

AN APPEAL FOR A GUARANTOR

AMONG the poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn is a piece *Ag so an chomairce, a Chormuic*, asking Cormac Ó hEaghra, chief of Leyney (*ob.* 1612), to act as guarantor on the poet's behalf and on behalf of the other male members of his kindred, also poets.¹ It refers – I quote the editor's summary – 'to the enforcement of new regulations by the English in Ireland; the inhabitants of each territory are to be summoned; the name of each one is to be recorded on a parchment roll, and every man is to acknowledge as his lord some chief who will take responsibility for him. Those without a chief to protect them are to be put to death summarily'.² Eleanor Knott gave the poem's date as '1584 or 1585', placing it in the time of Sir John Perrot's Composition of Connacht, to which Ó hEaghra was one of the signatories. Since Leyney was the territory in which Ó hUiginn's lands were located, it was natural for him in the circumstances to turn for protection to Ó hEaghra.

Enrolment of the population along the lines mentioned in Tadhg Dall's poem and the designation of principals were instruments of the policy of 'shiring', which was pursued with increasing vigour by the government during the course of Elizabeth's reign, not only in Connacht but wherever feasible throughout Ireland.³ The beginnings of its implementation can be seen in measures taken in Offaly and Leix in the years 1562–4. In 1564 an undertaking was sought from the O'Mores that 'they shall putt away all their men, savinge suche as they shalbe lycensed to kepe, whose names shalbe written, and they shalbe bounde to aunswer for their doynge'.⁴ And before that, in 1562, Henry Cowleye, a beneficiary of the recent plantation in Leix, was charged 'to appear before the constable or the sheriff, on the 1st September annually, with all the men under his government, between 16 and 60, who bear arms, and deliver their names, they answering for their deeds during the year, or in default he is to give satisfaction'.⁵ By making principals take responsibility for the inhabitants in their areas the Government hoped to effect military containment in those territories as well as a regulation of property in accordance with its own designs and a transition to common law. A

¹E. Knott (ed.), *The bardic poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn (1550–1591)* I (Ir. Texts Soc. XXII, London 1922 for 1920) 215–19 no. 30.

²*ibid.*, xxix–xxx.

³For the background see M. J. Bonn, *Die englische Kolonisation in Irland* I (Stuttgart 1906) 169–310; and G. A. Hayes McCoy, 'Conciliation, coercion, and the Protestant Reformation, 1547–71', in *A new history of Ireland* III (ed. T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin, F. J. Byrne, Oxford 1976) 69–93. Concerning the shiring bill of the Irish parliament of 1569–71, see V. Treadwell, 'The Irish parliament of 1569–71', *RIA Proc.* 65 C (1966) 55–89.

⁴Hist. MSS Commission, 15th report (1899) appendix pt iii, 129.

⁵Fiants of Elizabeth (11th to 18th Reports of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records in Ireland, 1879–86) no. 474.

major obstacle to the realisation of this three-fold objective was presented by the free movement within the country of so-called 'masterless persons', and, accordingly, from about the middle of the sixteenth century ordinances were issued regularly in an effort to curb this category which included 'rimers' and 'bards' among the most notorious offenders.

Around the time of the Irish Parliament of 1569–71 the Government under Sir Henry Sidney made clear its determination to rigorously advance the shiring policy by appointing a large number of local crown officers called seneschals, often chosen from the native population, with powers to assemble the inhabitants 'for the defense of the country', hold court baron, collect taxes, exercise martial law, and, significantly, to attack and gaol rimers.⁶ On 5 November 1571, by the same token, a commission was issued to Gerald, earl of Kildare, 'to punish by death or otherwise, as directed, harpers, rhymers, bards, idlemen, vagabonds, and such horseboys as have not their master's bill to show whose men they are'.⁷ At Limerick in the same year, the president of Munster, Sir John Perrot, decreed likewise: 'All carroughes, bards, rhymers and common idle men and women within this province making rhymes, bringing of messages, and common players of cards, to be spoiled of all their goods and chattels, and to be put in the next stocks, there to remain till they shall find sufficient surety to leave that wicked "thrade" of life and to fall to other occupation'.⁸ Again in 1579, a grant issued to Sir Henry Harrington in 'O Byrne's country' provided that he 'shall make proclamation that no idle person, vagabond or masterless man, bard, rymor, or other notorious malefactor, remain within the district on pain of whipping after 8 days, and of death after 20 days. . .'.⁹ Finally, on 20 January 1602, the President and Council of Munster proclaimed that 'the marshall of the province is straightley charged and commanded to execute by marshall lawe all manner Bards, Rymers, Harpers, Stokeghes, Clubbures, and all manner of vagrant and maisterless persons which he or any other thereto authorized shall fynde traveling or residing within this province or any part thereof, in the end of ten daies nexte after publishing of this present proclamation without the lycense or passporte of the martiall'.¹⁰

Apart from Tadhg Dall's poem to Ó hEaghra, already mentioned, the only other example known to me of a poet's appeal to a prospective guarantor, citing current official regulations, is the anonymous composition edited below. Similar poems must have been commonplace, however, given the authorities' evident determination to enforce the

⁶See Fiants of Elizabeth, nos. 1564 (1570), 1634 (1570), 1683 (1571), 2090 (1571).

⁷Fiants of Elizabeth, no. 1845.

⁸C. Maxwell, *Irish history from contemporary sources 1509–1610* (London 1923) 166.

⁹Fiants of Elizabeth, no. 3612.

¹⁰T. Dineley, *Observations in a voyage through the kingdom of Ireland* (1681) (Dublin 1870) 84 n. 1.

requirements.¹¹ Besides, that conclusion is also confirmed, albeit indirectly, in a revealing disclosure by the author concerning the background of the present appeal. Having stated that all persons with subjects or a title of art (*le tuaith nó i n-ainm ealadhan*) must have their names enrolled in books of account and acknowledge some overlord who will take responsibility for them, he goes on to reveal that an assembly had been called at which poets took counsel regarding the effects of the regulations on their circumstances. This appears to be unique testimony to a coming together of poets for purposes of concerted action in their own interest. Unfortunately the verses do not specify whether the convention was attended by poets from all over Ireland, or was merely a local gathering. But the former possibility seems more likely in view of the accusation levelled against the Gaelic nobility of having deserted Ireland's poets *en masse*. The course of action agreed by the assembled poets was to make a lottery, assigning to each individual a patron whom he should approach as a possible guarantor. All such approaches, it may be assumed, were undertaken with suitably certificatory verses similar to the poem *Cia meise, a mheic an Chalbhaigh*.

The patron in this instance was Aodh Buidhe Mac Domhnaill, a member of one of three septs of the MacDonnells in Leix known collectively during Elizabeth's reign as 'the queen's majesty's galloglasse'.¹² (Fr Paul Walsh took him for an O'Donnell, apparently misled by the presence of a copy of the poem in the Book of O'Donnell's Daughter; but the text states he was of *Clann Domhnaill*, i.e. the MacDonnells.)¹³ He was born in 1546, apparently the second of five sons of An Calbhach (s. of Toirdhealbhach, s. of Eoin Carrach), lord of Tinnakill Castle, which is located 'near the Great Heath of Maryborough in Queen's

¹¹The regulations are obliquely alluded to in the poem *Léigidh damh mo Dhomhnall féin*, composed by Lochlainn Óg Ó Dálaigh for Domhnall Ó Briain of Thomond (ob. 1579) (O. Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry* (ed. D. Greene, F. Kelly, Dublin 1970) no. 19). The poet claims Ó Briain's patronage as his own exclusively and warns potential competitors from outside that no English court will compel him to share his entitlements. Cf. qq. 3, 6:

In bhar dtíribh féin feasta
 anaidh, ní hiúl éicneasta,
 nós na nGallsa ós éigean ann
 léigear dhamhsa mo Dhomhnall. . . .
 Breath dlighidh gnáthchúirte Gall
 ní bheanfaidh díomsa Domhnall;
 fada atá sin 'nar seilbhne,
 rem lá ribh ní roinnfimne.

¹²In the following account of Aodh Buidhe I have been guided by J. O'Donovan, *Annals of the kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters* V (Dublin 1856) 1641-4 note j; W. Fitzgerald, 'The Macdonnells of Tinnakill Castle', *Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.* 4 (1905) 205-215; E. D. Borrowes, 'Tennekille Castle, Portarlington, and glimpses of the Mac Donnells', *Ulster Jn. of Arch.* 2 (1854) 37-42; A. O'Sullivan, 'The Tinnakill duanaire', *Celtica* 11 (1976) 214-28.

¹³P. Walsh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill* II (Ir. Texts Soc. XLV, Dublin 1957 for 1943) 198-9 n.; idem, *Irish men of learning* (Dublin 1947) 200.

County'.¹⁴ Title to the Tinnakill estate, comprising 998 acres in the parish of Coolbanagher, barony of Portnahinch, had been granted to 'Charles (Callagh) McTirlaghe' subject, among other provisions, to the obligation of 'maintaining 12 English galloglasses' in 1562-3.¹⁵ His son, Aodh Buidhe, received a grant of 312 (or 320) acres of adjacent land at Acregar in that year also,¹⁶ only to have it withdrawn temporarily by the crown four years later (1566) on the grounds that 'the said Hugh Mac Callow, uppon treason latly by him commytted, is fled, as it is alledged, owte of this realme, and . . . stondesth presently owtlawed. . .'.¹⁷ On 18 June 1570, An Calbhach Mac Domhnaill was slain in an encounter at Shrule, Co. Galway, while accompanied by 'his two sons' (*co na dhias mac*), serving with the President of Connacht.¹⁸ If Aodh Buidhe was one of the participating sons, then he may well have been rehabilitated in his standing with the authorities by that date.¹⁹ His father's inheritance appears to have devolved in the first instance on Alastrann (Alexander), Aodh Buidhe's brother, since he is mentioned first among a group from Tinnakill that included four sons of An Calbhach (but not Aodh Buidhe) to whom a pardon was granted in 1572-3, viz. 'Alexander m'Callogh O Donall [*sic*], of Tinnykill, Queen's County'.²⁰ A document of 1571 referring to an act 'for pacifinge . . . Callagh McTirlagh's sonnes in rebellion' might perhaps be construed as an indication that the pardon arose from some dispute concerning the inheritance in which Aodh Buidhe was worsted by his brothers.²¹ Whatever the case, in 1577 Alastrann was killed in combat at Galway by the sherriff of Sligo,²² and by

¹⁴The date of Aodh Buidhe's birth is from an *inquisitio post mortem* concerning his father from the year 1570, quoted in O'Donovan *AFM* 1643 n.; however, according to a Queen's Co. Exchequer Inquisition, no. 1 of Elizabeth, mentioned in *Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.* 4 (1905) 210 n., he was aged 24 years at the time of An Calbhach's death, said there to have occurred in 1573. The number of An Calbhach's sons is put at two, Hugh Boy and Alexander, in the *inquisitio post mortem* (1570); but the names of four sons, not including Aodh Buidhe, are known from a different source cited below (n. 19). Alexander was probably Aodh Buidhe's senior: see *Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.* 4 (1905) 210; *Celtica* 11 (1976) 216 n. 17; but cf. *Ulster Jn. of Arch.* 2 (1854) 37 n. (below, note 18).

¹⁵Fiant 498.

¹⁶Fiant 492.

¹⁷Hist. MSS Commission, 15th Report (1899) appendix pt iii, 170.

¹⁸O'Donovan, *AFM* sub anno. See above, note 14.

¹⁹Cf. *Ulster Jn. of Arch.* 2 (1854) 37 n., where it is stated of Aodh Buidhe that 'He was the eldest son of Calvagh, and was at the siege of Shruel, where his father was killed'. It is not clear upon what authority the statement rests.

²⁰Fiant 2225. Note, however, that according to O'Donovan's account of the *inquisitio post mortem* (1570) Aodh Buidhe succeeded to An Calbhach's estate (*AFM* 1643) and the Queen's Co. Exchequer Inquisition (1573) apparently referred to Aodh Buidhe as An Calbhach's 'son and heir' (*Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.* 4 (1905) 210 n. 1).

²¹Hist. MSS Commission, 15th Report (1899) appendix pt iii, 283.

²²O'Donovan, *AFM* sub anno ('Alastrann mac an Chalbhacich mic Toirdheal-bhaigh mic Eoin Charraigh do mharbhadh hi ccomhrac la mac Teabóitt Buidhe Mheg Seóinin i ndoras na Gaillmhe 7 nír bhó hiomdha mac gallóglag i nÉrinn in tan sin ro ba mó fagaltas 7 ro ba tioldhlaictighe toirbertaighe inás').

1578 Aodh Buidhe (Hugh boy Mac Callogh) had become 'cheefe captain' of one of 'the three septes of Clandonills, her Matie's galloglas', in which capacity he was a co-signatory of an indenture made on 8 May awarding 'a yearly pencone of three hundredth pounds' in lieu of other traditional entitlements, to each of 'the said three cheefe captaynes'.²³ Apart from a memorial from the Irish Council to the Earl of Essex dated 1599 alleging that the head of the Queen's County branch of the Mac Donnells was in rebellion with the O'Mores,²⁴ there is no indication that Aodh Buidhe steered other than a neutral course throughout the years of the revival of the Gaelic cause. In 1600 a pardon was granted to him at Tinnakill, together with his wife (Mary), son (Fergus), daughter-in-law, two daughters, and numerous others.²⁵ That too is the year assigned to a comment by Sir George Carew, President of Munster, concerning the 'Galloglass of good livelihood called Hugh Boy McCalloghe. His sons [*sic*], as I understand, are in rebellion, but himself is an aged corpulent man, and lives in neutrality'.²⁶ In December 1606, he was awarded a pension 'for services' of 16s. Irish, per diem for life.²⁷ When death came on 31 August 1619 he was seized of property at both Tinnakill and Acregar amounting to a total of some 1310 acres, which passed to his son, Fergus.²⁸

Viewed as the credentials of a prospective guarantor, Aodh Buidhe's means and his good standing with the English authorities were matched by a proven partiality towards Irish poets. Eloquent testimony to this aspect is preserved in the manuscript known as the 'Tinnakill Duanaire' (TCD H.3.19), a collection of 83 medieval bardic religious poems written on parchment, and compiled, as Anne O'Sullivan concluded in a detailed study, on Aodh Buidhe's behalf.²⁹ The final section of the codex contains a miscellany of items dealing mainly with the Leinster MacDonnells, and includes one complete poem in praise of Aodh Buidhe and his brother Alastrann which is attributed to Muircheartach Ó Cobhthaigh, *Le díis cuirther clú Laighen*, as well as part of the opening of a poem dealing with Aodh Buidhe's rights to MacDonnell revenues in Leinster, *Gnath Laidhnigh ach*. . . . On f. 30 is an entry in the hand of the well-known poet Brian mac Toirrdelbaig mic Giollapadraig, dated '11 January 1614', which concludes with the words 'Finis risintí tuasráiti sa lá reumhráiti 7 is a ttoigh na coille aodha m an calbaigh do sgriobadh so. 7c.'

Of the two poets mentioned by name in the final section of the Tinnakill Duanaire, Ó Cobhthaigh and Mac Giolla Phádraig, only the former

²³Text in O'Donovan *AFM* 1710-13 note s.

²⁴Cf. O'Donovan *AFM* 1642 note j.

²⁵Fiants of Elizabeth, no. 6453.

²⁶*Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.* 4 (1905) 212.

²⁷J. Erck, *Patent Rolls of Chancery, Ireland I* (Dublin 1846) 292.

²⁸*Ulster Jn. of Arch.* 2 (1854) 38 n. (text of *inquisitio post mortem* held at Maryborough, 6 March 1619 (Old Style)).

²⁹*Celtica* 11 (1976) 215.

could be considered a possible author of *Cia meise, a mheic an Chalbhaigh*. Brian Mac Giolla Phádraig was ordained in 1610 and his *floruit* belongs to the first half of the seventeenth century.³⁰ On the other hand, the poem, from what has been said of its theme, was probably composed during the period of Elizabeth's reign, i.e. before 1603. The fact that Aodh Buidhe is not addressed as head of his name, i.e. Mac Domhnaill, in the poem suggests that it may predate his instalment at Tinnakill c.1578, a date which is consistent with that of Muirheartach Ó Cobhthaigh's above-mentioned composition for the brothers Aodh Buidhe and Alastrann (*ob.* 1577). However, what further information we have concerning Ó Cobhthaigh shows that he is unlikely to have been the author of the present appeal. In 1582 he resided in Rogerstown, Co. Westmeath,³¹ and is likely to have remained there continuing a close association with his natural patrons, the Nugents, to whom three of his extant compositions are addressed.³² Having excluded Ó Cobhthaigh, no obvious possibility remains of penetrating the present poet's anonymity, save to note that by his own testimony he was separated by distance from Aodh Buidhe, perhaps implying that he was not of Leix stock.

Two copies survive, the older being in the seventeenth-century Brussels manuscript, Bibliothèque Royale 6131-3, f. 61a (B).³³ This is the well-known Book of O'Donnell's Daughter (Leabhar Inghine Í Dhomhnaill), which consists of two sections, the first with poems mainly on members of the O'Donnell family from between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries (ff. 1-41b) followed by a miscellaneous gathering of poems (including ours) and prose with many leaves left blank (ff. 42a-146).³⁴ A second copy occurs in the eighteenth-century manuscript TCD 1280 (H.1.16), p. 122, written by Aodh Ó Dálaigh (H). While this copy is incomplete (wanting qq. 5-6), it occasionally gives a superior reading (2*d*, 10*b*, 11*bc*, 15*a*). In editing I have normalised the text, even in cases such as that of the unclassical use of initial eclipsis (1*b*), which may be authorial. Reference to special difficulties will be found in the notes and a translation is supplied.

³⁰C. Mhág Craith, 'Brian Mac Giolla Phádraig', *Celtica* 4 (1958) 103-205, p. 103.

³¹T. F. O'Rahilly, 'Irish poets, historians, and judges in English documents, 1538-1615', *RIA Proc.* 36 C (1921-4) 88-120, p. 109.

³²E. O'Reilly, *Irish writers* (Dublin 1820) cxlvi.

³³I have used a microfilm copy in the National Library of Ireland.

³⁴For a full description, see Walsh, *Irish men of learning*, 179-205.

- 1 Cia meise, a mheic an Chalbhaigh?
tug m'fhad ód dhreich dhonnabhraigh,
a fholt fiar cladhsholas corr,
ciall san amharas agam.
- 2 Do chuireadar gasraidh Ghall
ar sluagh Teamhra le tamall
dlighthe rodhocra um Chlár gCuinn,
gan dál gcobhartha chugainn.
- 3 Sgríobhtar leó i leabhraibh cunntais
don chursa, a chúl bachalltais,
ainm gach duine dá ndaoineibh
ar ngairm fuile bhfionnGhaoidhil.
- 4 Ní háil leó duine ar domhan
le tuaith nó i n-ainm ealadhan
nach bia ceann urradha air,
a dhubhmala sheang shochraidh.
- 5 Ní fheadar, a Aodh Bhuidhe,
dá n-iarrthar ar n-urraine
gá fear le n-aideómhthar inn
nó ceadh aigeórtar inninn.

- 1 Who am I, O son of An Calbhach? My distance from your dark-lashed countenance, O wavy, bright, clustering, tapered tresses, has given me cause to be uncertain.
- 2 The foreign troop has imposed very strict laws on the host of Tara of late throughout the land of Conn with no relief in store for us.
- 3 Having summoned the races of fair Gaidheal they now inscribe in books of account, O soft-tressed head, the name of every one of their people.
- 4 They do not want anyone in the world with subjects or a title of art to lack a chief guarantor over him, O dark, slender, comely brow.
- 5 I know not, O Aodh Buidhe, if a guarantor be sought for me, who will acknowledge me or what will be exacted on my account.

- 1 *a* misi BH *m*hic B: *mc* H *b* ót H *dr. ndo.* BH *c* a *om.* H *fol*t B: *ffol*t H *fiár* H *-solus* H *d* ciall sa nam(h)arus BH
- 2 *a* gasreadh H *gall* BH *b* re H *c* im clar cu. H *d* dáil B *cob(h)*artha BH *aguinn* B: *cuguinn* H
- 3 *a* a B *leabraibh* H *b* dhon (?) B *cul* H *bachaltais* B *c* mian H *ndaoine* H *d* fi-. BH *-ga.* BH
- 4 *a* ara B *c* nach bia ceann *om.* H *no* urradha H *d* du-. H *-mha.* B *se.* BH *so.* H
- 5 *Not in* H *a* feudar B *b* niartar B *c* ga B *naigeobtar* B *d* aigeortar B *ionn-*
ainn B

- 6 Do toirmisceadh – truagh an bhroid,
ós dá chasaoid re caraíd –
a bharánda an ghléire Ghall,
tréidhe m’anára iomam.
- 7 Do chleachtsad gasraidh Ghaoidheal
(gá dú ar chách dá chomhmaoidheamh?)
ró moirne go drásda dún;
ar ngrásda oirne ag iompúdh.
- 8 A seóid ríogh, a rún fionnfhuar
do-gheibhmis ón Ghaoidhealshluagh,
tús comhóla agus cuilte,
tús onóra is fhothruigthe.
- 9 Tarla dóibhséin fa dheireadh
sluagh Breagh na mbárc nduilleigheal
fa chrích bhféaramhail bhfinn bhFáil
gur shéanadair inn d’éanláimh.
- 10 Tiaghmaoid ainnséin re ar-oile
(sgéla Innse hÚghaine)
dream fan ro-dhaingne rún gáidh
do shúr chomhairle i gcéadair.

- 6 The due claims of my status have been taken from me, O warrant of the foreign power; it is a pitiful oppression since I lament it to a friend.
- 7 The warriors of the Gaels treated us with excessive favour till now – why should I make much of it to anyone? Our privilege is changing to our disadvantage.
- 8 Their royal jewels, their sober confidence, precedence at drinking and in bedding, in honour and in bathing, we used to have from them.
- 9 In the end, the warriors of Breagh of the white-sailed boats, throughout the fair grassy land of Fál, came to shun us completely.
- 10 Then we assemble together, a company with whom a perilous secret is most secure, in order to take counsel forthwith – the tidings of Úghaine’s isle.

- 6 *Not in* H *c* baranta B *gl.* B *d* ionnam B
- 7 *a* cleachtsatt B *do chl. gas. om.* H *gao.* B *toir gaoideal* H *b* dú]tt *sic* H *ca.* H *commoidheamh* B *comhaoideamh* H *c* ro BH *mu.* B *ttrasda* B *duin* H
- 8 *b* -ge. BH *ga.* BH *-sl.* B *c* is B *d* fothruigte B: fothruichthe H
- 9 *a* -sein BH *de.* BH *b* breadh B *mbarc* BH *nduillegeal* BH *c* cri. BH *bfer.* BH *d* senar (*r with stroke through shaft*) H
- 10 *a* tiagmuit B *tiagmaid* H *ansein* B *b* innsi laoghoire B *c* -da. BH *ccáidh* B: *guidh* H *d* súr co. BH

- 11 Do cinneadh leó (lór do sgís)
don chursa an gcéin do bheidís
na Goill i bhfódmhaigh na bhFionn,
a roinn ar ógbhaidh Éireann.
- 12 Rug meise, a mheic an Chalbhaigh,
ainnséin ó na hollamhnaibh
tú do bhríogh ceartroinne croinn,
a dhíon deaghcloinne Domhnaill.
- 13 A cháor fháinne ar n-a hóradh,
a ghrian re hucht n-iarnónadh,
a thús líne clann gColla,
a bharr sídhe séaghanna.
- 14 A shéigh aille, a eó tobair,
a gheam cumhdaigh carrmhogail,
a ghruaidh sholas do shúir tol,
a dhoras rúin na ríoghan.
- 15 A shreabh ghlan do ghrian bhuinne,
a dheór bhríoghmhar bhalsaimé,
a luibh chobhra clár Line,
a lámh chomhdha ar gceirdeine.
- 11 They decided then (sufficient plight) for as long as the English should
continue in the plain of the Fair, to disperse among the warriors of Ireland.
- 12 Then did I, O son of An Calbhach, win you from the master-poets, O
guardian of the good race of Domhnall, through a fair lottery.
- 13 O gilded fireball, noontday sun, captain of the vanguard of Colla's race,
awesome, skillful chief.
- 14 O cliff hawk, salmon of the spring-fed stream, adorning gem of carbuncle,
bright cheek that love has pursued, secret door of the queens.
- 15 O fresh spring from a river bed, potent drop of balsam, healing herb of the
plains of Line, protecting hand of our art.
- 11 *a* scis H *b* cursa H: chuairtsi B *í* cin do bheithdís B *be.* H *c* ó fod B *ifod-*
maigh H *d* ogb- BH
- 12 *a* rucc misi BH *m*hic B: mc H *ca.* BH *b* andsein B *c* breith B *brigh* H
d -chloinne B
- 13 *a* fá. BH *b* gr. BH *iar.* BH *c* tus B *d* ba. BH *sithe* B *seghonda* H
- 14 *a* shégh B: eag (?) H *b* ge. BH *c* gr. BH *so.* B *do sur toil* B *a* shilis *trath*
do thuir H *d* na r.] na bhfilídhe H
- 15 *a* sr. B *gl.* BH *gr.* BH *buinne* H: *buime* B *b* dher H *br.* BH *ba.* H *c* co.
BH *clair* H *comdha* BH

- 16 An tráth do cuirthí 'nar gceann,
sinne riamh, éigse Éireann,
an té dob fhearr dot aicme
dob é ceann ar gcomairce.

CIA MEISE A MHEIC AN CHALBHAIGH

- 16 Whenever we, Ireland's poets, were set upon, the foremost of your race
was our chief protector.
16 a curtaoí B b riamh om. H

NOTES

- 2d *chugainn*: 'aguinn' (B) is the inferior reading, as it does not alliterate.
cd The rime *rodhocra* : *gcobhartha*, is not in conformity with the rules for riming consonant clusters postulated by Brian Ó Cuív, *Ériu* 20 (1966) 101.
4b *le tuaith*: *tuath* 'land, territory', also 'tribe, people'; it is used here apparently with the connotation 'subjects, followers'.
5c *n-aideómhthar* (< *admhaidh* 'acknowledges') replaces the reading of the ms (*naigeobtar*) which is clearly corrupt. For the rime (: *aigeórthar*) cf. *aigeoraidh*: *aideomhaidh* (L. McKenna, *Philip Bocht O Huiginn* (Dublin 1931) 116 § 25).
6d *iomam* (ms *ionnam*): a verbal construction with the preposition *um/imm* seems required by the sense (cf. *Dictionary of the Irish language* s.v. *do-airmesca* 192.14–19), and I have emended accordingly.
8 For privileges mentioned in this quatrain, see *RIA Proc.* 83 C (1983) 39–51.
11a *do cinneadh leó*: the change to passive construction is notable, emphasising that the poet's request is made at the behest of his peers (*ó na hollamhnaibh*, 12b), not on his own initiative.
15c *Line*, a placename frequent in epithets, and preserved in Moylinny (Magh Line) deanery, Co. Antrim; cf. Knott, *Tadhg Dall* II, 208.

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