

**GLENDALOUGH, OR,
THE SEVEN CHURCHES:
A DIDACTIC POEM**

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Glendalough, or, the Seven Churches: A Didactic Poem by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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A DIDACTIC POEM**

Editor of the University,

GLENDALOUGH,

with the author's completion
OR

THE SEVEN CHURCHES:

A Didactic Poem.

BY AN EX-MODERATOR, T.C.D.

"Nothing—or at best but ruin of ruins; for the imagination added by Reflection
must be left, after all, to make out the greater glories, which the gravedigger Time
has buried too deep for discovery."—Blackstone.

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1881

TO THE
REV. CHARLES GRAVES,
FELLOW AND PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS, TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

THIS WORK
IS DEDICATED, AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF REGARD AND ESTEEM,

BY

The Author.

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P R E F A C E.

HAVING made repeated visits to the Lake of the Valley of the Seven Churches, I have returned on each occasion more deeply impressed with its mournful beauty and picturesque associations. The lay of Moore,

“By that Lake whose gloomy shore
Sky-lark never warbles o'er,”

is not more wildly abrupt, nor the ancient music to which it is set more strikingly arranged, than the theme it suggests and the scene it portrays. Still, shorn of her bloom, shrunken in her dwellings, and degraded from her See—a crownless and unturreted Cybelè—the Mother-City retains sufficient indications of her earthly joy, to excite the feeling and attract the taste.

There is authentic report, and indeed it is matter of history, that the whole of this region was formerly wooded with fair wide-branching Oaks, which filled the hollows, spread the level, climbed the bare sides of the mountain, and diffused a sacred horror over the Sanctuary itself. Of this mass, a few occasional Stragglers and scant patches of dispersed underwood alone remain, to determine its extent, and bear witness of a time when,

according to local tradition, a squirrel could have sprung from bough to bough and tree to tree, from one end to the other. But even in the memory of man, it is reported, vast clearings have been made. Ludlow informs us in his *Memoirs*, (p. 151,) that he "marched with a party of horse and foot to the fastnesses of Wicklo, and scoured by different ways the passes and retreats of the Irish, who still fled on our approach to the *woods* and bogs." I have been told by the owner of the Fee in those parts, that when Ludlow was assaulting the castle of Kevin, built on an antient rath of the O'Tooles, he found the place so inaccessible—begirt as it was with a river, and a morass which has since in the process of drainage shrunk some way from its walls, and defended on all sides by this matted outwork of trees—that the only open which presented itself lay along the bed of the river, where he accordingly raised an earthen fort, which still exists, and so commanded the garrison and subdued the Kernes. An enormous brass camp-kettle, standing on its tripod about five feet from the ground, and capable of holding an entire sheep or even bullock for the use of the soldiery, (similar to one at present in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, bearing this date "1640," but of much larger dimensions) was dug up by a tenant in the neighbourhood; but being broken in the removal, its fragments were privately sold for seven pounds. Another cauldron, found here, which would seem to have been used for brewing, or such like purpose, was lately in the collection of the Dean of St. Patrick.

I consider it interesting to view the scene under this aspect, not only from the natural charm which it presents to our imagination, to look back upon this little Patmos in the wilderness, surrounded with such a closing rail of verdure; to catch through the florid vistas the busy hum of extinct industry, and science, and adoration; and harken through the shades to the call of the belfry—if only belfry it be—sending its sweet summons to each remote Church: but also because it refers our opinion of the sanctity of the place itself to an indefinite period, anterior to the present Dispensation, where the gaze of the Searcher is lost in the thickets of time. It would seem indeed to have been a place of mystery and gloom, of barbarous rite and strange communing; while

“The River rushing o'er its pebbled bed
Imposes silence.”

DOUGLAS.

The late lamented Cæsar Otway has observed, that the names of contiguous sites, Derry-bawn, Comaderry, and Derry-Ossory (church and parish) derive their significance in the original from their position in the oaken forest. But a further meaning is involved in this nomenclature, for we know that the Druids held these woods in high regard—as Pliny says, “*nihil habent visco et arbore in qua gignatur, si modo sit robur, sacratius,*” (*sub fin.* l. 15)—and were wont, beneath their umbrageous transepts, to rear the stony altar, lop the sacred mistletoe with a sickle of brass, and institute their weird ceremonies. Now, as we read in Grose's Antiqui-