



Domhnall Ó Súileabhain Béara
(1561-1618).

O'SULLIVAN BEARE OF BANTRY.

(From the painting at Ardriagh, Belfast.)

DOMNALL Ó SÚILEADÁIN BEARA.

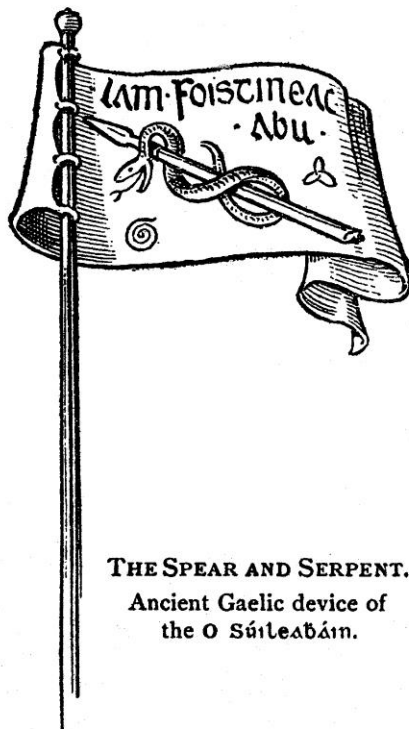
BY FRANCIS JOSEPH BIGGER, M.R.I.A.,
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AMONGST my most valued possessions is the portrait of DOMNALL Ó SÚILEADÁIN BEARA. It is full life size, 6 ft. 6 in. by 3 ft. 6 in., suitably framed and stoutly held together—a fit subject for any National Gallery or baronial hall. I consider it an asset of the nation. The time may come when it will become in reality a state heir-loom. At present our National Portrait Gallery has too many “strangers in the house” to make it a fitting and comfortable home for DOMNALL comes BEARRÆ et BEANTRIÆ. Perhaps Cork, its proper *refugium*, may some day have a Pantheon for Munster worthies. Till then DOMNALL has a kindly welcome in O’Neill’s land, under the shadow of the Fort of MacArt O’Neill (Wolfe Tone’s Hill) in the house of ARDRIGH. I have heard (I know not with what truth) that the original in the College of the Noble Irish at Salamanca in Spain has gone, but I trust not. If so, however, this exact replica is a fitting counterpart. It is well and skillfully copied, and now at the end of half a century is in as fine condition as when it made its journey from Spain to Erie. The title is printed plainly at the head of the portrait. It runs: “O’Sullevanus Bearus Berræ et Beantsiae Comes Ætatis suae LIII. Christivero Domini MDCXIII. Anno.” In the upper left-hand corner is a Coat of Arms, quarterly—1st, a bear; 2nd, a deer, 3rd, an arm holding a sword; 4th, three lions passant. Surmounting the shield is a helmet with a rayed coronet surmounting it, and the motto, “Patentia duris gaudet”—evidently not valid, but the “faked” idea of some English “Ulster.” The bear in the first quarter is evidently a “play” upon Beara, the O’Sullivan island—a feature of ignorance inexcusable, unless, perhaps, the Gaelic language was as obnoxious to Castle ears as in later times.

One of my most unpleasant recollections is the breaking up of the O’Lavery collection of books, antiquities and relics of Irish historic lore. All should have been preserved as the collection of one man—a true Irishman, a scholar, and a character. Lesser lights were unable to see his illumination, and so there was a sordid auction and “realisation of his estate,” Monsignor

O'Laverty had collected many rare Irish things during his long life—Chalices, mediæval and penal; crucifixes pre-Norman, Malachian, Stuartian; books of every phase of Irish life; bronzes innumerable and stone implements without number; fonts, lamps, carvings in great number. Yet of all, he valued most the portrait that he himself had discovered of Domnall O Súileabáin Beare. I cannot do better than recount in his own words the way this portrait came to Ireland:—

“Early in the year 1859 I met the Rev. Dr. John Gartlan, Rector of the College of the Noble Irish, Salamanca, who was then



THE SPEAR AND SERPENT.
Ancient Gaelic device of
the O Súileabáin.



THE CORRECT HERALDIC ARMS
OF THE O Súileabáin.

on a visit with Dr. Denvir, Bishop of Down and Connor. From him I learned that there was in that College a portrait of O'Sullivan Beare. I gave instructions to have an exact copy of it painted by a good artist, in every respect similar to the original. The painting, which was pronounced by all who saw it to be an exact copy of the original, was forwarded on the 18th of September, 1859, and I received it in perfect order. On the copy is inscribed: 'Pedro Micopintoen, Salamanca, ano 1859.' Copies of this portrait have been given in many books published since I discovered it, and I have reason to complain that not one of them informs its readers whose was the patriotism which conferred

a benefit on national literature. The preface to Father Meehan's *Flight of the Earls* says that the portrait of O'Sullivan in that work 'is from a faithful photograph of the original, still existing in the Irish College, Salamanca.' It is from a copy which Father Meehan got from me, the receipt of which he acknowledges on the 5th of May, 1860. He bestowed that copy, in 1884, to the National Gallery, Dublin, and it has been afterwards copied by Dr. Joyce into that most beautiful of school books, *A Child's History of Ireland*, which states:—'From portrait in Nat. Gall., Dublin, and that from original portrait in Irish College, Salamanca.' It has also been given in T. D. O'Sullivan's *Bantry, Berehaven and the O'Sullivan Sept*, who suitably acknowledges its source in the Appendix.¹

"The likeness of Donal O'Sullivan should have an interest for most Irishmen, for his courage, his ability, and his endurance, were of the highest order, and his whole career was chivalrous and romantic. On the arrival of the Spanish army at Kinsale in 1601, under Don Juan D'Aquila, it was joined by the forces of O'Neill and O'Donnell and other chiefs, among whom was Donal O'Sullivan. After the defeat of the Irish before Kinsale, Don Juan capitulated, and undertook to surrender to the English not only Kinsale, but many castles given to him by the Irish to garrison. Among those thus disposed of by D'Aquila was O'Sullivan's castle of Dunboy. One dark night O'Sullivan had a hole broken in one of the walls, through which he and his men poured in and overpowered the Spaniards. He had them all, except a few gunners who agreed to remain with him, shipped off to D'Aquila in Kinsale. He then commenced to prepare the castle to resist the English army, which was advancing to lay siege to Dunboy. At length it came, about 4,000 strong, to batter a castle in which there were only 144 men, under Donal's trusty chief, Richard Mac Geohagan. For eleven days the castle stood out, till its walls were battered down by cannon. The brave defenders then retired to the cellars, and when the English entered MacGeohagan, though mortally wounded, tottered, with a candle in his hand, towards a barrel of gunpowder, intending to blow up friends and foes, but before he could effect his purpose an English soldier killed him. After the fall of Dunboy, O'Sullivan felt that there was no safety for himself or his followers in the south of Ireland,

¹The original of all these reproductions is now in my possession, and "I hereby give notice that I will prosecute to conviction" anyone who reproduces this portrait without acknowledging its source, and giving to James O'Laverty the credit that is justly his.

and he and they determined to make their way towards the north, where some brave chiefs held out. That was a desperate undertaking; every day's march was marked by a battle with the English forces. On one occasion his people were encamped in a wood; on one side of him was the broad Shannon, and on every other side his numerous enemies. That night he caused his people to make long baskets of twigs, and over these they stretched the skins of their horses—an old Gaelic way of making curachs. In such boats they crossed the Shannon, and the flesh of their slain horses afforded a nutritive food which his wasted followers so much required. Scarcely, however, had they reached the friendly territory of O'Ruarc when the war terminated by the submission of O'Neill and the northern chiefs. O'Sullivan then took his way, with all his family, to Spain, where he was welcomed by the king, and raised to the rank of a Spanish grandee; hence he is styled Count in the portrait, which also represents him as bearing on his breast the Cross of St. James of Compostella. The portrait was painted late in the year 1613. On the 16th of July, 1618, one John Bath, an Englishman, had a duel with Philip O'Sullivan, the historian, who wounded him in the face, and would have killed him but for the interference of some persons sent by Domnal to save him. In the meantime, Domnal returning from Mass, came forward to the place where the combat had occurred. Bath, filled with fury, made for him, and before anyone could interfere, ran him through with his sword. Thus died Domnall O Súiteabáin Óeara, in the 57th year of his age, as told by his relative Philip. The portrait in every respect corresponds with the description given of him in the book written by his relative. The figure and features are such as may be seen amongst the O Súiteabáin of Óeara and Óearntra at the present day. The complexion is fair, the eyes blue, the hair brown, of a light shade, the body slight and tall, but with a good breadth across the shoulders. The painting shows him dressed in rich Spanish armour, a plumed helmet on a table by his side; in one hand he holds a truncheon, the other grasps the hilt of his sword.

“The portrait is certainly of much interest to Irishmen, especially as its identity is beyond any question whatsoever. The honours conferred on O'Sullivan by the king of Spain were extremely displeasing to the English government. Rushworth's *Collection of State Papers* contains a most remarkable letter 'from a great Minister of State' to Cottington, the agent of James I. to Spain. Cottington is instructed to inform the Spanish govern-

ment that the king put to death Sir Walter Raleigh 'chiefly for giving them satisfaction.' Here is a public acknowledgment that Raleigh was sacrificed to obtain the Spanish marriage for the king's son. But Cottington is warned to be cautious; for 'decency and buen termine that is to be observed between great princes will hardly admit of threats or revenge for a wooing language.' The letter continues:—'As touching O'Sullivan, it is very fit that you let them know that the report of the honour they did him hath come unto his majestie's ears; and that although they will alledge that in the time of hostility betwixt England and Spain it may be he did them many services, and may then have deserved well at their hands for which they have just cause to reward him, yet since, by his majestie's happy coming to these crowns, those differences have had an end, and that there is a perfect league and amity betwixt them, his majesty cannot chuse but dislike that they should bestow upon him any title or dignity, which only or properly belongeth unto him towards his own subjects; that, therefore, he would be glad that they would forbear to confer any such titular honor upon any of his subjects without his privity. This you shall do well to insist upon, so that they may understand that his majesty is very sensible that they should endeavour to make the Irish have any kind of dependence on that state.' This letter has never been properly referred to by Irish historians."

It shows the meanness of James I. in trying to pursue with indignity the Irish chieftains even in foreign states. Of course, in their own land they were "foule traitores" and "scurvy knaves," and had every other obliquity heaped upon them by their supplanters.

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