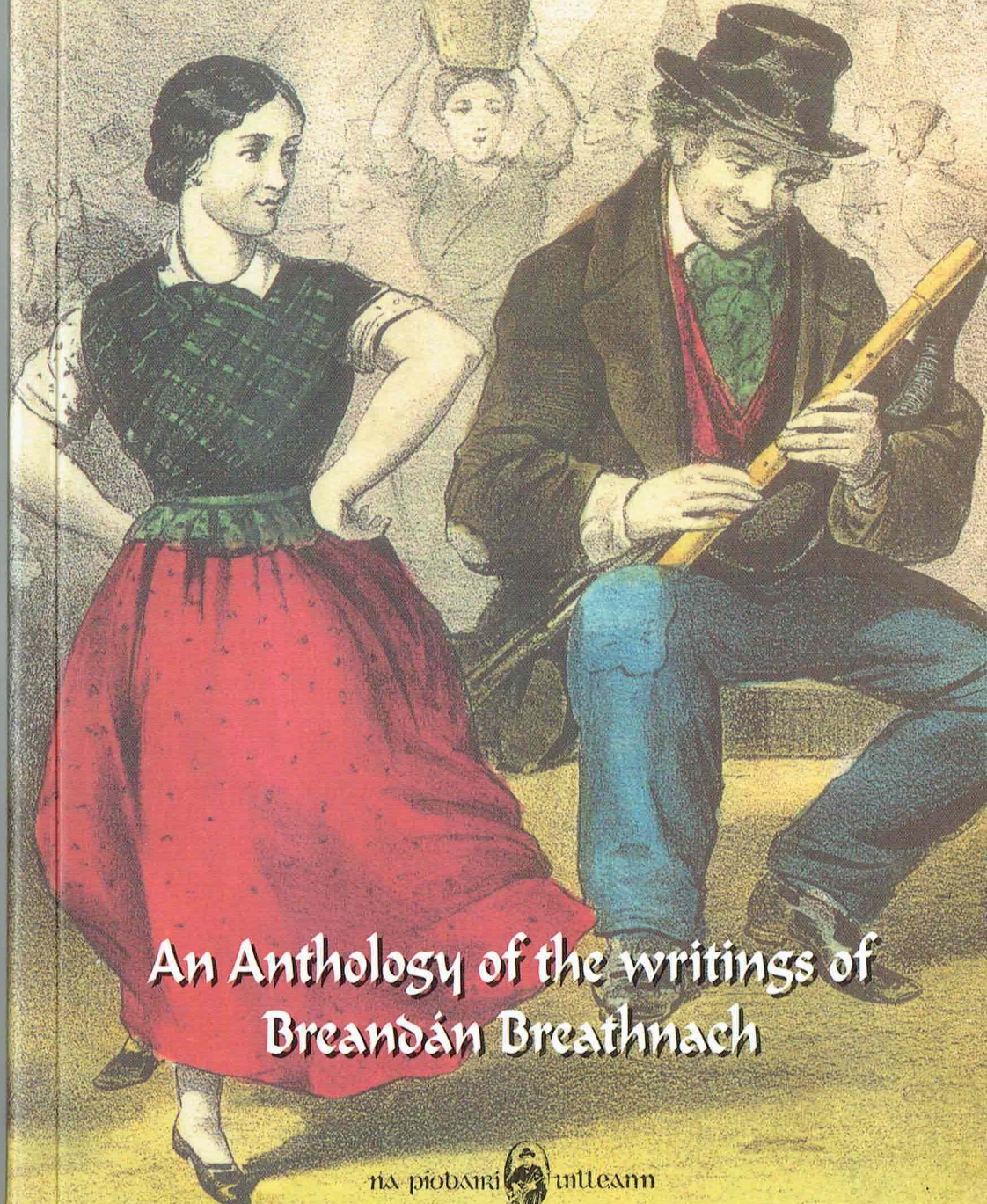


# The Man & his Music



An Anthology of the writings of  
Breandan Breathnach

## Máirseáil Alasdrúim

Ceol II, 3 (1966)

Smith in his *History of Cork* (1750) writes: "There is a very odd kind of Irish music, well known in Munster, by the name of *MacAllisdrum's march*, being a wild rhapsody made in honour of this Commander, to this day much esteemed by the Irish and played at all their feasts, etc." This descriptive piece commemorated the battle of Cnoc na nDós (Knocknanuss between Mallow and Kanturk) fought on 13th November, 1647, at which Inchiquin defeated the Irish forces under Lord Taaffe. Alasdair Mac Domhnaill, Mac Colla Ciotaigh (known as Colkitto by the English) was murdered after the surrender and his followers put to the sword.

Croker in his *Researches in the South of Ireland* (1824) expresses the opinion that this air should not be regarded as Irish:

Mr. Walker in his *History of the Irish Bards*, justly remarks its similarity to the pibroch or war tune of the Scotch, and had he more carefully perused the passage in Smith, alluded to by him, he would have had no hesitation in assigning to this singular strain its northern origin. The estimation in which it is held in Ireland is wonderful. I have heard this march, as it is called, sung by hundreds of the Irish peasantry, who imitate the drone of the bagpipe in their manner of singing it. On that instrument I have frequently heard it played, and occasionally with much pleasure from the peculiar and powerful expression given by the performer.

Goodman in one of the volumes forming his manuscript collection now in T.C.D. Library and dated 2nd May, 1861, writes:

... the only version of that strange piece of music, *Allisdrum's March*, which I have met with is that found ... in Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland* in which the Laments are incorrectly and imperfectly set down. The version which I give is that played by the Kerry pipers, and contains in addition to the March, the Gathering, the Battle, the shouts on the fall of Allisdrum, and the cries, first of his mother, the Munsterwoman, then that of his nurse, a Leinsterwoman, with the lament of his wife, the Ulsterwoman, and the piece concludes with the old jig *Cnocán an Teampuill* which she is said to have struck up so soon as she ascertained that her husband was really dead.

There are no good grounds for Croker's assertion that *Allasdrum's March* is not Irish. Grattan Flood's statement that it was a death-march specially composed by the Irish warpipers who accompanied the funeral is, like many more of his facts, almost certainly untrue.

## Máirseáil Alasdruim

Willie Clancy



The version given above was learned by Willie Clancy from an old piper, Mickey McMahon, who lived at Kilcororan near Miltown Malbay. McMahon called it *Alexander's March*.

It is nearer the O'Neill version (*Ollistrum jig, D.M.I. 326*) than Goodman's version. Croker's and Goodman's versions contain strains not found in these two versions. Bunting's version which he got from a piper in Westport in 1802 and published in *The Ancient Music of Ireland* (1840) is so close to one of the strains in that of Croker's that it seems almost certainly to be indebted to it. Other parts seem to be indebted to his imagination.

Mickey Sullivan (Cumbaw), a famous Kerry piper, who died early in the present century was the last piper to play this piece in its entirety. In addition to the cries mentioned O'Sullivan had cries for the mother-in-law and for the sister. The cry of the nurse was reputed to have surpassed in sweetness and in sorrow the other laments.

A version of *Cnocán an Teampaill* mentioned by Goodman may be found under the title *Church Hill* in O'Neill's *Dance Music* (343).

## Máirseáil Alasdruim (2)

Ceol III, 2 (1968)

Foilsíodh leagan dhe *Mháirseáil Alasdruim* a friothadh ó Liam Mac Fhlannchadha, píobaire, ar Ceol, II (3) agus tugadh roinnt seanchais ina thaobh freisin ann. Thagair Smith ina stair ar Chondae Chorcaí do *Mháirseáil Alasdruim* 'mar rithlearg fiadháin a rinneadh in onóir an taoisigh sin is atá go dtí an lá atá inniu ann faoi ardmheas ag Gaeil is a bhíos dhá chasadh ag a bhfleanna go léir.' Aiste cheoil atá sa bpíosa a bhí i gceist ag Smith a bhfuil an port a foilsíodh ar *Ceol* mar thús uirri agus a bhfuil port eile *Cnocán an Teampaill* mar dheireadh uirri.

Chuir Crofton Croker leagan i geló in *Researches in the South of Ireland* a foilsíodh sa mbliain 1824. Ní mó ná sásta a bhí an Canóineach Goodman leis an iarracht sin; i ndar leis féin bhí na caointe mí-chruinn agus fabhtach ag Croker agus scríobh sé féin ar lámhscríbhinn leis an leagan a chasadh píobairí Chiarraí. Tá míreanna ann nach bhfuil ag Croker agus is fearr a aontaíodh an leagan amach leis an mbeo-sheanchas ná leagan amach Croker. Sé Proinsias Ó Catháin, scríobhaí as Co. an Chláir, a chuir an leagan is iomláine den *Mháirseáil* ar fáil. I nduais-aiste a scríobh sé sa mbliain 1876 atá an ceol seo aige agus is mar léiriú ar an gcaoineadh a thug sé ann é. Is díol sunntais nach bhfuil *Cnocán an Teampaill* ag an gCathánach chor ar bith, sé sin an chríoch atá ar leagan Goodman agus a raibh trácht uirri freisin sa mbéaloideas.

Glaicín rollógaí nach bhfuil an ceol le cloisteáil uatha ach ar éigin an toradh gortach atá againn de bharr saothar an Fheis Cheoil i dtús an chéid seo. Ar cheann do na rollógaí tá ceol a chas Mici (Cumbá) Ó Súilleabháin, píobaire. *Gol na mBan san Ár* a thug an bollscaire ar an gceol seo. *Cnocán an Teampaill* an píosa deireannach a casadh ann, rud a thiúrfadh le fios gur le *Máirseáil Alasdruim* a bhain an ceol seo. Ní féidir an chainnt eile atá ar an rollóig a dhéanamh amach chor ar bith.

Tá leagan amháin, mar sin, de *Mháirseáil Alasdruim* i geló, leagan nach díol muiníne má's fíor do Goodman, dhá leagan i lámhscríbhíní, leagan an Chathánaigh agus leagan Goodman — is athchóip de leagan Croker atá ag Forde. Tá beagán de chorp an cheoil ar an rollóig a rinne Mici Cumba agus tá an port tosaigh agus an port deireannach — *Máirseáil Alasdruim* agus *Cnocán an Teampaill* — sách tréan fós i measc ceoltóirí na Mumhan. Is iomdha leagan ar ndó den dá chuid seo atá i geló cheana féin. Tugtar anseo síos (le caoin-chead an Acadaimh) leagan an Chathánaigh. Direach mar atá sé sa lámh-scríbhinn atá sé, gan athrú ar aon phonnc den cheol ná den litriú.

Ní féidir ac an méid sin a thabhairt cheal spáis ar an eagrán seo de *Ceol*. Tiúrfar leagan Goodman, ceol Uí Shúilleabháin agus leaganacha de na poirt sa gcéad eagrán eile.

# Máirseáil Alasdrúim

Section A:

- Staff 1: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 6/8 time signature. Starts with a fermata over the first measure.
- Staff 2: Continuation of Section A.
- Staff 3: Continuation of Section A.
- Staff 4: Continuation of Section A.
- Staff 5: Continuation of Section A, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Section B:

- Staff 6: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 6/8 time signature. Starts with a fermata over the first measure.
- Staff 7: Continuation of Section B.
- Staff 8: Continuation of Section B, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 9: Continuation of Section B, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 10: Continuation of Section B, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 11: Continuation of Section B, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Section C:

- Staff 12: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 6/8 time signature. Starts with a fermata over the first measure.
- Staff 13: Continuation of Section C.
- Staff 14: Continuation of Section C.
- Staff 15: Continuation of Section C, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 16: Continuation of Section C, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 17: Continuation of Section C, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 18: Continuation of Section C, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Section D:

- Staff 19: Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), 3/4 time signature. Starts with a fermata over the first measure.
- Staff 20: Continuation of Section D, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 21: Continuation of Section D, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 22: Continuation of Section D, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 23: Continuation of Section D, featuring a triplet of eighth notes.
- Staff 24: Continuation of Section D, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

- 1.-1. *Seiodan an galltrumpa ag tabhairt na bhfear chum catha*  
(The trumpet calls the men to battle).
- 2.-2. *Ag fanacha le hórdighadh roimh catha*  
(Awaiting the order before battle).
- 3.-3. *Alasdrom ag liúghadh ag iarradh cabhradh*  
(Alastair calling out, looking for support).
- 4.-4. *Ag máirseáil chum fatha an chomhraic*  
(Marching to the battlefield).
- 5.-5. *Ag fúireachd le hórdighadh catha*  
(Awaiting the order for battle).
- 6.-6. *Buail a's gear, buail a's gearr, a's ná fág aon neach beo*  
(Strike and slash, strike and slash, and leave no one alive).
- 7.-7. *Anois do bhiodar marbh achd aon fhear amháin do goineadh a's do chuaidh Alasdrom tríd an ár d'fhéachaint a raibh fear air bith 'na bheatha d'árdóghach lámh 'na choinne, a's ní raibh aon. Amsan do thug a each go dtí srúit chum deoch d'ól a's ag cromadh síos do air ghualáin an eich, do thug an fear do bhi gonta do luchd na heascáirde síghe iongantach a leith, a dhroma do Alasdrom gur thuit sé marbh.*  
(Now they were all dead but a single man who was wounded and Alastair went through the slaughter to see if there was any man alive who would raise his hand against him and there was no one. Then he took his horse to a stream to have a drink and stooping down on the shoulder of the horse the man of the enemy who was wounded made an amazing thrust in Alastair's back so that he fell dead).
- 8.-8. *Tá na mná dá lorg amesg na marbh*  
(The women are looking for him among the dead).
- 9.-9. *Táid na cloig ag bualadh*  
(The bells are ringing).
- 10.-10. *Adeir na mná "ní hé seo é — ní hé siúd é"*  
(The women say "This is not he — that is not he").

11.–11. *Caoine mná Alasdruim*

(Lament of Alastair's wife).

12.–12. *Caoine na mná Olltaigh – banaltra mná Alasdruim*

(Lament of the Ulster woman-Alastair's wife's nurse).

- A. Only those time signatures shown are found in the manuscript.
- B. Only the last crotchet in this strain is dotted.
- C. Delete sign for "C" sharp.
- D. Delete sharp sign.
- E. The flat (instead of natural) sign is superfluous. Pipers would play this and the preceding strain a note higher than written here. Perhaps F.K. noted the piece from a piper playing on a low-pitched (C) pipes and overlooked transposing these two parts.

*Alasdrom's March is one of three or four descriptive pieces formerly held in great esteem but now lost traditionally with the death of the last of the professional pipers around the beginning of the present century. It commemorated the death of Alasdair Mac Colla Ciotaigh (known among the English as Colkitto) at the battle of Cnoc na nDos (Knocknamuss) in 1647. In the piece are portrayed the march to the battlefield, the trumpet calls, the assembly, the conflict, the death of Alasdrom, and the laments of the women as well as the concluding dance for which the folklore offers an interesting explanation.*

*Crofton Croker published this piece in his Researches in the South of Ireland (1824). Canon Goodman, a piper, found faults with Croker's version, particularly with the laments, and set in his own manuscript (written in 1862) the version played by the Kerry pipers. The longest version now extant was included in an essay on the state of the Irish language and literature which Francis Keane wrote in 1876 for a competition organised by the Royal Irish Academy. Strangely enough, this version ends with the laments; it does not include the dance piece. The opening and closing sections, Alasdrom's March and The Church Hill have been published many times before and they are still known traditionally among players in Munster. A few short strains of the laments and the concluding dance tune were recorded from the playing of Micky (Cumbaw) O Sullivan, a piper, at the beginning of the present century. The music is announced as Gol na mBan san Ar (The Lament of the women among the slaughtered). It is only with difficulty the music on the cylinder can be heard; it is not possible to make out the speech apart from the title. Keane's version is given here, exactly as found in the manuscript: what appear to be slips in transcription are referred to beneath the music. The Goodman version, a transcription of O'Sullivan's music and other versions of the jigs written from present-day players will be given in the next issue of Ceol.*

## Máirseáil Alasdruim (3)

Ceol III, 3 (1969)

Tugtar anseo síos an leagan de *Mhairseáil Alasdruim* atá le fáil i lámhscríbhinn Goodman i gColáiste na Tríonóide (an leagan, a dúirt Goodman, a chasadh píobairí Chiarraí) agus na streamcáin dhe a thóig lucht an Fhéis Cheoil uaidh Mhicheál Ó Súilleabháin, piobaire, bunáite 70 bliain ó shoin agus a d'aithscríobh Pádhraig Ó Máille anois le haghaidh na hócáide.

Tugtar freisin maltraid leaganacha den dhá phort.

Cé gur thóig John Wayland, Rúnaí Chumann na bPíobairí i gCorcaigh, roinnt mháith cheoil uaidh Mhicheál Ó Súilleabháin (*Mairseáil Alasdruim, Fiach an Mhada Rua* is tuilleadh) níl fágtha anois is cosúil ach an rollán aontrac de chuid an Fhéis Cheoil.

Tuairim's 1830 ar an Ráth, in aice le Cathair Dhónaill a rugadh an Súilleabhánach. De threibh Chúmbá é agus Míci Chúmbá a tugtaí go hiondúil air. Ba dall abhí ann. Fuíoll na bolgaí d'fhága gan amharc a shúl in aois a dhá bhliain déag é. Mara bhfuil ach dha nóiméad féin dá chuid ceoil ar fáil anois is leor an méid sin le taisbeáint go mba piobaire ar na hailt é agus go raibh stíl piobaireacht aige nach bhfuil a leithéid anois ann.

*Gol na mBan san Ár* a fuagraítear ar an rollán ach tá sé i gceist nach le cath Chnoc na nDos a bhain an teideal sin ach le *Cath Eachdruime* nó le piosa eile nach maireann tuairisc féin faoi anois. Níl aon aimhreas nach cuid de Mhairseáil Alasdruim atá againn anseo mar is le *Cnocán an Teampaill* a chríochnaíonn an Súilleabhánach a chuid ceoil.

Níl na leaganacha ar aon fhocal i dtaobh na mná a rinne na caointe. I leagan an Chathánaigh a fóilsíodh ar *Ceol* (III), (2), (II. 38/43) sí bean Alasdruim a chaoín i dtosach é agus a bhanaltra féin ina dhiaidh sin. Sí a mháthair (an bhean Mhuimhneach) ba thúisce a chaoín é, a bhanaltra (an Laighneach) annsin agus a bhean féin (an Ultach) ba deireannaí a chaoín é i leagan Goodman. Tá sé i gceist i leagan eile gur chaoín máthair a chéile agus drifúir leis chomh maith é.

Tagrann tuairisc sa mbéaloideas as Ciarraí do na caointe a rinneadh: "Golaí, golaí, golaí, golaí" — an siomsán abhí ag mná Chonnacht; "Olagón ó, olagón ó, olagón ó, olagón ó" a dúirt mná Chúige Uladh agus rinne mná Chúige Mumhain olagón breá bog. Tá sé ráite gur rug caoineadh na buime nó na banaltra barr le binneas agus le brón ar na mná eile. I gcuid de na leaganacha sí bean Alasdruim (ní Ultach ach Albanach abhí inti) a chaoín go deireannach é, is rinne sí babtha damhsa ansin as treann oile lás nach bhfuair sí cead a chaointe i dtosach ar na mná eile. Tá cuimhne fós ar an damhsa seo mar is léir ón rann as Ciarraí:

Dance away womeneen, over the whipeneen,  
 Cnocán an Teampaill, Cnocán an Teampaill,  
 Dance away womeneen, over the whipeneen.  
 Cnocán an Teampaill, Cnocán an Teampaill.

An ceol atá ar an rollán an taon blúire atá fágtha de *Mhairseáil Alasdrúim*. Níl fágtha i gcuimhne an phobail ach an píosa seafóide atá luaite thuas agus ní le *Cnocán an Teampaill* a dúradh é ach le *Dónall na Gréine*. D'áitíodh Fionán Mac Coluim gurb ionann *Mairseáil Alasdrúim* is *Bó na Leathadhairce*, rud nach fíor, ar ndó.

Tá mé buíoch do Bhórd Choláiste na Tríonóide as ucht cead a thabhairt an ceol as láimhscribhinn Goodman a fhoilsíú anseo.

The setting of *Allisdrums March* given below is from the Goodman collection (I, p. 266) in T.C.D. Library. It is, Goodman wrote, the version played by the Kerry pipers. *Gol na mBan san Ár* was recorded by the Féis Ceoil some seventy years ago from the playing of Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, a blind piper commonly called Míci Chumbá. The pieces are certainly part of the March although it is doubtful if the title *Gol na mBan san Ár* is properly associated with the battle of Cnoc na nDos but rather referred to the Battle of Aughrim or some other now forgotten event. None of the ms. versions include this title. There are at least three other airs bearing the title, none of which is related to those above.

The different versions are not in agreement about the women who “keened” Alasdar. In Keane’s version (*Ceol III* (2), pp. 38/43) his wife performed the first lament and was followed by his nurse. In Goodman’s version his mother, a Munster woman, is introduced and in another version of the story his mother-in-law and his sister appear in addition to the other women. It is not possible to make out in the recording of Míci Chumbá who performed the various cries. A further Kerry description refers to women from Connacht, Ulster and Munster. Alasdar’s wife is said to have struck up the old jig *Cnocán an Teampaill* as soon as she ascertained her husband was really dead. Another version has her dancing from vexation because she was not permitted to keen her husband before the other women. The dancing is remembered in the verse, now meaningless, which is given above and which was sung not to *Cnocán an Teampaill* but to *Dónall na Gréine*. Fionán Mac Colm used declare that the introductory piece was *Bó na Leathadhairce* but in this he was obviously incorrect. It remains to quote the remarks of a writer on the bagpipes in the Dublin University Magazine (July, 1833) who declared that one of the oldest pipe tunes in Ireland was *M’Alusdrums*, “*Young Alexander McDonald’s March*” which was played at the Battle of Aughrim and there called “*March of the Munster Pipers*”.

## ALLISDRUM’S MARCH, Battle of Cnoc na nDos

Slow

5

9

10

3 times

Gol na mban san ár

a

b

c

3



Gol na mban san ár (ar lean)

Musical score for 'Gol na mban san ár (ar lean)'. It consists of four staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff is the melody, and the second and third staves are accompaniment. The fourth staff is a continuation of the melody. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the third staff.

1. Ellexander's March

Musical score for '1. Ellexander's March'. It consists of four staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff is the melody, and the second and third staves are accompaniment. The fourth staff is a continuation of the melody.

2. Ellexander's March

Musical score for '2. Ellexander's March'. It consists of four staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff is the melody, and the second and third staves are accompaniment. The fourth staff is a continuation of the melody.

3. The Church Hill

Musical score for '3. The Church Hill'. It consists of four staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff is the melody, and the second and third staves are accompaniment. The fourth staff is a continuation of the melody.

4. The Church Hill

Musical score for '4. The Church Hill'. It consists of four staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff is the melody, and the second and third staves are accompaniment. The fourth staff is a continuation of the melody.

5. The Church Hill

Musical score for '5. The Church Hill'. It consists of four staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The first staff is the melody, and the second and third staves are accompaniment. The fourth staff is a continuation of the melody. The score includes first and second endings, marked with '1.' and '2.'.

### Allisdrum's March

1. An bailiughadh chum catha (gathering for the battle).
2. An cath — buail as mairbh !!! (the battle — strike and kill).
3. buail as mairbh (strike and kill).
4. Marbh — tuitim Allasdrum (dead — the fall of Alasdair).
5. An Bhean Mhuimhneach, / a mháthair, ag gul (The Munster woman, his mother crying).
6. uch, uch, uch, ón! (alas, alas, alas).
7. An Laighneach, / a bhanartla, ag gul (The Leinster woman, his nurse, crying).
8. uch, uch, uch, ón (alas, alas, alas).
9. An Ultach / a bhean, ag caoineadh (The Ulster woman, his wife keening).
10. *Cnocán an Teampuill* (Church Hill). x. sic.

### Gol na mBan san Ár.

When playing *Máirseáil Alasdrum* the piper announced the various actions being illustrated, as indicated in the Keane and the Goodman versions given above. O'Sullivan likewise introduced the various parts in this manner but because of the poor condition of the cylinder it was not possible to make out the speech other than the title itself.

- a. A most plaintive sound is obtained by pipers playing C natural by raising the chanter off the knee and rapidly striking the uncovered holes under the second and third fingers of the bottom hand.
  - b. This note was produced by rapidly beating the second finger of the bottom hand underneath the lower edge of the F hole. This vibrato effect is a most popular form of ornamentation among pipers.
  - c. This note is played as described above, but here the C hole is not fully uncovered: the effect of this is to flatten the note somewhat less than a quarter tone.
- 1/2 *Ellexander's March* ex ms kindly lent by Maurice O'Keefe, Glounreagh, Kishkeam, Co. Cork. Ms appears to be over 100 years old. The first tune is styled "the jiggy way", the second, "the new way".
- 3 *The Church Hill*. From the playing of Mrs. Murphy, Glen Collins, Ballydesmond, Co. Cork. She learned it from Tom Billy for whom see *Ceol* (II, 2 pp 96/101).
  - 4 *Church Hill* ex ms. kindly lent by J. M. Buckley, Carriganes, Ballydesmond. The ms was written in 1866 by William Fitzgerald, Cronrea, Ballydesmond, a noted fiddle player who subsequently emigrated to America.
  - 5 *Church Hill* ex ms. kindly lent by C. Ó Floinn, Castleisland, Co. Kerry. Ms appears to be a local one and probably written about 1870.