

**"JOYCES' COUNTRY."**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION.

SIR—Owing to very pressing business I could not, until now, well devote a minute to reply to a letter which appeared in your issue of the 28th ult., over the *nom de plume* "Hibernicus." Your correspondent, in the first place, endeavours to make it appear that I said there was no such place as Connemara. I never insinuated anything of that kind; what I said, and now repeat, was that "the greatest and most admired part of the mountain, lake, and woodland solitude described by your correspondent, 'A Traveller,' was, is, and will be known as the Joyces' Country." There was certainly a small district in the South-East of this county called Conmaicne-Mara (or Connemara)—the barony of Ballinahinch, properly speaking. Most assuredly Joyces' Country is not Connemara; they are as different as the counties of Galway and Mayo. We, Joycelanders, have at least as good an opportunity of knowing the extent of Connemara as the "travelling public," Mr. Ward, or "Hibernicus"; and the reason why it was so termed too: it was called after the posterity of Conmac, son of Fergus MacRoy by Maud, an ancient Queen of Connaught.

Again, he appears to be satisfied that the Joyce family, with two others, only possessed a district of twelve miles by eight; or, in other words, a patch of four miles by two and one-fourth to each; and that they came as adventurers to Ireland, under the auspices of Dermot M'Morrough. This is certainly fallacious, as I will prove from credible historians.

In "The Tribes of Galway," the following interesting account is given of the Joyces:—"This old family is of ancient and honourable descent, and was allied to the Welsh and British princes. Thomas Joyce, the first of the name that came to Ireland, sailed from Wales in the reign of Edward the First, and arrived at Thomond, where he married Nora O'Brien, daughter of the chief of that district. From thence, putting to sea, he directed his course to the western part of Connaught, where he acquired considerable tracts of territory, which his posterity still inhabit. While on his voyage his wife was delivered of a son, whom he named MacMara—son of the sea. He extended his father's acquisitions; and from him descended the sept of Joyces—a race of men remarkable for their extraordinary stature—who for centuries past, and still, inhabit the mountain districts in Iar-Connaught, called from them 'Dhu-Sheoghaidb,' or 'Joyces' Country,' now forming the barony of Ross (which includes the Isles of Arran), in the county Galway. . . . MacMara Joyce was first married to the daughter of O'Flaherty, Prince of Iar-Connaught, by whom he acquired additional territories."

The "Topographical Dictionary" and other reliable works corroborate the foregoing statement.

Now, sir, it is obvious to any intelligent reader that the assertions of "Hibernicus" are fallacious. For any reader who is acquainted with Ireland's past history must be aware that Dermot Mac-Morrough was dead about one hundred years before Edward the First reigned; and that the whole barony of Ross, with the other "acquisitions" and "additional territories," which included the barony of Ballinakill, &c. (where Joyce Castles stand), are far more extensive than the little tract which "Hibernicus" represents to be Joyces' Country.

And again I differ with "Hibernicus's" statement which is to the effect that it was by the consent of the O'Flahertys the Joyces first settled here. For Thomas Joyce, "the first of the name," got a colony from Edward the First in the north-west of the county Galway; and accordingly steered his course thither with an armed fleet. And, furthermore, I greatly mistake if the Joyces themselves were not settled here as early as the O'Flahertys. For it was in the latter end of the thirteenth century they were routed by the English from their native place—the barony of Claro. It was then they first came to Iar-Connaught. "In the thirteenth century the O'Flahertys were expelled from this territory (the barony of Clare) by the English; and, having settled on the other side of Lough Corrib, they got large possessions there in the barony of Moycullen" (only). Accordingly it was not under the "patronage or protection" of the O'Flahertys the Joyces settled here.

I agree with your correspondent that the O'Flahertys and Joyces were allied for some time; but neither of them subject to the other. When MacMara Joyce, son to Thomas, got married to a daughter of the "Chief of Moycullen," or the principal of the O'Flaherty clan, they shrewdly united the one solid phalanx for their common defence.

Were I to dwell upon a multitude of minor charges that are contained in the somewhat defamatory letter of "Hibernicus" the reader would certainly grow weary; I will, consequently, confine my remarks to one or two observations more, relative to the "fanciful heroism" which he fains to attribute to the Joyces. In a work recommended by the NATION I find the following references to that noble race:—"They were a brave and warlike race, of tall and manly stature; and were great commanders of Gallowglasses (or heavily-armed troops) in Connaught, Ulster, Leinster, and Munster."

He also attempts to controvert my statement regarding the war that took place between themselves and an English army, because "history seems to preserve no notice of such heroism." This is, in my judgment, outside the limit of fair discussion. How many heroic conflicts are unrecorded in the annals of history? How many valuable records have perished, or have been destroyed by fanatical fury? The brave exploit is true—handed down from sire to son; and is to-day fresh in the tradition of the natives.—I remain, sir, your humble servant,

T. F. J.

Near Leenane, Joyces' Country,

Nov. 13, 1876.

[We cannot insert any further correspondence on this subject.—ED. NATION.]