked at the "Rock of Bunbois." Now, this is undoubtedly intended for Bunbuais or Bushfoot, for Buais is the well-known ancient name for the Bush, and there is no other place to which Bun (meaning the end or foot of the river) would apply. There is a long low reef of rock at the Bush mouth which is evidently the place referred to.

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