

**ILLUSTRATED HANDBOOK  
OF THE SCENERY  
AND ANTIQUITIES OF  
SOUTHWESTERN DONEGAL**

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Illustrated Handbook of the Scenery and Antiquities of Southwestern Donegal by James Stephens

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**JAMES STEPHENS**

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AND ANTIQUITIES OF  
SOUTHWESTERN DONEGAL**





BALLYSHANNON.

Frontispiece.

Not in P. D.

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ILLUSTRATED HANDBOOK

OF

THE SCENERY AND ANTIQUITIES

OF

SOUTH-WESTERN DONEGAL,

COMPRISING

SKETCHES OF ITS MOUNTAINS, ITS CLIFFS AND ITS PASSES,  
ITS HOLY WELLS, ITS OLD CASTLES AND ABBEYS, ITS  
ANCIENT STONE CROSSES, GIANTS' GRAVES, AND  
OTHER REMARKABLE CYCLOPEAN REMAINS;

WITH

HISTORICAL NOTES ON THAT ONCE FAMOUS CLAN IN TIR-CONNELL,

*Mac Swine of the Battle Axe,*

AND ITS WARRIOR CHIEFTAIN, NIALL-MOR:

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

NOTICES OF THAT FAR-FAMED PLACE OF PILGRIMAGE,  
LOUGH DERG, AND OF TORRY ISLAND,  
BLESSED BY THE LABOURS OF THE GREAT ST. COLUMB-CILL.

WITH NOTES OF THE ROAD FOR TOURISTS TO THE WILDS.

DUBLIN:

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

THE ANTIQUITIES OF DONEGAL—ITS OLD CASTLES AND RUINED ABBEYS—ITS STONE CROSSES AND ITS ROUND TOWERS—HISTORY OF THE HOLY WELLS—THE FAMOUS CLAN OF MAC SWINE OF THE BATTLE AXE—THE TOURIST'S ROUTE TO THE HIGHLANDS OF DONEGAL—ITS FRONTIER TOWN, BALLYSHANNON—KILBARRON CASTLE.



**A**MONG the ancient memorials and historic remains in Ireland of the long forgotten past, it must be admitted that there is a deeply interesting mine for the antiquary, which hitherto has been but very imperfectly explored and investigated. It happens however as the archeological taste has become more fully developed, that now and then some of the finest of our historic monuments are dug up from their hiding places where they had remained in obscurity for ages. And this is especially the case as regards the beautiful celtic Tomb of the famed warrior and chieftan, Niall Mor, of which it may be said "the cold chain of silence had hung o'er it long," but which is now so carefully preserved in the Church of Killybegs.

The fine historic land of old Tirconnell is filled with interesting memorials of other days, and studded over with old ruined abbeys, and churches, and castles, which, in the days gone by, filled up some bright pages in the "Annals of Ireland." And what a solemn interest attaches to those fine old ruins, which cover the land with their mournful but magnificent desolation, and which at once remind us of the glories and sufferings of our Church. These fine old abbeys, now a desecrated ruin, once resounded with the praises of the Most High, and from their quiet sanctuaries went forth apostolic preachers to enlighten barbarous kingdoms, which now rank high in the scale of nations, giving Bishops to the Church, Doctors to the Universities, and Martyrs and Confessors to Heaven. Need I more than allude to the fine old historic Abbey of Donegal, immortalized by its work of the "Annals of the Four Masters," which forms the largest collection of national, civil, military, and family history, ever brought together in this, or, perhaps, in any other country, dating from the Deluge to A. D. 1616. I cannot pass over in my enumeration the old Cistercian Abbey at Ballyshannon, of Asheroe (Eas aedh Ruaidh), the Cataract of Red Hugh, founded in 1178, by Roderick O'Cananan, Prince of Tirconnell:—

The bore tree and the lightsome ash across the portal grow,  
And heaven itself is now the roof of the Abbey Asheroe;  
and the ruined Abbeys of Killydonnell, Fahan, and  
Rathmullen, where