

A Popular History of Ireland - From the earliest period to the emancipation of the Catholics

Thomas D'Arcy McGee

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A Popular History of Ireland: from the Earliest
Period to the Emancipation of the Catholics

by Thomas D'Arcy McGee

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

Ireland, lifting herself from the dust, drying her tears,
and proudly demanding her legitimate place among the
nations of the earth, is a spectacle to cause immense
progress in political philosophy.

Behold a nation whose fame had spread over all the earth
ere the flag of England had come into existence. For 500
years her life has been apparently extinguished. The
fiercest whirlwind of oppression that ever in the wrath
of God was poured upon the children of disobedience had
swept over her. She was an object of scorn and contempt
to her subjugator. Only at times were there any signs of
life--an occasional meteor flash that told of her olden
spirit--of her deathless race. Degraded and apathetic as
this nation of Helots was, it is not strange that political
philosophy, at all times too Sadducean in its principles,
should ask, with a sneer, "Could these dry bones live?"
The fulness of time has come, and with one gallant sunward
bound the "old land" comes forth into the political day
to teach these lessons, that Right must always conquer
Might in the end--that by a compensating principle in
the nature of things, Repression creates slowly, but
certainly, a force for its overthrow.

Had it been possible to kill the Irish Nation, it had
long since ceased to exist. But the transmitted qualities
of her glorious children, who were giants in intellect,
virtue, and arms for 1500 years before Alfred the Saxon
sent the youth of his country to Ireland in search of
knowledge with which to civilize his people,--the legends,
songs, and dim traditions of this glorious era, and the
irrepressible piety, sparkling wit, and dauntless courage
of her people, have at last brought her forth like
Lazarus from the tomb. True, the garb of the prison or
the cerements of the grave may be hanging upon her,
but "loose her and let her go" is the wise policy of
those in whose hands are her present destinies.

A nation with such a strange history must have some great
work yet to do in the world. Except the Jews, no people
has so suffered without dying.

The History of Ireland is the most interesting of records,
and the least known. The Publishers of this edition of
D'Arcy McGee's excellent and impartial work take advantage
of the awakening interest in Irish literature to present

to the public a book of _high-class history_, as cheap as _largely circulating romance_. A sale as large as that of a popular romance is, therefore, necessary to pay the speculation. That sale the Publishers expect. Indeed, as truth is often stranger than fiction, so Irish history is more romantic than romance. How Queen Scotia unfurled the Sacred Banner. How Brian and Malachy contended for empire. How the "Pirate of the North" scourged the Irish coast. The glories of Tara and the piety of Columba. The cowardice of James and the courage of Sarsfield. How Dathi, the fearless, sounded the Irish war-cry in far Alpine passes, and how the Geraldine forayed Leinster. The deeds of O'Neil and O'Donnell. The march of Cromwell, the destroying angel. Ireland's sun sinking in dim eclipse. The dark night of woe in Erin for a hundred years. '83--'98--'48--'68. Ireland's sun rising in glory. Surely the Youth of Ireland will find in their country's records romance enough!

The English and Scotch are well read in the histories of their country. The Irish are, unfortunately, not so; and yet, what is English or Scottish history to compare with Irish? Ireland was a land of saints and scholars when Britons were painted savages. Wise and noble laws, based upon the spirit of Christianity, were administered in Erin, and valuable books were written ere the Britons were as far advanced in civilization as the Blackfeet Indians. In morals and intellect, in Christianity and civilization, in arms, art, and science, Ireland shone like a star among the nations when darkness enshrouded the world. And she nobly sustained civilization and religion by her missionaries and scholars. The libraries and archives of Europe contain the records of their piety and learning. Indeed the echoes have scarcely yet ceased to sound upon our ears, of the mighty march of her armed children over the war-fields of Europe, during that terrible time when England's cruel law, intended to destroy the spirit of a martial race, precipitated an armed torrent of nearly 500,000 of the flower of the Irish youth into foreign service. Irish steel glittered in the front rank of the most desperate conflicts, and more than once the ranks of England went down before "the Exiles," in just punishment for her terrible penal code which excluded the Irish soldier from his country's service.

It was the Author's wish to educate his countrymen in their national records. If by issuing a cheap edition the present Publishers carry out to any extent that wish, it will be to them a source of satisfaction.

It is impossible to conclude this Preface without an expression of regret at the dark and terrible fate which overtook the high-minded, patriotic, and distinguished Irishman, Thomas D'Arcy McGee. He was a man who loved his country well; and when the contemptible squabbles and paltry dissensions of the present have passed away, his name will be a hallowed memory, like that of Emmet or Fitzgerald, to inspire men with high, ideals of

patriotism and devotion.

CAMERON & FERGUSON.

[Note: From 1857 until his death, McGee was active in Canadian politics. A gifted speaker and strong supporter of Confederation, he is regarded as one of Canada's fathers of Confederation. On April 7, 1868, after attending a late-night session in the House of Commons, he was shot and killed as he returned to his rooming house on Sparks Street in Ottawa. It is generally believed that McGee was the victim of a Fenian plot. Patrick James Whelan was convicted and hanged for the crime, however the evidence implicating him was later seen to be suspect.]

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HISTORY OF IRELAND

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST INHABITANTS.

Ireland is situated in the North Atlantic, between the degrees fifty-one and a half and fifty-five and a half North, and five and a quarter and ten and a third West longitude from Greenwich. It is the last land usually seen by ships leaving the Old World, and the first by those who arrive there from the Northern ports of America. In size it is less than half as large as Britain, and in shape it may be compared to one of those shields which we see in coats-of-arms, the four Provinces--Ulster, Connaught, Leinster, and Munster--representing the four quarters of the shield.

Around the borders of the country, generally near the

coast, several ranges of hills and mountains rear their crests, every Province having one or more such groups. The West and South have, however, the largest and highest of these hills, from the sides of all which descend numerous rivers, flowing in various directions to the sea. Other rivers issue out of large lakes formed in the valleys, such as the Galway river which drains Lough Corrib, and the Bann which carries off the surplus waters of Lough Neagh (_Nay_). In a few districts where the fall for water is insufficient, marshes and swamps were long ago formed, of which the principal one occupies nearly 240,000 acres in the very heart of the country. It is called "the Bog of Alien," and, though quite useless for farming purposes, still serves to supply the surrounding district with fuel, nearly as well as coal mines do in other countries.

In former times, Ireland was as well wooded as watered, though hardly a tree of the primitive forest now remains. One of the earliest names applied to it was "the wooded Island," and the export of timber and staves, as well as of the furs of wild animals, continued, until the beginning of the seventeenth century, to be a thriving branch of trade. But in a succession of civil and religious wars, the axe and the torch have done their work of destruction, so that the age of most of the wood now standing does not date above two or three generations back.

Who were the first inhabitants of this Island, it is impossible to say, but we know it was inhabited at a very early period of the world's lifetime--probably as early as the time when Solomon the Wise, sat in Jerusalem on the throne of his father David. As we should not altogether reject, though neither are we bound to believe, the wild and uncertain traditions of which we have neither documentary nor monumental evidence, we will glance over rapidly what the old Bards and Story-tellers have handed down to us concerning Ireland before it became Christian.

The _first_ story they tell is, that about three hundred years after the Universal Deluge, Partholan, of the stock of Japhet, sailed down the Mediterranean, "leaving Spain on the right hand," and holding bravely on his course, reached the shores of the wooded western Island. This Partholan, they tell us, was a double parricide, having killed his father and mother before leaving his native country, for which horrible crimes, as the Bards very morally conclude, his posterity were fated never to possess the land. After a long interval, and when they were greatly increased in numbers, they were cut off to the last man, by a dreadful pestilence.

The story of the _second_ immigration is almost as vague as that of the first. The leader this time is called Nemedh, and his route is described as leading from the shores of the Black Sea, across what is now Russia in Europe, to the Baltic Sea, and from the Baltic to Ireland. He is said to have built two royal forts, and to have "cleared twelve plains of wood" while in Ireland. He

and his posterity were constantly at war, with a terrible race of Formorians, or Sea Kings, descendants of Ham, who had fled from northern Africa to the western islands for refuge from their enemies, the sons of Shem. At length the Formorians prevailed, and the children of the second immigration were either slain or driven into exile, from which some of their posterity returned long afterwards, and again disputed the country, under two different denominations.

The Firbolgs or Belgae are the third immigration. They were victorious under their chiefs, the five sons of Dela, and divided the island into five portions. But they lived in days when the earth--the known parts of it at least--was being eagerly scrambled for by the overflowing hosts of Asia, and they were not long left in undisputed possession of so tempting a prize. Another expedition, claiming descent from the common ancestor, Nemedh, arrived to contest their supremacy. These last--the fourth immigration--are depicted to us as accomplished soothsayers and necromancers who came out of Greece. They could quell storms; cure diseases; work in metals; foretell future events; forge magical weapons; and raise the dead to life; they are called the Tuatha de Danans, and by their supernatural power, as well as by virtue of "the Lia Fail," or fabled "stone of destiny," they subdued their Belgic kinsmen, and exercised sovereignty over them, till they in turn were displaced by the Gaelic, or fifth immigration.

This fifth and final colony called themselves alternately, or at different periods of their history, Gael, from one of their remote ancestors; Milesians, from the immediate projector of their emigration; or Scoti, from Scota, the mother of Milesius. They came from Spain under the leadership of the sons of Milesius, whom they had lost during their temporary sojourn in that country. In vain the skilful Tuatha surrounded themselves and their coveted island with magic-made tempest and terrors; in vain they reduced it in size so as to be almost invisible from sea; Amergin, one of the sons of Milesius, was a Druid skilled in all the arts of the east, and led by his wise counsels, his brothers countermined the magicians, and beat them at their own weapons. This Amergin was, according to universal usage in ancient times, at once Poet, Priest, and Prophet; yet when his warlike brethren divided the island between them, they left the Poet out of reckoning. He was finally drowned in the waters of the river Avoca, which is probably the reason why that river has been so suggestive of melody and song ever since.

Such are the stories told of the five successive hordes of adventurers who first attempted to colonize our wooded Island. Whatever moiety of truth may be mixed up with so many fictions, two things are certain, that long before the time when our Lord and Saviour came upon earth, the coasts and harbours of Erin were known to the merchants of the Mediterranean, and that from the first to the

fifth Christian century, the warriors of the wooded Isle made inroads on the Roman power in Britain and even in Gaul. Agricola, the Roman governor of Britain in the reign of Domitian--the first century--retained an Irish chieftain about his person, and we are told by his biographer that an invasion of Ireland was talked of at Rome. But it never took place; the Roman eagles, although supreme for four centuries in Britain, never crossed the Irish Sea; and we are thus deprived of those Latin helps to our early history, which are so valuable in the first period of the histories of every western country, with which the Romans had anything to do.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST AGES.

Since we have no Roman accounts of the form of government or state of society in ancient Erin, we must only depend on the Bards and Story-tellers, so far as their statements are credible and agree with each other. On certain main points they do agree, and these are the points which it seems reasonable for us to take on their authority.

As even brothers born of the same mother, coming suddenly into possession of a prize, will struggle to see who can get the largest share, so we find in those first ages a constant succession of armed struggles for power. The petty Princes who divided the Island between them were called _Righ_, a word which answers to the Latin _Rex_ and French _Roi_; and the chief king or monarch was called _Ard-Righ_, or High-King. The eldest nephew, or son of the king, was the usual heir of power, and was called the _Tanist_, or successor; although any of the family of the Prince, his brothers, cousins, or other kinsmen, might be chosen _Tanist_, by election of the people over whom he was to rule. One certain cause of exclusion was personal deformity; for if a Prince was born lame or a hunchback, or if he lost a limb by accident, he was declared unfit to govern. Even after succession, any serious accident entailed deposition, though we find the names of several Princes who managed to evade or escape this singular penalty. It will be observed besides of the _Tanist_, that the habit of appointing him seems to have been less a law than a custom; that it was not universal in all the Provinces; that in some tribes the succession alternated between a double line of Princes; and that sometimes when the reigning Prince obtained the nomination of a _Tanist_, to please himself, the choice was set aside by the public voice of the clansmen. The successor to the _Ard-Righ_, or Monarch, instead of being simply called _Tanist_, had the more sounding title of _Roydamna_, or King-successor.

The chief offices about the Kings, in the first ages, were all filled by the Druids, or Pagan Priests; the

Brehons, or Judges, were usually Druids, as were also the _Bards_, the historians of their patrons. Then came the Physicians; the Chiefs who paid tribute or received annual gifts from the Sovereigns, or Princes; the royal stewards; and the military leaders or Champions, who, like the knights of the middle ages, held their lands and their rank at court, by the tenure of the sword. Like the feudal _Dukes_ of France, and _Barons_ of England, these military nobles often proved too powerful for their nominal patrons, and made them experience all the uncertainty of reciprocal dependence. The Champions play an important part in all the early legends. Wherever there is trouble you are sure to find them. Their most celebrated divisions were the warriors of the _Red Branch_ --that is to say, the Militia of Ulster; the _Fiann_, or Militia of Leinster, sometimes the royal guard of Tara, at others in exile and disgrace; the _Clan-Degaid_ of Munster, and the _Fiann_ of Connaught. The last force was largely recruited from the Belgic race who had been squeezed into that western province, by their Milesian conquerors, pretty much as Cromwell endeavoured to force the Milesian Irish into it, many hundred years afterwards. Each of these bands had its special heroes; its Godfreys and Orlandos celebrated in song; the most famous name in Ulster was Cuchullin: so called from _cu_, a hound, or watch-dog, and _Ullin_, the ancient name of his province. He lived at the dawn of the Christian era. Of equal fame was Finn, the father of Ossian, and the Fingal of modern fiction, who flourished in the latter half of the second century. Gall, son of Morna, the hero of Connaught (one of the few distinguished men of Belgic origin whom we hear of through the Milesian bards), flourished a generation earlier than Finn, and might fairly compete with him in celebrity, if he had only had an Ossian to sing his praises.

The political boundaries of different tribes expanded or contracted with their good or ill fortune in battle. Immigration often followed defeat, so that a clan, or its offshoot is found at one period on one part of the map and again on another. As _surnames_ were not generally used either in Ireland or anywhere else, till after the tenth century, the great families are distinguishable at first, only by their tribe or clan names. Thus at the north we have the Hy-Nial race; in the south the Eugénian race, so called from Nial and Eóghan, their mutual ancestors.

We have already compared the shape of Erin to a shield, in which the four Provinces represented the four quarters. Some shields have also _bosses_ or centre-pieces, and the federal province of MEATH was the _boss_ of the old Irish shield. The ancient Meath included both the present counties of that name, stretching south to the Liffey, and north to Armagh. It was the mensal demesne, or "board of the king's table:" it was exempt from all taxes, except those of the Ard-Rígh, and its relations to the other Provinces may be vaguely compared to those of the District of Columbia to the several States of the North American

Union. ULSTER might then be defined by a line drawn from Sligo Harbour to the mouth of the Boyne, the line being notched here and there by the royal demesne of Meath; LEINSTER stretched south from Dublin triangle-wise to Waterford Harbour, but its inland line, towards the west, was never very well defined, and this led to constant border wars with Munster; the remainder of the south to the mouth of the Shannon composed MUNSTER; the present county of Clare and all west of the Shannon north to Sligo, and part of Cavan, going with CONNAUGHT. The chief seats of power, in those several divisions, were TARA, for federal purposes; EMANIA, near Armagh, for Ulster; LEIGHLIN, for Leinster; CASHEL, for Munster; and CRUCHAIN, (now Rathcrogan, in Roscommon,) for Connaught.

How the common people lived within these external divisions of power it is not so easy to describe. All histories tell us a great deal of kings, and battles, and conspiracies, but very little of the daily domestic life of the people. In this respect the history of Erin is much the same as the rest; but some leading facts we do know. Their religion, in Pagan times, was what the moderns call _Druidism_, but what they called it themselves we now know not. It was probably the same religion anciently professed by Tyre and Sidon, by Carthage and her colonies in Spain; the same religion which the Romans have described as existing in great part of Gaul, and by their accounts, we learn the awful fact, that it sanctioned, nay, demanded, human sacrifices. From the few traces of its doctrines which Christian zeal has permitted to survive in the old Irish language, we see that _Belus_ or "Crom," the god of fire, typified by the sun, was its chief divinity--that two great festivals were held in his honour on days answering to the first of May and last of October. There were also particular gods of poets, champions, artificers and mariners, just as among the Romans and Greeks. Sacred groves were dedicated to these gods; Priests and Priestesses devoted their lives to their service; the arms of the champion, and the person of the king were charmed by them; neither peace nor war was made without their sanction; their own persons and their pupils were held sacred; the high place at the king's right hand and the best fruits of the earth and the waters were theirs. Old age revered them, women worshipped them, warriors paid court to them, youth trembled before them, princes and chieftains regarded them as elder brethren. So numerous were they in Erin, and so celebrated, that the altars of Britain and western Gaul, left desolate by the Roman legions, were often served by hierophants from Erin, which, even in those Pagan days, was known to all the Druidic countries as the "Sacred Island." Besides the princes, the warriors, and the Druids, (who were also the Physicians, Bards and Brehons of the first ages,) there were innumerable petty chiefs, all laying claim to noble birth and blood. They may be said with the warriors and priests to be the only freemen. The _Bruais_, or farmers, though possessing certain legal rights, were an inferior caste; while of the Artisans, the smiths and armorers only seem to have been of much consideration.

The builders of those mysterious round towers, of which a hundred ruins yet remain, may also have been a privileged order. But the mill and the loom were servile occupations, left altogether to slaves taken in battle, or purchased in the market-places of Britain. The task of the herdsman, like that of the farm-labourer, seems to have devolved on the bondsmen, while the _quern_ and the shuttle were left exclusively in the hands of the bondswomen.

We need barely mention the names of the first Milesian kings, who were remarkable for something else than cutting each other's throats, in order to hasten on to the solid ground of Christian tunes. The principal names are: Heber and Heremhon, the crowned sons of Milesians; they at first divided the Island fairly, but Heremhon soon became jealous of his brother, slew him in battle, and established his own supremacy. Irial the Prophet was King, and built seven royal fortresses; Tiern'mass; in his reign the arts of dyeing in colours were introduced; and the distinguishing of classes by the number of colours they were permitted to wear, was decreed. Ollamh ("the Wise") established the Convention of Tara, which assembled habitually every ninth year, but might be called oftener; it met about the October festival in honour of Beleus or _Crom_; Eocaid invented or introduced a new species of wicker boats, called _cassa_, and spent much of his time upon the sea; a solitary queen, named Macha, appears in the succession, from whom Armagh takes its name; except Mab, the mythological Queen of Connaught, she is the sole female ruler of Erin in the first ages; Owen or Eugene Mor ("the Great") is remembered as the founder of the notable families who rejoice in the common name of Eugenians; Leary, of whom the fable of Midas is told with variations; Angus, whom the after Princes of Alba (Scotland) claimed as their ancestor; Eocaid, the tenth of that name, in whose reign are laid the scenes of the chief mythological stories of Erin--such as the story of Queen Mab--the story of the Sons of Usna; the death of Cuchullin (a counterpart of the Persian tale of Roostam and Sohrab); the story of Fergus, son of the king; of Connor of Ulster; of the sons of Dari; and many more. We next meet with the first king who led an expedition abroad against the Romans in Crimthan, surnamed _Neea-Naari_, or Nair's Hero, from the good genius who accompanied him on his foray. A well-planned insurrection of the conquered Belgae, cut off one of Crimthan's immediate successors, with all his chiefs and nobles, at a banquet given on the Belgian-plain (Moybolgue, in Cavan); and arrested for a century thereafter Irish expeditions abroad. A revolution and a restoration followed, in which Moran the Just Judge played the part of Monk to _his_ Charles II., Tuathal surnamed "the Legitimate." It was Tuathal who imposed the special tax on Leinster, of which, we shall often hear--under the title of _Borooa_, or Tribute. "The Legitimate" was succeeded by his son, who introduced the Roman _Lex Talionis_ ("an eye for an eye and a tooth, for a tooth") into the Brehon code; soon after, the Eugenic families of the south, strong in numbers, and led by a second Owen More, again halved the Island with

the ruling race, the boundary this time being the _esker_, or ridge of land which can be easily traced from Dublin west to Galway. Olild, a brave and able Prince, succeeded in time to the southern half-kingdom, and planted his own kindred deep and firm in its soil, though the unity of the monarchy was again restored under Cormac Ulla, or _Longbeard_. This Cormac, according to the legend, was in secret a Christian, and was done to death by the enraged and alarmed Druids, after his abdication and retirement from the world (A.D. 266). He had reigned full forty years, rivalling in wisdom, and excelling in justice the best of his ancestors. Some of his maxims remain to us, and challenge comparison for truthfulness and foresight with most uninspired writings.

Cormac's successors during the same century are of little mark, but in the next the expeditions against the Roman outposts were renewed with greater energy and on an increasing scale. Another Crimthan eclipsed the fame of his ancestor and namesake; Nial, called "of the Hostages," was slain on a second or third expedition into Gaul (A.D. 405), while Dathy, nephew and successor to Nial, was struck dead by lightning in the passage of the Alps (A.D. 428). It was in one of Nial's Gallic expeditions that the illustrious captive was brought into Erin, for whom Providence had reserved the glory of its conversion to the Christian faith--an event which gives a unity and a purpose to the history of that Nation, which must always constitute its chief attraction to the Christian reader.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY PREACHED AT TARA--THE RESULT.

The conversion of a Pagan people to Christianity must always be a primary fact in their history. It is not merely for the error it abolishes or the positive truth it establishes that a national change of faith is historically important, but for the complete revolution it works in every public and private relation. The change socially could not be greater if we were to see some irresistible apostle of Paganism arriving from abroad in Christian Ireland, who would abolish the churches, convents, and Christian schools; decry and bring into utter disuse the decalogue, the Scriptures and the Sacraments; efface all trace of the existing belief in One God and Three Persons, whether in private or public worship, in contracts, or in courts of law; and instead of these, re-establish all over the country, in high places and in every place, the gloomy groves of the Druids, making gods of the sun and moon, the natural elements, and man's own passions, restoring human sacrifices as a sacred duty, and practically excluding from the community of their fellows, all who presumed to question the divine origin of such a religion. The preaching of Patrick effected a revolution to the full as complete as

such a counter-revolution in favour of Paganism could possibly be, and to this thorough revolution we must devote at least one chapter before going farther.

The best accounts agree that Patrick was a native of Gaul, then subject to Rome; that he was carried captive into Erin on one of King Nial's returning expeditions; that he became a slave, as all captives of the sword did, in those iron times; that he fell to the lot of one Milcho, a chief of Dalriada, whose flocks he tended for seven years, as a shepherd, on the mountain called Slemish, in the present county of Antrim. The date of Nial's death, and the consequent return of his last expedition, is set down in all our annals at the year 405; as Patrick was sixteen years of age when he reached Ireland, he must have been born about the year 390; and as he died in the year 493, he would thus have reached the extraordinary, but not impossible age of 103 years. Whatever the exact number of his years, it is certain that his mission in Ireland commenced in the year 432, and was prolonged till his death, sixty-one years afterwards. Such an unprecedented length of life, not less than the unprecedented power, both popular and political, which he early attained, enabled him to establish the Irish Church, during his own time, on a basis so broad and deep, that neither lapse of ages, nor heathen rage, nor earthly temptations, nor all the arts of Hell, have been able to upheave its firm foundations. But we must not imagine that the powers of darkness abandoned the field without a struggle, or that the victory of the cross was achieved without a singular combination of courage, prudence, and determination--God aiding above all.

If the year of his captivity was 405 or 406, and that of his escape or manumission seven years later (412 or 413), twenty years would intervene between his departure out of the land of his bondage, and his return to it clothed with the character and authority of a Christian Bishop. This interval, longer or shorter, he spent in qualifying himself for Holy Orders or discharging priestly duties at Tours, at Lerins, and finally at Rome. But always by night and day he was haunted by the thought of the Pagan nation in which he had spent his long years of servitude, whose language he had acquired, and the character of whose people he so thoroughly understood. These natural retrospections were heightened and deepened by supernatural revelations of the will of Providence towards the Irish, and himself as their apostle. At one time, an angel presented him, in his sleep, a scroll bearing the superscription, "the voice of the Irish;" at another, he seemed to hear in a dream all the unborn children of the nation crying to him for help and holy baptism. When, therefore, Pope Celestine commissioned him for this enterprise, "to the ends of the earth," he found him not only ready but anxious to undertake it.

When the new Preacher arrived in the Irish Sea, in 432, he and his companions were driven off the coast of Wicklow by a mob, who assailed them with showers of stones.

Running down the coast to Antrim, with which he was personally familiar, he made some stay at Saul, in Down, where he made few converts, and celebrated Mass in a barn; proceeding northward he found himself rejected with scorn by his old master, Milcho, of Slemish. No doubt it appeared an unpardonable audacity in the eyes of the proud Pagan, that his former slave should attempt to teach him how to reform his life and order his affairs. Returning again southward, led on, as we must believe, by the Spirit of God, he determined to strike a blow against Paganism at its most vital point. Having learned that the monarch, Leary (_Laeghaire_), was to celebrate his birthday with suitable rejoicings at Tara, on a day which happened to fall on the eve of Easter, he resolved to proceed to Tara on that occasion, and to confront the Druids in the midst of all the princes and magnates of the Island. With this view he returned on his former course, and landed from his frail barque at the mouth of the Boyne. Taking leave of the boatmen, he desired them to wait for him a certain number of days, when, if they did not hear from him, they might conclude him dead, and provide for their own safety. So saying he set out, accompanied by the few disciples he had made, or brought from abroad, to traverse on foot the great plain which stretches from the mouth of the Boyne to Tara. If those sailors were Christians, as is most likely, we can conceive with what anxiety they must have awaited tidings of an attempt so hazardous and so eventful.

The Christian proceeded on his way, and the first night of his journey lodged with a hospitable chief, whose family he converted and baptized, especially marking out a fine child named Beanen, called by him Benignus, from his sweet disposition; who was destined to be one of his most efficient coadjutors, and finally his successor in the Primatial see of Armagh. It was about the second or third day when, travelling probably by the northern road, poetically called "the Slope of the Chariots," the Christian adventurers came in sight of the roofs of Tara. Halting on a neighbouring eminence they surveyed the citadel of Ancient Error, like soldiers about to assault an enemy's stronghold. The aspect of the royal hill must have been highly imposing. The building towards the north was the Banquet Hall, then thronged with the celebrants of the King's birth-day, measuring from north to south 360 feet in length by 40 feet wide. South of this hall was the King's Rath, or residence, enclosing an area of 280 yards in diameter, and including several detached buildings, such as the house of Cormac, and the house of the hostages. Southward still stood the new rath of the reigning king, and yet farther south, the rath of Queen Mab, probably uninhabited even then. The intervals between the buildings were at some points planted, for we know that magnificent trees shaded the well of Finn, and the well of Newnaw, from which all the raths were supplied with water. Imposing at any time, Tara must have looked its best at the moment Patrick first beheld it, being in the pleasant season of spring, and decorated in honour of the anniversary of the reigning sovereign.

One of the religious ceremonies employed by the Druids to heighten the solemnity of the occasion, was to order all the fires of Tara and Meath to be quenched, in order to rekindle them instantaneously from a sacred fire dedicated to the honour of their god. But Patrick, either designedly or innocently, anticipated this striking ceremony, and lit his own fire, where he had encamped, in view of the royal residence. A flight of fiery arrows, shot into the Banqueting Hall, would not have excited more horror and tumult among the company there assembled, than did the sight of that unlicensed blaze in the distance. Orders were issued to drag the offender against the laws and the gods of the Island before them, and the punishment in store for him was already decreed in every heart. The Preacher, followed by his trembling disciples, ascended "the Slope of the Chariots," surrounded by menacing minions of the Pagan law, and regarded with indignation by astonished spectators. As he came he recited Latin Prayers to the Blessed Trinity, beseeching their protection and direction in this trying hour. Contrary to courteous custom no one at first rose to offer him a seat. At last a chieftain, touched with mysterious admiration for the stranger, did him that kindness. Then it was demanded of him, why he had dared to violate the laws of the country, and to defy its ancient gods. On this text the Christian Missionary spoke. The place of audience was in the open air, on that eminence, the home of so many kings, which commands one of the most agreeable prospects in any landscape. The eye of the inspired orator, pleading the cause of all the souls that hereafter, till the end of time, might inhabit the land, could discern within the spring-day horizon, the course of the Blackwater and the Boyne before they blend into one; the hills of Cavan to the far north; with the royal hill of Tailtean in the foreground; the wooded heights of Slane and Skreen, and the four ancient roads, which led away towards the four subject Provinces, like the reins of empire laid loosely on their necks. Since the first Apostle of the Gentiles had confronted the subtle Paganism of Athens, on the hill of Mars, none of those who walked in his steps ever stood out in more glorious relief than Patrick, surrounded by Pagan Princes, and a Pagan Priesthood, on the hill of Tara.

The defence of the fire he had kindled, unlicensed, soon extended into wider issues. Who were the gods against whom he had offended? Were they true gods or false? They had their priests: could they maintain the divinity of such gods, by argument, or by miracle? For his God, he, though unworthy, was ready to answer, yea, right ready to die. His God had become man, and had died for man. His name alone was sufficient to heal all diseases; to raise the very dead to life. Such, we learn from the old biographers, was the line of Patrick's argument. This sermon ushered in a controversy. The king's guests, who had come to feast and rejoice, remained to listen and to meditate. With the impetuosity of the national character

--with all its passion for debate--they rushed into this new conflict, some on one side, some on the other. The daughters of the king and many others--the Arch-Druid himself--became convinced and were baptized. The missionaries obtained powerful protectors, and the king assigned to Patrick the pleasant fort of Trim, as a present residence. From that convenient distance, he could readily return at any moment, to converse with the king's guests and the members of his household.

The Druidical superstition never recovered the blow it received that day at Tara. The conversion of the Arch-Druid and the Princesses, was, of itself, their knell of doom. Yet they held their ground during the remainder of this reign--twenty-five years longer (A.D. 458). The king himself never became a Christian, though he tolerated the missionaries, and deferred more and more every year to the Christian party. He sanctioned an expurgated code of the laws, prepared under the direction of Patrick, from which every positive element of Paganism was rigidly excluded. He saw, unopposed, the chief idol of his race, overthrown on "the Plain of Prostration," at Sletty. Yet withal he never consented to be baptized; and only two years before his decease, we find him swearing to a treaty, in the old Pagan form--"by the Sun, and the Wind, and all the Elements." The party of the Druids at first sought to stay the progress of Christianity by violence, and even attempted, more than once, to assassinate Patrick. Finding these means ineffectual they tried ridicule and satire. In this they were for some time seconded by the Bards, men warmly attached to their goddess of song and their lives of self-indulgence. All in vain. The day of the idols was fast verging into everlasting night in Erin. Patrick and his disciples were advancing from conquest to conquest. Armagh and Cashel came in the wake of Tara, and Cruachan was soon to follow. Driven from the high places, the obdurate Priests of Bel took refuge in the depths of the forest and in the islands of the sea, wherein the Christian anchorites of the next age were to replace them. The social revolution proceeded, but all that was tolerable in the old state of things, Patrick carefully engrafted with the new. He allowed much for the habits and traditions of the people, and so made the transition as easy, from darkness into the light, as Nature makes the transition from night to morning. He seven times visited in person every mission in the kingdom, performing the six first "circuits" on foot, but the seventh, on account of his extreme age, he was borne in a chariot. The pious munificence of the successors of Leary, had surrounded him with a household of princely proportions. Twenty-four persons, mostly ecclesiastics, were chosen for this purpose: a bell-ringer, a psalmist, a cook, a brewer, a chamberlain, three smiths, three artificers, and three embroiderers are reckoned of the number. These last must be considered as employed in furnishing the interior of the new churches. A scribe, a shepherd to guard his flocks, and a charioteer are also mentioned, and their proper names given. How different this following from the little boat's crew, he had left

waiting tidings from Tara, in such painful apprehension, at the mouth of the Boyne, in 432. Apostolic zeal, and unrelaxed discipline had wrought these wonders, during a lifetime prolonged far beyond the ordinary age of man.

The fifth century was drawing to a close, and the days of Patrick were numbered. Pharamond and the Franks had sway on the Netherlands; Hengist and the Saxons on South Britain; Clovis had led his countrymen across the Rhine into Gaul; the Vandals had established themselves in Spain and North Africa; the Ostrogoths were supreme in Italy. The empire of barbarism had succeeded to the empire of Polytheism; dense darkness covered the semi-Christian countries of the old Roman empire, but happily daylight still lingered in the West. Patrick, in good season, had done his work. And as sometimes, God seems to bring round His ends, contrary to the natural order of things, so the spiritual sun of Europe was now destined to rise in the West, and return on its light-bearing errand towards the East, dispelling its path, Saxon, Frankish, and German darkness, until at length it reflected back on Rome herself, the light derived from Rome.

On the 17th of March, in the year of our Lord 493, Patrick breathed his last in the monastery of Saul, erected on the site of that barn where he had first said Mass. He was buried with national honours in the Church of Armagh, to which he had given the Primacy over all the churches of Ireland; and such was the concourse of mourners, and the number of Masses offered for his eternal repose, that from the day of his death till the close of the year, the sun is poetically said never to have set--so brilliant and so continual was the glare of tapers and torches.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSTITUTION, AND HOW THE KINGS KEPT IT.

We have fortunately still existing the main provisions of that constitution which was prepared under the auspices of Saint Patrick, and which, though not immediately, nor simultaneously, was in the end accepted by all Erin as its supreme law. It is contained in a volume called "the Book of Rights," and in its printed form (the Dublin bilingual edition of 1847), fills some 250 octavo pages. This book may be said to contain the original institutes of Erin under her Celtic Kings: "the Brehon laws," (which have likewise been published), bear the same relation to "the Book of Rights," as the Statutes at large of England, or the United States, bear to the English Constitution in the one case, or to the collective Federal and State Constitutions in the other. Let us endeavour to comprehend what this ancient Irish Constitution was like, and how the Kings received it, at first.

There were, as we saw in the first chapter, beside the

existing four Provinces, whose names are familiar to every one, a fifth principality of Meath. Each of the Provinces was subdivided into chieftainries, of which there were at least double or treble as many as there are now counties. The connection between the chief and his Prince, or the Prince and his monarch, was not of the nature of feudal obedience; for the fee-simple of the soil was never supposed to be vested in the sovereign, nor was the King considered to be the fountain of all honour. The Irish system blended the aristocratic and democratic elements more largely than the monarchical. Everything proceeded by election, but all the candidates should be of noble blood. The Chiefs, Princes, and Monarchs, so selected, were bound together by certain customs and tributes, originally invented by the genius of the Druids, and afterwards adopted and enforced by the authority of the Bishops. The tributes were paid in kind, and consisted of cattle, horses, foreign-born slaves, hounds, oxen, scarlet mantles, coats of mail, chess-boards and chess-men, drinking cups, and other portable articles of value. The quantity in every case due from a King to his subordinate, or from a subordinate to his King--for the gifts and grants were often reciprocal--is precisely stated in every instance. Besides these rights, this constitution defines the "prerogatives" of the five Kings on their journeys through each other's territory, their accession to power, or when present in the General Assemblies of the Kingdom. It contains, besides, a very numerous array of "prohibitions"--acts which neither the Ard-Righ nor any other Potentate may lawfully do. Most of these have reference to old local Pagan ceremonies in which the Kings once bore a leading part, but which were now strictly prohibited; others are of inter-Provincial significance, and others, again, are rules of personal conduct. Among the prohibitions of the monarch the first is, that the sun must never rise on him in his bed at Tara; among his prerogatives he was entitled to banquet on the first of August, on the fish of the Boyne, fruit from the Isle of Man, cresses from the Brosna river, venison from Naas, and to drink the water of the well of Talla: in other words, he was entitled to eat on that day, of the produce, whether of earth or water, of the remotest bounds, as well as of the very heart of his mensal domain. The King of Leinster was "prohibited" from upholding the Pagan ceremonies within his province, or to encamp for more than a week in certain districts; but he was "privileged" to feast on the fruits of Almain, to drink the ale of Cullen, and to preside over the games of Carman, (Wexford.) His colleague of Munster was "prohibited" from encamping a whole week at Killarney or on the Suir, and from mustering a martial host on the Leinster border at Gowran; he was "privileged" to pass the six weeks of Lent at Cashel (in free quarters), to use fire and force in compelling tribute from north Leinster; and to obtain a supply of cattle from Connaught, at the time "of the singing of the cuckoo." The Connaught King had five other singular "prohibitions" imposed on him--evidently with reference to some old Pagan rites--and his "prerogatives" were hostages from Galway, the monopoly

of the chase in Mayo, free quarters in Murrisk, in the same neighbourhood, and to marshal his border-host at Athlone to confer with the tribes of Meath. The ruler of Ulster was also forbidden to indulge in such superstitious practices as observing omens of birds, or drinking of a certain fountain "between two darkneses;" his prerogatives were presiding at the games of Cooley, "with the assembly of the fleet;" the right of mustering his border army in the plains of Louth; free quarters in Armagh for three nights for his troops before setting out on an expedition; and to confine his hostages in Dunseverick, a strong fortress near the Giant's Causeway. Such were the principal checks imposed upon the individual caprice of Monarchs and Princes; the plain inference from all which is, that under the Constitution of Patrick, a Prince who clung to any remnant of ancient Paganism, might lawfully be refused those rents and dues which alone supported his dignity. In other words, disguised as it may be to us under ancient forms, "the Book of Rights" establishes Christianity as the law of the land. All national usages and customs, not conflicting with this supreme law, were recognized and sanctioned by it. The internal revenues in each particular Province were modelled upon the same general principle, with one memorable exception--the special tribute which Leinster paid to Munster--and which was the cause of more bloodshed than all other sources of domestic quarrel combined. The origin of this tax is surrounded with fable, but it appears to have arisen out of the reaction which took place, when Tuathal, "the Legitimate," was restored to the throne of his ancestors, after the successful revolt of the Belgic bondsmen. Leinster seems to have clung longest to the Belgic revolution, and to have submitted only after repeated defeats. Tuathal, therefore, imposed on that Province this heavy and degrading tax, compelling its Princes not only to render him and his successors immense herds of cattle, but also 150 male and female slaves, to do the menial offices about the palace of Tara. With a refinement of policy, as far-seeing as it was cruel, the proceeds of the tax were to be divided one-third to Ulster, one-third to Connaught, and the remainder between the Queen of the Monarch and the ruler of Munster. In this way all the other Provinces became interested in enforcing this invidious and oppressive enactment upon Leinster which, of course, was withheld whenever it could be refused with the smallest probability of success. Its resistance, and enforcement, especially by the kings of Munster, will be found a constant cause of civil war, even in Christian times.

The sceptre of Ireland, from her conversion to the time of Brian, was almost solely in the hands of the northern Hy-Nial, the same family as the O'Neills. All the kings of the sixth and seventh centuries were of that line. In the eighth century (from 709 to 742), the southern annalists style Cathal, King of Munster, Ard-Righ; in the ninth century (840 to 847), they give the same high title to Felim, King of Munster; and in the eleventh century Brian possessed that dignity for the twelve last

years of his life, (1002 to 1014). With these exceptions, the northern Hy-Nial, and their co-relatives of Meath, called the southern Hy-Nial, seem to have retained the sceptre exclusively in their own hands, during the five first Christian centuries. Yet on every occasion, the ancient forms of election, (or procuring the adhesion of the Princes), had to be gone through. Perfect unanimity, however, was not required; a majority equal to two-thirds seems to have sufficed. If the candidate had the North in his favour, and one Province of the South, he was considered entitled to take possession of Tara; if he were a Southern, he should be seconded either by Connaught or Ulster, before he could lawfully possess himself of the supreme power. The benediction of the Archbishop of Armagh, seems to have been necessary to confirm the choice of the Provincials. The monarchs, like the petty kings, were crowned or "made" on the summit of some lofty mound prepared for that purpose; an hereditary officer, appointed to that duty, presented him with a white wand perfectly straight, as an emblem of the purity and uprightness which should guide all his decisions, and, clothed with his royal robes, the new ruler descended among his people, and solemnly swore to protect their rights and to administer equal justice to all. This was the civil ceremony; the solemn blessing took place in a church, and is supposed to be the oldest form of coronation service observed anywhere in Christendom.

A ceremonial, not without dignity, regulated the gradations of honour, in the General Assemblies of Erin. The time of meeting was the great Pagan Feast of Samhain, the 1st of November. A feast of three days opened and closed the Assembly, and during its sittings, crimes of violence committed on those in attendance were punished with instant death. The monarch himself had no power to pardon any violator of this established law. The Chiefs of territories sat, each in an appointed seat, under his own shield; the seats being arranged by order of the Ollamh, or Recorder, whose duty it was to preserve the muster-roll, containing the names of all the living nobles. The Champions, or leaders of military bands, occupied a secondary position, each sitting under his own shield. Females and spectators of an inferior rank were excluded; the Christian clergy naturally stepped into the empty places of the Druids, and were placed immediately next the monarch.

We shall now briefly notice the principal acts of the first Christian kings, during the century immediately succeeding St. Patrick's death. Of OLLIOL, who succeeded Leary, we cannot say with certainty that he was a Christian. His successor, LEWY, son of Leary, we are expressly told was killed by lightning (A.D. 496), for "having violated the law of Patrick"--that is, probably, for having practised some of those Pagan rites forbidden to the monarchs by the revised constitution. His successor, MURKERTACH, son of Ere, was a professed Christian, though a bad one, since he died by the vengeance of a concubine named Sheen, (that is, storm), whom he had once put

away at the instance of his spiritual adviser, but whom he had not the courage--though brave as a lion in battle--to keep away (A.D. 527). TUATHAL, "the Rough," succeeded and reigned for seven years, when he was assassinated by the tutor of DERMID, son of Kerbel, a rival whom he had driven into exile. DERMID immediately seized on the throne (A.D. 534), and for twenty eventful years bore sway over all Erin. He appears to have had quite as much of the old leaven of Paganism in his composition--at least in his youth and prime--as either Lewy or Leary. He kept Druids about his person, despised "the right of sanctuary" claimed by the Christian clergy, and observed, with all the ancient superstitious ceremonial, the national games at Tailteen. In his reign, the most remarkable event was the public curse pronounced on Tara, by a Saint whose sanctuary the reckless monarch had violated, in dragging a prisoner from the very horns of the altar, and putting him to death. For this offence--the crowning act of a series of aggressions on the immunities claimed by the clergy--the Saint, whose name was Ruadan, and the site of whose sanctuary is still known as Temple-Ruadan in Tipperary, proceeded to Tara, accompanied by his clergy, and, walking round the royal rath, solemnly excommunicated the monarch, and anathematized the place. The far-reaching consequences of this awful exercise of spiritual power are traceable for a thousand years through Irish history. No king after Dermid resided permanently upon the hill of Tara. Other royal houses there were in Meath--at Tailteen, at the hill of Usna, and on the margin of the beautiful Lough Ennell, near the present Castlepollard, and at one or other of these, after monarchs held occasional court; but those of the northern race made their habitual home in their own patrimony near Armagh, or on the celebrated hill of Aileach. The date of the malediction which left Tara desolate is the year of our Lord, 554. The end of this self-willed semi-Pagan (Dermid) was in unison with his life; he was slain in battle by Black Hugh, Prince of Ulster, two years after the desolation of Tara.

Four kings, all fierce competitors for the succession, reigned and fell, within ten years of the death of Dermid, and then we come to the really interesting and important reign of Hugh the Second, which lasted twenty-seven years (A.D. 566 to 593), and was marked by the establishment of the Independence of the Scoto-Irish Colony in North Britain, and by other noteworthy events. But these twenty-seven years deserve a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER V.

REIGN OF HUGH II.--THE IRISH COLONY IN SCOTLAND OBTAINS ITS INDEPENDENCE.

Twenty-seven years is a long reign, and the years of King-Hugh II. were marked with striking events. One

religious and one political occurrence, however, threw all others into the shade--the conversion of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (then called Alba or Albyn by the Gael, and Caledonia by the Latins), and the formal recognition, after an exciting controversy, of the independence of the Milesian colony in Scotland. These events follow each other in the order of time, and stand partly in the relation of cause and effect.

The first authentic Irish immigration into Scotland seems to have taken place about the year of our Lord 258. The pioneers crossed over from Antrim to Argyle, where the strait is less than twenty-five miles wide. Other adventurers followed at intervals, but it is a fact to be deplored, that no passages in our own, and in all other histories, have been so carelessly kept as the records of emigration. The movements of rude masses of men, the first founders of states and cities, are generally lost in obscurity, or misrepresented by patriotic zeal. Several successive settlements of the Irish in Caledonia can be faintly traced from the middle of the third till the beginning of the sixth century. About the year 503, they had succeeded in establishing a flourishing principality among the cliffs and glens of Argyle. The limits of their first territory cannot be exactly laid down; but it soon spread north into Rosshire, and east into the present county of Perth. It was a land of stormy friths and fissured headlands, of deep defiles and snowy summits. "'Tis a far cry to Lough Awe," is still a lowland proverb, and Lough Awe was in the very heart of that old Irish settlement.

The earliest emigrants to Argyle were Pagans, while the latter were Christians, and were accompanied by priests, and a bishop, Kieran, the son of the carpenter, whom, from his youthful piety and holy life, as well as from the occupation followed by his father, is sometimes fancifully compared to our Lord and Saviour himself. Parishes in Cantyre, in Islay, and in Carrick, still bear the name of St. Kieran as patron. But no systematic attempt--none at least of historic memory--was made to convert the remoter Gael and the other races then inhabiting Alba--the Picts, Britons, and Scandinavians, until the year of our era, 565, Columba or COLUMBKILL, a Bishop of the royal race of Nial, undertook that task, on a scale commensurate with its magnitude. This celebrated man has always ranked with Saint Patrick and Saint Bridget as the most glorious triad of the Irish Calendar. He was, at the time he left Ireland, in the prime of life--his 44th year. Twelve companions, the apostolic number, accompanied him on his voyage. For thirty-four years he was the legislator and captain of Christianity in those northern regions. The King of the Picts received baptism at his hands; the Kings of the Scottish colony, his kinsmen, received the crown from him on their accession. The islet of I., or Iona, as presented to him by one of these princes. Here he and his companions built with their own hands their parent-house, and from this Hebridean rock in after times was shaped the destinies, spiritual

and temporal, of many tribes and kingdoms.

The growth of Iona was as the growth of the grain of mustard seed mentioned in the Gospel, even during the life of its founder. Formed by his teaching and example, there went out from it apostles to Iceland, to the Orkneys, to Northumbria, to Man, and to South Britain. A hundred monasteries in Ireland looked to that exiled saint as their patriarch. His rule of monastic life, adopted either from the far East, from the recluses of the Thebaid, or from his great contemporary, Saint Benedict, was sought for by Chiefs, Bards, and converted Druids. Clients, seeking direction from his wisdom, or protection through his power, were constantly arriving and departing from his sacred isle. His days were divided between manual labour and the study and transcribing of the Sacred Scriptures. He and his disciples, says the Venerable Bede, in whose age Iona still flourished, "neither thought of nor loved anything in _this_ world." Some writers have represented Columbkil's _Culdees_, (which in English means simply "Servants of God,") as a married clergy; so far is this from the truth, that we now know, no woman was allowed to land on the island, nor even a cow to be kept there, for, said the holy Bishop, "wherever there is a cow there will be a woman, and wherever there is a woman there will be mischief."

In the reign of King Hugh, three domestic questions arose of great importance; one was the refusal of the Prince of Ossory to pay tribute to the Monarch; the other, the proposed extinction of the Bardic Order, and the third, the attempt to tax the Argyle Colony. The question between Ossory and Tara, we may pass over as of obsolete interest, but the other two deserve fuller mention:

The Bards--who were the Editors, Professors, Registrars and Record-keepers--the makers and masters of public opinion in those days, had reached in this reign a number exceeding 1,200 in Meath and Ulster alone. They claimed all the old privileges of free quarters on their travels and freeholdings at home, which were freely granted to their order when it was in its infancy. Those chieftains who refused them anything, however extravagant, they lampooned and libelled, exciting their own people and other princes against them. Such was their audacity, that some of them are said to have demanded from King Hugh the royal brooch, one of the most highly prized heirlooms of the reigning family. Twice in the early part of this reign they had been driven from the royal residence, and obliged to take refuge in the little principality of Ulidia (or Down); the third time the monarch had sworn to expel them utterly from the kingdom. In Columbkil, however, they were destined to find a most powerful mediator, both from his general sympathy with the Order, being himself no mean poet, and from the fact that the then Arch-Poet, or chief of the order, Dallan Forgaill, was one of his own pupils.

To settle this vexed question of the Bards, as well as

to obtain the sanction of the estates to the taxation of Argyle, King Hugh called a General Assembly in the year 590. The place of meeting was no longer the interdicted Tara, but for the monarch's convenience a site farther north was chosen--the hill of Drom-Keth, in the present county of Deny. Here came in rival state and splendour the Princes of the four Provinces, and other principal chieftains. The dignitaries of the Church also attended, and an occasional Druid was perhaps to be seen in the train of some unconverted Prince. The pretensions of the mother-country to impose a tax upon her Colony, were sustained by the profound learning and venerable name of St. Colman, Bishop of Dromore, one of the first men of his Order.

When Columbkil "heard of the calling together of that General Assembly," and of the questions to be there decided, he resolved to attend, notwithstanding the stern vow of his earlier life, never to look on Irish soil again. Under a scruple of this kind, he is said to have remained blindfold, from his arrival in his fatherland, till his return to Iona. He was accompanied by an imposing train of attendants; by Aidan, Prince of Argyle, so deeply interested in the issue, and a suite of over one hundred persons, twenty of them Abbots or Bishops. Columbkil spoke for his companions; for already, as in Bede's time, the Abbots of Iona exercised over all the clergy north of the Humber, but still more directly north of the Tweed, a species of supremacy similar to that which the successors of St. Benedict and St. Bernard exercised, in turn, over Prelates and Princes on the European Continent.

When the Assembly was opened the holy Bishop of Dromore stated the arguments in favour of Colonial taxation with learning and effect. Hugh himself impeached the Bards for their licentious and lawless lives. Columbkil defended both interests, and, by combining both, probably strengthened the friends of each. It is certain that he carried the Assembly with him, both against the monarch and those of the resident clergy, who had selected Colman as their spokesman. The Bardic Order was spared. The doctors, or master-singers among them, were prohibited from wandering from place to place; they were assigned residence with the chiefs and princes; their loose attendants were turned over to honest pursuits, and thus a great danger was averted, and one of the most essential of the Celtic institutions being reformed and regulated, was preserved. Scotland and Ireland have good reason to be grateful to the founder of Iona, for the interposition that preserved to us the music, which is now admitted to be one of the most precious inheritances of both countries.

The proposed taxation Columbkil strenuously and successfully resisted. Up to this time, the colonists had been bound only to furnish a contingent force, by land and sea, when the King of Ireland went to war, and to make them an annual present called "chief-rent."

From the Book of Rights we learn that (at least at the

time the existing transcript was made) the Scottish Princes paid out of Alba, seven shields, seven steeds, seven bondswomen, seven bondsmen, and seven hounds all of the same breed. But the "chief-rent," or "eric for kindly blood," did not suffice in the year 590 to satisfy King Hugh. The colony had grown great, and, like some modern monarchs, he proposed to make it pay for its success. Columbkille, though a native of Ireland, and a prince of its reigning house, was by choice a resident of Caledonia, and he stood true to his adopted country. The Irish King refused to continue the connection on the old conditions, and declared his intention to visit Alba himself to enforce the tribute due; Columbkille, rising in the Assembly, declared the Albanians "for ever free from the yoke," and this, adds an old historian, "turned out to be the fact." From the whole controversy we may conclude that Scotland never paid political tribute to Ireland; that their relation was that rather of allies, than of sovereign and vassal; that it resembled more the homage Carthage paid to Tyre, and Syracuse to Corinth, than any modern form of colonial dependence; that a federal connection existed by which, in time of war, the Scots of Argyle, and those of Hibernia, were mutually bound to aid, assist, and defend each other. And this natural and only connection, founded in the blood of both nations, sanctioned by their early saints, confirmed by frequent intermarriage, by a common language and literature, and by hostility to common enemies, the Saxons, Danes, and Normans, grew into a political bond of unusual strength, and was cherished with affection by both nations, long ages after the magnates assembled at Drom-Keth had disappeared in the tombs of their fathers.

The only unsettled question which remained after the Assembly at Drom-Keth related to the Prince of Ossory. Five years afterwards (A.D. 595), King Hugh fell in an attempt to collect the special tribute from all Leinster, of which we have already heard something, and shall, by and by, hear more. He was an able and energetic ruler, and we may be sure "did not let the sun rise on him in his bed at Tara," or anywhere else. In his time great internal changes were taking place in the state of society. The ecclesiastical order had become more powerful than any other in the state. The Bardic Order, thrice proscribed, were finally subjected to the laws, over which they had at one time insolently domineered. Ireland's only colony --unless we except the immature settlement in the Isle of Man, under Cormac Longbeard--was declared independent of the parent country, through the moral influence of its illustrious Apostle, whose name many of its kings and nobles were of old proud to bear--_Mal-Colm_, meaning "servant of Columbkille," or Columbkille. But the memory of the sainted statesman who decreed the separation of the two populations, so far as claims to taxation could be preferred, preserved, for ages, the better and far more profitable alliance, of an ancient friendship, unbroken by a single national quarrel during a thousand years.

A few words more on the death and character of this

celebrated man, whom we are now to part with at the close of the sixth, as we parted from Patrick at the close of the fifth century. His day of departure came in 596. Death found him at the ripe age of almost fourscore, _stylus_ in hand, toiling cheerfully over the vellum page. It was the last night of the week when the presentiment of his end came strongly upon him. "This day," he said to his disciple and successor, Dermid, "is called the day of rest, and such it will be for me, for it will finish my labours." Laying down the manuscript, he added, "let Baithen finish the rest." Just after Matins, on the Sunday morning, he peacefully passed away from the midst of his brethren.

Of his tenderness, as well as energy of character, tradition, and his biographers have recorded many instances. Among others, his habit of ascending an eminence every evening at sunset, to look over towards the coast of his native land. The spot is called by the islanders to this day, "the place of the back turned upon Ireland." The fishermen of the Hebrides long believed they could see their saint flitting over the waves after every new storm, counting the islands to see if any of them had foundered. It must have been a loveable character of which such tales could be told and cherished from generation to generation.

Both Education and Nature had well fitted Columbkil to the great task of adding another realm to the empire of Christendom. His princely birth gave him power over his own proud kindred; his golden eloquence and glowing verse--the fragments of which still move and delight the Gaelic scholar--gave him fame and weight in the Christian schools which had suddenly sprung up in every glen and island. As prince, he stood on equal terms with princes; as poet, he was affiliated to that all-powerful Bardic Order, before whose awful anger kings trembled, and warriors succumbed in superstitious dread. A spotless soul, a disciplined body, an indomitable energy, an industry that never wearied, a courage that never blanched, a sweetness and courtesy that won all hearts, a tenderness for others that contrasted strongly with his rigour towards himself--these were the secrets of the success of this eminent missionary--these were the miracles by which he accomplished the conversion of so many barbarous tribes and Pagan Princes.

CHAPTER VI.

KINGS OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY.

THE five years of the sixth century, which remained after the death of Hugh II., were filled by Hugh III., son of Dermid, the semi-Pagan. Hugh IV. succeeded (A.D. 599) and reigned for several years; two other kings, of small account, reigned seven years; Donald II. (A.D. 624)

reigned sixteen years; Connall and Kellach, brothers, (A.D. 640) reigned jointly sixteen years; they were succeeded (A.D. 656) by Dermid and Blathmac, brothers, who reigned jointly seven years; Shanasagh, son of the former, reigned six years; Kenfala, four; Finnacta, "the hospitable," twenty years, and Loingsech (A.D. 693) eight years.

Throughout this century the power of the Church was constantly on the increase, and is visible in many important changes. The last armed struggle of Druidism, and the only invasion of Ireland by the Anglo-Saxons, are also events of the civil history of the seventh century.

The reign, of Donald II. is notable for the passing away of most of those saintly men, the second generation of Irish abbots and bishops; for the foundation of the celebrated school of Lismore on the Munster Blackwater; and the battle of Moira, in the present county of Down. Of the school and the saints we shall speak hereafter; the battle deserves more immediate mention.

The cause of the battle was the pretension of the petty Prince of Ulidia, which comprised little more than the present county of Down, to be recognised as Prince of all Ulster. Now the Hy-Nial family, not only had long given monarchs to all Ireland, but had also the lion's share of their own Province, and King Donald as their head could not permit their ascendancy to be disputed. The ancestors of the present pretender, Congal, surnamed "the squint-eyed," had twice received and cherished the licentious Bards when under the ban of Tara, and his popularity with that still powerful order was one prop of his ambition. It is pretty clear also that the last rally of Druidism against Christianity took place behind his banner, on the plain of Moira. It was the year 637, and preparations had long gone on on both sides for a final trial of strength. Congal had recruited numerous bands of Saxons, Britons, Picts and Argyle Scots, who poured into the Larbours of Down for months, and were marshalled on the banks of the Lagan, to sustain his cause. The Poets of succeeding ages have dwelt much in detail on the occurrences of this memorable day. It was what might strictly be called a pitched battle, time and place being fixed by mutual agreement. King Donald was accompanied by his Bard, who described to him, as they came in sight, the several standards of Congal's host, and who served under them. Conspicuous above all, the ancient banner of the Red Branch Knights--"a yellow lion wrought on green satin"--floated over Congal's host. On the other side the monarch commanded in person, accompanied by his kinsmen, the sons of Hugh III. The red hand of Tirowen, the cross of Tirconnell, the eagle and lion of Innishowen, the axes of Fanad, were in his ranks, ranged closely round his own standard. The cause of the Constitution and the Church prevailed, and Druidism mourned its last hope extinguished on the plains of Moira, in the death of Congal, and the defeat of his vast army.

King Donald returned in triumph to celebrate his victory at Emania and to receive the benediction of the Church at Armagh.

The sons of Hugh III., Dermid and Blathmac, zealous and pious Christian princes, survived the field of Moira and other days of danger, and finally attained the supreme power--A.D. 656. Like the two kings of Sparta they reigned jointly, dividing between them the labours and cares of State. In their reign, that terrible scourge, called in Irish, "the yellow plague," after ravaging great part of Britain, broke out with undiminished virulence in Erin (A.D. 664). To heighten the awful sense of inevitable doom, an eclipse of the sun occurred concurrently with the appearance of the pestilence on the first Sunday in May. It was the season when the ancient sun-god had been accustomed to receive his annual oblations, and we can well believe that those whose hearts still trembled at the name of Bel, must have connected the eclipse and the plague with the revolution in the national worship, and the overthrow of the ancient gods on that "plain of prostration," where they had so long received the homage of an entire people. Among the victims of this fearful visitation--which, like the modern cholera, swept through all ranks and classes of society, and returned in the same track for several successive seasons--were very many of those venerated men, the third and fourth generation of the Abbots and Bishops. The Munster King, and many of the chieftain class shared the common lot. Lastly, the royal brothers fell themselves victims to the epidemic, which so sadly signalizes their reign.

The only conflicts that occurred on Irish soil with a Pictish or an Anglo-Saxon force--if we except those who formed a contingent of Congal's army at Moira--occurred in the time of the hospitable Finnacta. The Pictish force, with their leaders, were totally defeated at Rathmore, in Antrim (A.D. 680), but the Anglo-Saxon expedition (A.D. 684) seems not to have been either expected or guarded against. As leading to the mention of other interesting events, we must set this inroad clearly before the reader.

The Saxons had now been for four centuries in Britain, the older inhabitants of which--Celts like the Gauls and Irish--they had cruelly harassed, just as the Milesian Irish oppressed their Belgic predecessors, and as the Normans, in turn, will be found oppressing both Celt and Saxon in England and Ireland. Britain had been divided by the Saxon leaders into eight separate kingdoms, the people and princes of several of which were converted to Christianity in the fifth, sixth, and seventh century, though some of them did not receive the Gospel before the beginning of the eighth. The Saxons of Kent and the Southern Kingdoms generally were converted by missionaries from France or Rome, or native preachers of the first or second Christian generation; those of Northumbria recognise as their Apostles St. Aidan and St. Cuthbert, two Fathers

from Iona. The Kingdom of Northumbria, as the name implies, embraced nearly all the country from the Humber to the Pictish border. York was its capital, and the seat of its ecclesiastical primacy, where, at the time we speak of, the illustrious Wilfrid was maintaining, with a wilful and unscrupulous king, a struggle not unlike that which Becket maintained with Henry II. This Prince, Egfrid by name, was constantly engaged in wars with his Saxon cotemporaries, or the Picts and Scots. In the summer of 683 he sent an expedition under the command of Beort, one of his earls, to ravage the coast of Leinster. Beort landed probably in the Boyne, and swept over the rich plain of Meath with fire and sword, burning churches, driving off herds and flocks, and slaughtering the clergy and the husbandmen. The piety of an after age saw in the retribution which overtook Egfrid the following year, when he was slain by the Picts and Scots, the judgment of Heaven, avenging the unprovoked wrongs of the Irish. His Scottish conquerors, returning good for evil, carried his body to Iona, where it was interred with all due honour.

Iona was now in the zenith of its glory. The barren rock, about three miles in length, was covered with monastic buildings, and its cemetery was already adorned with the tombs of saints and kings. Five successors of Columbkille slept in peace around their holy Founder, and a sixth, equal in learning and sanctity to any who preceded him, received the remains of King Egfrid from the hands of his conquerors. This was Abbot Adamnan, to whom Ireland and Scotland are equally indebted for his admirable writings, and who might almost dispute with Bede himself, the title of Father of British History. Adamnan regarded the fate of Egfrid, we may be sure, in the light of a judgment on him for his misdeeds, as Bede and British Christians very generally did. He learned, too, that there were in Northumbria several Christian captives, carried off in Beort's expedition and probably sold into slavery. Now every missionary that ever went out from Iona, had taught that to reduce Christians to slavery was wholly inconsistent with a belief in the doctrines of the Gospel. St. Aidan, the Apostle of Northumbria, had refused the late Egfrid's father absolution, on one occasion, until he solemnly promised to restore their freedom to certain captives of this description. In the same spirit Adamnan voluntarily undertook a journey to York, where Aldfrid (a Prince educated in Ireland, and whose "Itinerary" of Ireland we still have) now reigned. The Abbot of Iona succeeded in his humane mission, and crossing over to his native land, he restored sixty of the captives to their homes and kindred. While the liberated exiles rejoiced on the plain of Meath, the tent of the Abbot of Iona was pitched on the rath of Tara--a fact which would seem to indicate that already, in little more than a century since the interdict had fallen on it, the edifices which made so fine a show in the days of Patrick were ruined and uninhabitable. Either at Tara, or some other of the royal residences, Adamnan on this visit procured the passing of a law, (A.D. 684,) forbidding

women to accompany an army to battle, or to engage personally in the conflict. The mild maternal genius of Christianity is faithfully exhibited in such a law, which consummates the glory of the worthy successor of Columbkil. It is curious here to observe that it was not until another hundred years had past--not till the beginning of the ninth century--that the clergy were "exempt" from military service. So slow and patient is the process by which Christianity infuses itself into the social life of a converted people!

The long reign of FINNACTA, the hospitable, who may, for his many other virtues, be called also the pious, was rendered farther remarkable in the annals of the country by the formal abandonment of the special tax, so long levied upon, and so long and desperately resisted by, the men of Leinster. The all-powerful intercessor in this case was Saint Moling, of the royal house of Leinster, and Bishop of Fernmore (now Ferns). In the early part of his reign Finnacta seems not to have been disposed to collect this invidious tax by force; but, yielding to other motives, he afterwards took a different view of his duty, and marched into Leinster to compel its payment. Here the holy Prelate of Ferns met him, and related a Vision in which he had been instructed to demand the abolition of the impost. The abolition, he contended, should not be simply a suspension, but final and for ever. The tribute was, at this period, enormous; 15,000 head of cattle annually. The decision must have been made about the time that Abbot Adamnan was in Ireland, (A.D. 684,) and that illustrious personage is said to have been opposed to the abolition. Abolished it was, and though its re-enactment was often attempted, the authority of Saint Moling's solemn settlement, prevented it from being re-enforced for any length of time, except as a political or military infliction.

Finnacta fell in battle in the 20th year of his long and glorious reign; and is commemorated as a saint in the Irish calendar. St. Moling survived him three years, and St. Adamnan, so intimately connected with his reign, ten years. The latter revisited Ireland in 697, under the short reign of Loingsech, and concerned himself chiefly in endeavouring to induce his countrymen to adopt the Roman rule, as to the tonsure, and the celebration of Easter. On this occasion there was an important Synod of the Clergy, under the presidency of Flan, Archbishop of Armagh, held at Tara. Nothing could be more natural than such an assembly in such a place, at such a period. In every recorded instance the power of the clergy had been omnipotent in politics for above a century. St. Patrick had expurgated the old constitution; St. Ruadan's curse drove the kings from Tara; St. Columbkil had established the independence of Alba, and preserved the Bardic Order; St. Moling had abolished the Leinster tribute. If their power was irresistible in the sixth and especially in the seventh centuries, we must do these celebrated Abbots and Bishops the justice to remember that it was always exercised against the oppression of the weak by the

strong, to mitigate the horrors of war, to uphold the right of sanctuary (the _Habeus Corpus_ of that rude age), and for the maintenance and spread of sound Christian principles.

CHAPTER VII.

KINGS OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY.

The kings of the eighth century are Congal II. (surnamed Kenmare), who reigned seven years; Feargal, who reigned ten years; Forgatah, Kenneth, Flaherty, respectively one, four, and seven years; Hugh V. (surnamed Allan), nine years; Donald III., who reigned (A.D. 739-759) twenty years; Nial II. (surnamed Nial of the Showers), seven years; and Donogh I., who reigned thirty-one years, A.D. 766-797. The obituaries of these kings show that we have fallen on a comparatively peaceful age, since of the entire nine, but three perished in battle. One retired to Armagh and one to Iona, where both departed in the monastic habit; the others died either of sickness or old age.

Yet the peaceful character of this century is but comparative, for in the first quarter (A.D. 722), we have the terrible battle of Almain, between Leinster and the Monarch, in which 30,000 men were stated to have engaged, and 7,000 to have fallen. The Monarch who had double the number of the Leinster Prince, was routed and slain, _apropos_ of which we have a Bardic tale told, which almost transports one to the far East, the simple lives and awful privileges of the Hindoo Brahmins. It seems that some of King FEARGAL's army, in foraging for their fellows, drove off the only cow of a hermit, who lived in seclusion near a solitary little chapel called Killin. The enraged recluse, at the very moment the armies were about to engage, appeared between them, regardless of personal danger, denouncing ruin and death to the monarch's forces. And in this case, as in others, to be found in every history, the prophecy, no doubt, helped to produce its own fulfilment. The malediction of men dedicated to the service of God, has often routed hosts as gallant as were marshalled on the field of Almain.

FEARGAL'S two immediate successors met a similar fate --death in the field of battle--after very brief reigns, of which we have no great events to record.

FLAHERTY, the next who succeeded, after a vigorous reign of seven years, withdrew from the splendid cares of a crown, and passed the long remainder of his life--thirty years--in the habit of a monk at Armagh. The heavy burthen which he had cheerfully laid down, was taken up by a Prince, who combined the twofold character of poet and hero. HUGH V. (surnamed Allan), the son of FEARGAL, of whom we have just spoken, was the very opposite of his

father, in his veneration for the privileges of holy persons and places. His first military achievement was undertaken in vindication of the rights of those who were unable by arms to vindicate their own. Hugh Roin, Prince of the troublesome little principality of Ulidia (Down), though well stricken in years and old enough to know better, in one of his excursions had forcibly compelled the clergy of the country through which he passed to give him free quarters, contrary to the law everywhere existing. Congus, the Primate, jealous of the exemptions of his order, complained of this sacrilege in a poetic message addressed to Hugh Allan, who, as a Christian and a Prince, was bound to espouse his quarrels. He marched into the territory of the offender, defeated him in battle, cut off his head on the threshold of the Church of Faughard, and marched back again, his host chanting a war song composed by their leader.

In this reign died Saint Gerald of Mayo, an Anglo-Saxon Bishop, and apparently the head of a colony of his countrymen, from whom that district is ever since called "Mayo of the Saxons." The name, however, being a general one for strangers from Britain about that period, just as Dane became for foreigners from the Baltic in the next century, is supposed to be incorrectly applied: the colony being, it is said, really from Wales, of old British stock, who had migrated rather than live under the yoke of their victorious Anglo-Saxon Kings. The descendants of these Welshmen are still to be traced, though intimately intermingled with the original Belgic and later Milesian settlers in Mayo, Sligo, and Galway--thus giving a peculiar character to that section of the country, easily distinguishable from all the rest.

Although Hugh Allan did not imitate his father's conduct towards ecclesiastics, he felt bound by all-ruling custom to avenge his father's death. In all ancient countries the kinsmen of a murdered man were both by law and custom the avengers of his blood. The members of the Greek _phratry_, of the Roman _fatria_, or _gens_, of the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon _guild_, and of the mediaeval sworn _commune_, were all solemnly bound to avenge the blood of any of their brethren, unlawfully slain. So that the repulsive repetition of reprisals, which so disgusts the modern reader in our old annals, is by no means a phenomenon peculiar to the Irish state of society. It was in the middle age and in early times common to all Europe, to Britain and Germany, as well as to Greece and Rome. It was, doubtless, under a sense of duty of this sort that Hugh V. led into Leinster a large army (A.D. 733), and the day of Ath-Senaid fully atoned for the day of Almain. Nine thousand of the men of Leinster were left on the field, including most of their chiefs; the victorious monarch losing a son, and other near kinsmen. Four years later, he himself fell in an obscure contest near Kells, in the plain of Meath. Some of his quartrains have come down to us, and they breathe a spirit at once religious and heroic--such as must have greatly endeared the Prince who possessed it to his companions in arms. We are not

surprised, therefore, to find his reign a favourite epoch with subsequent Bards and Storytellers.

The long and prosperous reign of Donald III. succeeded (A.D. 739 to 759). He is almost the only one of this series of Kings of whom it can be said that he commanded in no notable battle. The annals of his reign are chiefly filled with ordinary accidents, and the obits of the learned. But its literary and religious record abounds with bright names and great achievements, as we shall find when we come to consider the educational and missionary fruits of Christianity in the eighth century. While on a pilgrimage to Durrow, a famous Columbian foundation in Meath, and present King's County, Donald III. departed this life, and in Durrow, by his own desire, his body was interred.

Nial II. (surnamed of the Showers), son to FEARGAL and brother of the warrior-Bard, Hugh V., was next invested with the white wand of sovereignty. He was a prince less warlike and more pious than his elder brother. The soubriquet attached to his name is accounted for by a Bardic tale, which represents him as another Moses, at whose prayer food fell from heaven in time of famine. Whatever "showers" fell or wonders were wrought in his reign, it is certain that after enjoying the kingly office for seven years, Nial resigned, and retired to Iona, there to pass the remainder of his days in penance and meditation. Eight years he led the life of a monk in that sacred Isle, where his grave is one of those of "the three Irish Kings," still pointed out in the cemetery of the Kings. He is but one among several Princes, his cotemporaries, who had made the same election. We learn in this same century, that Cellach, son of the King of Connaught, died in Holy Orders, and that Bec, Prince of Ulidia, and Ardgall, son of a later King of Connaught, had taken the "crostaff" of the pilgrim, either for Iona or Armagh, or some more distant shrine. Pilgrimages to Rome and to Jerusalem seem to have been begun even before this time, as we may infer from St. Adamnan's work on the situation of the Holy Places, of which Bede gives an abstract.

The reign of Donogh I. is the longest and the last among the Kings of the eighth century (A.D. 776 to 797). The Kings of Ireland had now not only abandoned Tara, but one by one, the other royal residences in Meath as their usual place of abode. As a consequence a local sovereignty sprung up in the family of O'Melaghlin, a minor branch of the ruling race. This house developing its power so unexpectedly, and almost always certain to have the national forces under the command of a Patron Prince at their back, were soon involved in quarrels about boundaries, both with Leinster and Munster. King Donogh, at the outset of his reign, led his forces into both principalities, and without battle received their hostages. Giving hostages--generally the sons of the chiefs--was the usual form of ratifying any treaty. Generally also, the Bishop of the district, or its most distinguished ecclesiastic,

was called in as witness of the terms, and both parties were solemnly sworn on the relics of Saints--the Gospels of the Monasteries or Cathedrals--or the croziers of their venerated founders. The breach of such a treaty was considered "a violation of the relics of the saint," whose name had been invoked, and awful penalties were expected to follow so heinous a crime. The hostages were then carried to the residence of the King, to whom they were entrusted, and while the peace lasted, enjoyed a parole freedom, and every consideration due to their rank. If of tender age they were educated with the same care as the children of the household. But when war broke out their situation was always precarious, and sometimes dangerous. In a few instances they had even been put to death, but this was considered a violation of all the laws both of hospitality and chivalry; usually they were removed to some strong secluded fort, and carefully guarded as pledges to be employed, according to the chances and changes of the war. That Donogh preferred negotiation to war, we may infer by his course towards Leinster and Munster, in the beginning of his reign, and his "kingly parlee" at a later period (A.D. 783) with FIACHNA, of Ulidia, son of that over-exacting Hugh Roin, whose head was taken from his shoulders at the Church door of Faughard. This "kingly parlee" was held on an island off the Methian shore, called afterwards "King's Island." But little good came of it. Both parties still held their own views, so that the satirical poets asked what was the use of the island, when one party "would not come upon the land, nor the other upon the sea?" However, we needs must agree with King Donogh, that war is the last resort, and is only to be tried when all other means have failed.

Twice during this reign the whole island was stricken with panic, by extraordinary signs in the heavens, of huge serpents coiling themselves through the stars, of fiery bolts flying like shuttles from one side of the horizon to the other, or shooting downward directly to the earth. These atmospheric wonders were accompanied by thunder and lightning so loud and so prolonged that men hid themselves for fear in the caverns of the earth. The fairs and markets were deserted by buyers and sellers; the fields were abandoned by the farmers; steeples were rent by lightning, and fell to the ground; the shingled roofs of churches caught fire and burned whole buildings. Shocks of earthquake were also felt, and round towers and cyclopean masonry were strewn in fragments upon the ground. These visitations first occurred in the second year of Donogh, and returned again in 783. When, in the next decade, the first Danish descent was made on the coast of Ulster (A.D. 794), these signs and wonders were superstitiously supposed to have been the precursors of that far more terrible and more protracted visitation.

The Danes at first attracted little notice, but in the last year of Donogh (A.D. 797) they returned in greater force, and swept rapidly along the coast of Meath; it was reserved for his successors of the following centuries

to face the full brunt of this new national danger.

But before encountering the fierce nations of the north, and the stormy period they occupy, let us cast back a loving glance over the world-famous schools and scholars of the last two centuries. Hitherto we have only spoken of certain saints, in connection with high affairs of state. We must now follow them to the college and the cloister, we must consider them as founders at home, and as missionaries abroad; otherwise how could we estimate all that is at stake for Erin and for Christendom, in the approaching combat with the devotees of Odin,--the deadly enemies of all Christian institutions?

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT THE IRISH SCHOOLS AND SAINTS DID IN THE THREE FIRST CHRISTIAN CENTURIES.

We have now arrived at the close of the third century, from the death of Saint Patrick, and find ourselves on the eve of a protracted struggle with the heathen warriors of Scandinavia; it is time, therefore, to look back on the interval we have passed, and see what changes have been wrought in the land, since its kings, instead of waiting to be attacked at home, had made the surrounding sea "foam with the oars" of their outgoing expeditions.

The most obvious change in the condition of the country is traceable in its constitution and laws, into every part of which, as was its wont from the beginning, the spirit of Christianity sought patiently to infuse itself. We have already spoken of the expurgation of the constitution, which prohibited the observance of Pagan rites to the kings, and imposed on them instead, certain social obligations. This was a first change suggested by Saint Patrick, and executed mainly by his disciple, Saint Benignus. We have seen the legislative success which attended the measures of Columbkille, Moling, and Adamnan; in other reforms of minor importance the paramount influence of the clerical order may be easily traced.

But it is in their relation as teachers of human and divine science that the Irish Saints exercised their greatest power, not only over their own countrymen, but over a considerable part of Europe. The intellectual leadership of western Europe--the glorious ambition of the greatest nations--has been in turn obtained by Italy, France, Britain and Germany. From the middle of the sixth to the middle of the eighth century, it will hardly be disputed that that leadership devolved on Ireland. All the circumstances of the sixth century helped to confer it upon the newly converted western isle; the number of her schools, and the wisdom, energy, and zeal of her masters, retained for her the proud distinction for two hundred years. And when it passed away from her grasp,

she might still console herself with the grateful reflection that the power she had founded and exercised, was divided among British and continental schools, which her own _alumni_ had largely contributed to form and establish. In the northern Province, the schools most frequented were those of Armagh, and of Bangor, on Belfast lough; in Meath, the school of Clonard, and that of Clomnacnoise, (near Athlone); in Leinster, the school of Taghmon (_Ta-mun_), and Beg-Erin, the former near the banks of the Slaney, the latter in Wexford harbour; in Munster, the school of Lismore on the Blackwater, and of Mungret (now Limerick), on the Shannon; in Connaught, the school of "Mayo of the Saxons," and the schools of the Isles of Arran. These seats of learning were almost all erected on the banks of rivers, in situations easy of access, to the native or foreign student; a circumstance which proved most disastrous to them when the sea kings of the north began to find their way to the shores of the island. They derived their maintenance--not from taxing their pupils --but in the first instance from public endowments. They were essentially free schools; not only free as to the lessons given, but the venerable Bede tells us they supplied free bed and board and books to those who resorted to them from abroad. The Prince and the Clansmen of every principality in which a school was situated, endowed it with a certain share--often an ample one--of the common land of the clan. Exclusive rights of fishery, and exclusive mill-privileges seem also to have been granted. As to timber for building purposes and for fuel, it was to be had for carrying and cutting. The right of quarry went with the soil, wherever building stone was found. In addition to these means of sustenance, a portion of the collegiate clergy appeared to have discharged missionary duty, and received offerings of the produce of the land. We hear of periodical _quests_ or collections made for the sustenance of these institutions, wherein the learned Lectors and Doctors, no doubt, pleaded their claims to popular favour, with irresistible eloquence. Individuals, anxious to promote the spread of religion and of science, endowed particular institutions out of their personal means; Princes, Bishops, and pious ladies, contributed to enlarge the bounds and increase the income of their favourite foundations, until a generous emulation seems to have seized on all the great families as well as on the different Provinces, as to which could boast the most largely attended schools, and the greatest number of distinguished scholars. The love of the _alma mater_ --that college patriotism which is so sure a sign of the noble-minded scholar--never received more striking illustration than among the graduates of those schools. Columbkille, in his new home among the Hebrides, invokes blessings on blessings, on "the angels" with whom it was once his happiness to walk in Arran, and Columbanus, beyond the Alps, remembers with pride the school of Bangor--the very name of which inspires him with poetic rapture.

The buildings, in which so many scholars were housed and taught, must have been extensive. Some of the schools we

have mentioned were, when most flourishing, frequented by one, two, three, and even, at some periods, as many as seven thousand scholars. Such a population was alone sufficient to form a large village; and if we add the requisite number of teachers and attendants, we will have an addition of at least one-third to the total. The buildings seem to have been separately of no great size, but were formed into streets, and even into something like wards. Armagh was divided into three parts--_trian-more_ (or the town proper), _trian-Patrick_, the Cathedral close, and _trian-Sassenagh_, the Latin quarter, the home of the foreign students. A tall sculptured Cross, dedicated to some favourite saint, stood at the bounds of these several wards, reminding the anxious student to invoke their spiritual intercession as he passed by. Early hours and vigilant night watches had to be exercised to prevent conflagrations in such village-seminaries, built almost wholly of wood, and roofed with reeds or shingles. A Cathedral, or an Abbey Church, a round tower, or a cell of some of the ascetic masters, would probably be the only stone structure within the limits. To the students, the evening star gave the signal for retirement, and the morning sun for awaking. When, at the sound of the early bell, two or three thousand of them poured into the silent streets and made their way towards the lighted Church, to join in the service of matins, mingling, as they went or returned, the tongues of the Gael, the Cimbri, the Pict, the Saxon, and the Frank, or hailing and answering each other in the universal language of the Roman Church, the angels in Heaven must have loved to contemplate the union of so much perseverance with so much piety.

The lives of the masters, not less than their lessons, were studied and observed by their pupils. At that time, as we gather from every authority, they were models of simplicity. One Bishop is found, erecting with his own hands, the _cashel_ or stone enclosure which surrounded his cell; another is labouring in the field, and gives his blessing to his visitors, standing between the stilts of the plough. Most ecclesiastics work occasionally either in wood, in bronze, in leather, or as scribes. The decorations of the Church, if not the entire structure, was the work of those who served at the altar. The tabernacle, the rood-screen, the ornamental font; the vellum on which the Psalms and Gospels were written; the ornamented case which contained the precious volume, were often of their making. The music which made the vale of Bangor resound as if inhabited by angels, was their composition; the hymns that accompanied it were their own. "It is a poor Church that has no music," is one of the oldest Irish proverbs; and the _Antiphonarium_ of Bangor, as well as that of Armagh, remains to show that such a want was not left unsupplied in the early Church.

All the contemporary schools were not of the same grade nor of equal reputation. We constantly find a scholar, after passing years in one place, transferring himself to another, and sometimes to a third and a fourth. Some

masters were, perhaps, more distinguished in human Science; others in Divinity. Columbkille studied in two or three different schools, and _visited_ others, perhaps as disputant or lecturer--a common custom in later years. Nor should we associate the idea of under-age with the students of whom we speak. Many of them, whether as teachers or learners, or combining both characters together, reached middle life before they ventured as instructors upon the world. Forty years is no uncommon age for the graduate of those days, when as yet the discovery was unmade, that all-sufficient wisdom comes with the first trace of down upon the chin of youth.

The range of studies seems to have included the greater part of the collegiate course of our own times. The language of the country, and the language of the Roman Church; the languages of Scripture--Greek and Hebrew; the logic of Aristotle, the writings of the Fathers, especially of Pope Gregory the Great--who appears to have been a favourite author with the Irish Church; the defective Physics of the period; Mathematics, Music, and Poetical composition went to complete the largest course. When we remember that all the books were manuscripts; that even paper had not yet been invented; that the best parchment was equal to so much beaten gold, and a perfect MS. was worth a king's ransom, we may better estimate the difficulties in the way of the scholar of the seventh century. Knowing these facts, we can very well credit that part of the story of St. Columbkille's banishment into Argyle, which turns on what might be called a copyright dispute, in which the monarch took the side of St. Finian of Clonard, (whose original MSS. his pupil seems to have copied without permission,) and the Clan-Conal stood up, of course, for their kinsman. This dispute is even said to have led to the affair of Culdrum, in Sligo, which is sometimes mentioned as "the battle of the book." The same tendency of the national character which overstocked the Bardic Order, becomes again visible in its Christian schools; and if we could form anything like an approximate census of the population, anterior to the northern invasions, we would find that the proportion of ecclesiastics was greater than has existed either before or since in any Christian country. The vast designs of missionary zeal drew off large bodies of those who had entered Holy Orders; still the numbers engaged as teachers in the great schools, as well as of those who passed their lives in solitude and contemplation, must have been out of all modern proportion to the lay inhabitants of the Island.

The most eminent Irish Saints of the fifth century were St. Ibar, St. Benignus and St. Kieran, of Ossory; in the sixth, St. Bendan, of Clonfert; St. Brendan, of Birr; St. Maccartin, of Clogher; St. Finian, of Moville; St. Finbar, St. Cannice, St. Finian, of Clonard; and St. Jarlath, of Tuam; in the seventh century, St. Fursey, St. Laserian, Bishop of Leighlin; St. Kieran, Abbot of Clonmacnoise; St. Comgall, Abbot of Bangor; St. Carthage, Abbot of Lismore; St. Colman, Bishop of Dromore; St. Moling,

Bishop of Ferns; St. Colman Ela, Abbot; St. Cummian, "the White;" St. Fintan, Abbot; St. Gall, Apostle of Switzerland; St. Fridolin, "the Traveller;" St. Columbanus, Apostle of Burgundy and Lombardy; St. Killian, Apostle of Franconia; St. Columbkille, Apostle of the Picts; St. Cormac, called "the Navigator;" St. Cuthbert; and St. Aidan, Apostle of Northumbria. In the eighth century the most illustrious names are St. Cataldus, Bishop of Tarentum; St. Adamnan, Abbot of Iona; St. Rumold, Apostle of Brabant; Clement and Albinus, "the Wisdom-seekers;" and St. Feargal or Virgilius, Bishop of Saltzburgh. Of holy women in the same ages, we have some account of St. Samthan, in the eighth century; of St. Bees, St. Dymphna and St. Syra, in the seventh century, and of St. Monina, St. Ita of Desies, and St. Bride, or Bridget, of Kildare, in the sixth. The number of conventual institutions for women established in those ages, is less easily ascertained than the number of monastic houses for men; but we may suppose them to have borne some proportion to each other, and to have even counted by hundreds. The veneration in which St. Bridget was held during her life, led many of her countrywomen to embrace the religious state, and no less than fourteen _Saints_, her namesakes, are recorded. It was the custom of those days to call all holy persons who died in the odour of sanctity, _Saints_, hence national or provincial tradition venerates very many names, which the reader may look for in vain, in the Roman calendar.

The intellectual labours of the Irish schools, besides the task of teaching such immense numbers of men of all nations on their own soil, and the missionary conquests to which I have barely alluded, were diversified by controversies, partly scientific and partly theological --such as the "Easter Controversy," the "Tonsure Controversy," and that maintained by "Feargal the Geometer," as to the existence of the Antipodes.

The discussion, as to the proper time of observing Easter, which had occupied the doctors of the Council of Nice in the fourth century, was raised in Ireland and in Britain early in the sixth, and complete uniformity was not established till far on in the eighth. It occupied the thoughts of several generations of the chief men of the Irish Church, and some of their arguments still fortunately survive, to attest their learning and tolerance, as well as their zeal. St. Patrick had introduced in the fifth century the computation of time then observed in Gaul, and to this custom many of the Irish doctors rigidly adhered, long after the rest of Christendom had agreed to adopt the Alexandrian computation. Great names were found on both sides of the controversy: Columbanus, Fintan, and Aidan, for adhering exactly to the rule of St. Patrick; Cummian, the White, Laserian and Adamnan, in favour of strict agreement with Rome and the East. Monks of the same Monastery and Bishops of the same Province maintained opposite opinions with equal ardour and mutual charity. It was a question of discipline, not a matter of faith; but it involved a still greater

question, whether national churches were to plead the inviolability of their local usages, even on points of discipline, against the sense and decision of the Universal Church.

In the year of our Lord 630, the Synod of Leighlin was held, under the shelter of the ridge of Leinster, and the presidency of St. Laserian. Both parties at length agreed to send deputies to Rome, as "children to their mother," to learn her decision. Three years later, that decision was made known, and the midland and southern dioceses at once adopted it. The northern churches, however, still held out, under the lead of Armagh and the influence of Iona, nor was it till a century later that this scandal of celebrating Easter on two different days in the same church was entirely removed. In justification of the Roman rule, St. Cummian, about the middle of the seventh century, wrote his famous epistle to Segenius, Abbot of Iona, of the ability and learning of which all modern writers from Archbishop Usher to Thomas Moore, speak in terms of the highest praise. It is one of the few remaining documents of that controversy. A less vital question of discipline arose about the tonsure. The Irish shaved the head in a semicircle from temple to temple, while the Latin usage was to shave the crown, leaving an external circle of hair to typify the crown of thorns. At the conference of Whitby (A.D. 664) this was one of the subjects of discussion between the clergy of Iona, and those who followed the Roman method--but it never assumed the importance of the Easter controversy.

In the following century an Irish Missionary, Virgilius, of Salzburg, (called by his countrymen "Feargal, the Geometer,") was maintaining in Germany against no less an adversary than St. Boniface, the sphericity of the earth and the existence of antipodes. His opponents endeavoured to represent him, or really believed him to hold, that there were other men, on our earth, for whom the Redeemer had not died; on this ground they appealed to Pope Zachary against him; but so little effect had this gross distortion of his true doctrine at Rome, when explanations were given, that Feargal was soon afterwards raised to the See of Salzburg, and subsequently canonized by Pope Gregory IX. In the ninth century we find an Irish geographer and astronomer of something like European reputation in Dicuil and Dungal, whose treatises and epistles have been given to the press. Like their compatriot, Columbanus, these accomplished men had passed their youth and early manhood in their own country, and to its schools are to be transferred the compliments paid to their acquirements by such competent judges as Muratori, Latronne, and Alexander von Humboldt. The origin of the scholastic philosophy--which pervaded Europe for nearly ten centuries--has been traced by the learned Mosheim to the same insular source. Whatever may now be thought of the defects or shortcomings of that system, it certainly was not unfavourable either to wisdom or eloquence, since among its professors may be reckoned the names of St. Thomas and St. Bernard.

We must turn away our eyes from the contemplation of those days in which were achieved for Ireland the title of the land of saints and doctors. Another era opens before us, and we can already discern the long ships of the north, their monstrous beaks turned towards the holy Isle, their sides hung with glittering shields and their benches thronged with fair-haired warriors, chanting as they advance the fierce war songs of their race. Instead of the monk's familiar voice on the river banks we are to hear the shouts of strange warriors from a far-off country; and for matin hymn and vesper song, we are to be beset through a long and stormy period, with sounds of strife and terror, and deadly conflict.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE DANISH INVASION.

Hugh VI., surnamed Ornie, succeeded to the throne vacant by the death of Donogh I. (A.D. 797), and reigned twenty-two years; Conor II. succeeded (A.D. 819), and reigned fourteen years; Nial III. (called from the place of his death Nial of Callan), reigned thirteen years; Malachy I. succeeded (A.D. 845), and reigned fifteen years; Hugh VII. succeeded and reigned sixteen years (dying A.D. 877); Flan (surnamed Flan of the Shannon) succeeded at the latter date, and reigned for thirty-eight years, far into the tenth century. Of these six kings, whose reigns average twenty years each, we may remark that not one died by violence, if we except perhaps Nial of Callan, drowned in the river of that name in a generous effort to save the life of one of his own servants. Though no former princes had ever encountered dangers equal to these--yet in no previous century was the person of the ruler so religiously respected. If this was evident in one or two instances only, it would be idle to lay much stress upon it; but when we find the same truth holding good of several successive reigns, it is not too much to attribute it to that wide diffusion of Christian morals, which we have pointed out as the characteristic of the two preceding centuries. The kings of this age owed their best protection to the purer ethics which overflowed from Armagh and Bangor and Lismore; and if we find hereafter the regicide habits of former times partially revived, it will only be after the new Paganism--the Paganism of interminable anti-Christian invasions--had recovered the land, and extinguished the beacon lights of the three first Christian centuries.

The enemy, who were now to assault the religious and civil institutions of the Irish, must be admitted to possess many great military qualities. They certainly

exhibit, in the very highest degree, the first of all military virtues--unconquerable courage. Let us say cheerfully, that history does not present in all its volumes a braver race of men than the Scandinavians of the ninth century. In most respects they closely resembled the Gothic tribes, who, whether starting into historic life on the Euxine or the Danube, or faintly heard of by the Latins from the far off Baltic, filled with constant alarm the Roman statesmen of the fourth century; nor can the invasions of what we may call the maritime Goths be better introduced to the reader than by a rapid sketch of the previous triumphs of their kindred tribes over the Roman Empire.

It was in the year of our Lord 378 that these long-dreaded barbarians defeated the Emperor Valens in the plain of Adrianople, and as early as 404--twenty-six years after their first victory in Eastern Europe--they had taken and burned great Rome herself. Again and again--in 410, in 455, and in 472--they captured and plundered the Imperial City. In the same century they had established themselves in Burgundy, in Spain, and in Northern Africa; in the next, another branch of the Gothic stock twice took Rome; and yet another founded the Lombard Kingdom in Northern Italy. With these Goths thus for a time masters of the Roman Empire, whose genius and temper has entered so deeply into all subsequent civilization, war was considered the only pursuit worthy of men. According to their ideas of human freedom, that sacred principle was supposed to exist only in force and by force; they had not the faintest conception, and at first received with unbounded scorn the Christian doctrine of the unity of the human race, the privileges and duties annexed to Christian baptism, and the sublime ideal of the Christian republic. But they were very far from being so cruel or so faithless as their enemies represented them; they were even better than they cared to represent themselves. And they had amongst them men of the highest capacity and energy, well worthy to be the founders of new nations. Alaric, Attila, and Genseric, were fierce and unmerciful it is true; but their acts are not all written in blood; they had their better moments and higher purposes in the intervals of battle; and the genius for civil government of the Gothic race was in the very beginning demonstrated by such rulers as Theodoric in Italy and Clovis in Gaul. The rear guard of this irresistible barbaric invasion was now about to break in upon Europe by a new route; instead of the long land marches by which they had formerly concentrated from the distant Baltic and from the tributaries of the Danube, on the capital of the Roman empire; instead of the tedious expeditions striking across the Continent, hewing their paths through dense forests, arrested by rapid rivers and difficult mountains, the last northern invaders of Europe had sufficiently advanced in the arts of shipbuilding and navigation to strike boldly into the open sea and commence their new conquests among the Christian islands of the West. The defenders of Roman power and Christian civilization in the fifth and sixth centuries, were arrayed against a warlike but

pastoral people encumbered with their women and children; the defenders of the same civilization, in the British Islands in the ninth and tenth centuries, were contending with kindred tribes, who had substituted maritime arts and habits for the pastoral arts and habits of the companions of Attila and Theodoric. The Gothic invasion of Roman territory in the earlier period was, with the single exception of the naval expeditions of Genseric from his new African Kingdom, a continental war; and notwithstanding the partiality of Genseric for his fleet, as an arm of offence and defence, his companions and successors abandoned the ocean as an uncongenial element. The only parallel for the new invasion, of which we are now to speak, is to be found in the history and fortunes of the Saxons of the fifth century, first the allies and afterwards the conquerors of part of Britain. But even their descendants in England had not kept pace, either in the arts of navigation or in thirst for adventure, with their distant relatives, who remained two centuries later among the friths and rocks of Scandinavia.

The first appearance of these invaders on the Irish and British coasts occurred in 794. Their first descent on Ireland was at Rathlin island, which may be called the outpost of Erin, towards the north; their second attempt (A.D. 797) was at a point much more likely to arouse attention--at Skerries, off the coast of Meath (now Dublin); in 803, and again in 806, they attacked and plundered the holy Iona; but it was not until a dozen years later they became really formidable. In 818 they landed at Howth; and the same year, and probably the same party, sacked the sacred edifices in the estuary of the Slaney, by them afterwards called Wexford; in 820 they plundered Cork, and in 824--most startling blow of all--they sacked and burned the schools of Bangor. The same year they revisited Iona; and put to death many of its inmates; destroyed Moville; received a severe check in Lecale, near Strangford lough (one of their favourite stations). Another party fared better in a land foray into Ossory, where they defeated those who endeavoured to arrest their progress, and carried off a rich booty. In 830 and 831, their ravages were equally felt in Leinster, in Meath, and in Ulster, and besides many prisoners of princely rank, they plundered the primatial city of Armagh for the first time, in the year 832. The names of their chief captains, at this period, are carefully preserved by those who had so many reasons to remember them; and we now begin to hear of the Ivars, Olafs, and Sitricks, strangely intermingled with the Hughs, Nials, Connors, and Felims, who contended with them in battle or in diplomacy. It was not till the middle of this century (A.D. 837) that they undertook to fortify Dublin, Limerick, and some other harbours which they had seized, to winter in Ireland, and declare their purpose to be the complete conquest of the country.

The earliest of these expeditions seem to have been annual visitations; and as the northern winter sets in about October, and the Baltic is seldom navigable before May,

the summer was the season of their depredations. Awaiting the breaking up of the ice, the intrepid adventurers assembled annually upon the islands in the Cattegat or on the coast of Norway, awaiting the favourable moment of departure. Here they beguiled their time between the heathen rites they rendered to their gods, their wild bacchanal festivals, and the equipment of their galleys. The largest ship built in Norway, and probably in the north, before the eleventh century, had 34 banks of oars. The largest class of vessel carried from 100 to 120 men. The great fleet which invaded Ireland in 837 counted 120 vessels, which, if of average size for such long voyages, would give a total force of some 6,000 men. As the whole population of Denmark, in the reign of Canute who died in 1035, is estimated at 800,000 souls, we may judge from their fleets how large a portion of the men were engaged in these piratical pursuits. The ships on which they prided themselves so highly were flat-bottomed craft, with little or no keel, the sides of wicker work, covered with strong hides. They were impelled either by sails or oars as the changes of the weather allowed; with favourable winds they often made the voyage in three days. As if to favour their designs, the north and north-west blast blows for a hundred days of the year over the sea they had to traverse. When land was made, in some safe estuary, their galleys were drawn up on shore, a convenient distance beyond highwater mark, where they formed a rude camp, watch-fires were lighted, sentinels set, and the fearless adventurers slept as soundly as if under their own roofs, in their own country. Their revels after victory, or on returning to their homes, were as boisterous as their lives. In food they looked more to quantity than quality, and one of their most determined prejudices against Christianity was that it did not sanction the eating of horse flesh. An exhilarating beer, made from heath, or from the spruce tree, was their principal beverage, and the recital of their own adventures, or the national songs of the Scalds, were their most cherished amusement. Many of the Vikings were themselves Scalds, and excelled, as might be expected, in the composition of war songs.

The Pagan belief of this formidable race was in harmony with all their thoughts and habits, and the exact opposite of Christianity. In the beginning of time, according to their tradition, there was neither heaven nor earth, but only universal chaos and a bottomless abyss, where dwelt Surtur in an element of unquenchable fire. The generation of their gods proceeded amid the darkness and void, from the union of heat and moisture, until Odin and the other children of Asa-Thor, or the Earth, slew Ymer, or the Evil One, and created the material universe out of his lifeless remains. These heroic conquerors also collected the sparks of eternal fire flying about in the abyss, and fixed them as stars in the firmament. In addition, they erected in the far East, Asgard, the City of the Gods; on the extreme shore of the ocean stood Utgard, the City of Nor and his giants, and the wars of these two cities, of their gods and giants, fill the first and most obscure ages of the Scandinavian legend. The human

race had as yet no existence until Odin created a man and woman, Ask and Embla, out of two pieces of wood (ash and elm), thrown upon the beach by the waves of the sea.

Of all the gods of Asgard, Odin was the first in place and power; from his throne he saw everything that happened on the earth; and lest anything should escape his knowledge, two ravens, Spirit and Memory, sat on his shoulders, and whispered in his ears whatever they had seen in their daily excursions round the world. Night was a divinity and the father of Day, who travelled alternately throughout space, with two celebrated steeds called Shining-mane and Frost-mane. Friga was the daughter and wife of Odin; the mother of Thor, the Mars, and of the beautiful Balder, the Apollo, of Asgard. The other gods were of inferior rank to these, and answered to the lesser divinities of Greece and Rome. Niord was the Neptune, and Frega, daughter of Niord, was the Venus of the North. Heimdall, the watchman of Asgard, whose duty it was to prevent the rebellious giants scaling by surprise the walls of the celestial city, dwelt under the end of the rainbow; his vision was so perfect he could discern objects 100 leagues distant, either by night or day, and his ear was so fine he could hear the wool growing on the sheep, and the grass springing in the meadows.

The hall of Odin, which had 540 gates, was the abode of heroes who had fought bravest in battle. Here they were fed with the lard of a wild boar, which became whole every night, though devoured every day, and drank endless cups of hydromel, drawn from the udder of an inexhaustible she-goat, and served out to them by the Nymphs, who had counted the slain, in cups which were made of the skulls of their enemies. When they were wearied of such enjoyments, the sprites of the Brave exercised themselves in single combat, hacked each other to pieces on the floor of Valhalla, resumed their former shape, and returned to their lard and their hydromel.

Believing firmly in this system--looking forward with undoubting faith to such an eternity--the Scandinavians were zealous to serve their gods according to their creed. Their rude hill altars gave way as they increased in numbers and wealth, to spacious temples at Upsala, Ledra, Trondheim, and other towns and ports. They had three great festivals, one at the beginning of February, in honour of Thor, one in Spring, in honour of Odin, and one in Summer, in honour of the fruitful daughter of Niord. The ordinary sacrifices were animals and birds; but every ninth year there was a great festival at Upsala, at which the kings and nobles were obliged to appear in person, and to make valuable offerings. Wizards and sorcerers, male and female, haunted the temples, and good and ill winds, length of life, and success in war, were spiritual commodities bought and sold. Ninety-nine human victims were offered at the great Upsala festival, and in all emergencies such sacrifices were considered most acceptable to the gods. Captives and slaves were at first selected; but, in many cases, princes did not spare their subjects,

nor fathers their own children. The power of a Priesthood, who could always enforce such a system, must have been unbounded and irresistible.

The active pursuits of such a population were necessarily maritime. In their short summer, such crops as they planted ripened rapidly, but their chief sustenance was animal food and the fish that abounded in their waters. The artisans in highest repute among them were the shipwrights and smiths. The hammer and anvil were held in the highest honour; and of this class, the armorers held the first place. The kings of the North had no standing armies, but their lieges were summoned to war by an arrow in Pagan times, and a cross after their conversion. Their chief dependence was in infantry, which they formed into wedge-like columns, and so, clashing their shields and singing hymns to Odin, they advanced against their enemies. Different divisions were differently armed; some with a short two-edged sword and a heavy battle-axe; others with the sling, the javelin, and the bow. The shield was long and light, commonly of wood and leather, but for the chiefs, ornamented with brass, with silver, and even with gold. Locking the shields together formed a rampart which it was not easy to break; in bad weather the concave shield seems to have served the purpose of our umbrella; in sea-fights the vanquished often escaped by swimming ashore on their shields. Armour many of them wore; the Berserkers, or champions, were so called from always engaging, bare of defensive armour.

Such were the men, the arms, and the creed, against which the Irish of the ninth age, after three centuries of exemption from foreign war, were called upon to combat. A people, one-third of whose youth and manhood had embraced the ecclesiastical state, and all whose tribes now professed the religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, were called to wrestle with a race whose religion was one of blood, and whose beatitude was to be in proportion to the slaughter they made while on earth. The Northman hated Christianity as a rival religion, and despised it as an effeminate one. He was the soldier of Odin, the elect of Valhalla; and he felt that the offering most acceptable to his sanguinary gods was the blood of those religionists who denied their existence and execrated their revelation. The points of attack, therefore, were almost invariably the great seats of learning and religion. There, too, was to be found the largest bulk of the portable wealth of the country, in richly adorned altars, jewelled chalices, and shrines of saints. The ecclesiastical map is the map of their campaigns in Ireland. And it is to avenge or save these innumerable sacred places--as countless as the Saints of the last three centuries--that the Christian population have to rouse themselves year after year, hurrying to a hundred points at the same time. To the better and nobler spirits the war becomes a veritable crusade, and many of those slain in single-hearted defence of their altars may well be accounted martyrs--but a war so protracted and so devastating will be found, in the sequel, to foster and

strengthen many of the worst vices as well as some of the best virtues of our humanity.

The early events are few and ill-known. During the reign of Hugh VI., who died in 819, their hostile visits were few and far between; his successors, Conor II. and Nial III., were destined to be less fortunate in this respect. During the reign of Conor, Cork, Lismore, Dundalk, Bangor and Armagh, were all surprised, plundered, and abandoned by "the Gentiles," as they are usually called in Irish annals; and with the exception of two skirmishes in which they were worsted on the coasts of Down and Wexford, they seem to have escaped with impunity. At Bangor they shook the bones of the revered founder out of the costly shrine before carrying it off; on their first visit to Kildare they contented themselves with taking the gold and silver ornaments of the tomb of St. Bridget, without desecrating the relics; their main attraction at Armagh was the same, but there the relics seemed to have escaped. When, in 830, the brotherhood of Iona apprehended their return, they carried into Ireland, for greater safety, the relics of St. Columbkille. Hence it came that most of the memorials of SS. Patrick, Bridget, and Columbkille, were afterwards united at Downpatrick.

While these deplorable sacrileges, too rapidly executed perhaps to be often either prevented or punished, were taking place, Conor the King had on his hand a war of succession, waged by the ablest of his contemporaries, Felim, King of Munster, who continued during this and the subsequent reign to maintain a species of rival monarchy in Munster. It seems clear enough that the abandonment of Tara, as the seat of authority, greatly aggravated the internal weakness of the Milesian constitution. While over-centralization is to be dreaded as the worst tendency of imperial power, it is certain that the want of a sufficient centralization has proved as fatal, on the other hand, to the independence of many nations. And anarchical usages once admitted, we see from the experience of the German Empire, and the Italian republics, how almost impossible it is to apply a remedy. In the case before us, when the Irish Kings abandoned the old mensal domain and betook themselves to their own patrimony, it was inevitable that their influence and authority over the southern tribes should diminish and disappear. Aileach, in the far North, could never be to them what Tara had been. The charm of conservatism, the halo of ancient glory, could not be transferred. Whenever, therefore, ambitious and able Princes arose in the South, they found the border tribes rife for backing their pretensions against the Northern dynasty. The Bards, too, plied their craft, reviving the memory of former times, when Heber the Fair divided Erin equally with Heremon, and when Eugene More divided it a second time with Con of the Hundred Battles. Felim, the son of Crimthan, the contemporary of Conor II. and Nial III., during the whole term of their rule, was the resolute assertor of these pretensions, and the Bards of his own Province do not hesitate to confer on him the high title of _Ard-Righ_.

As a punishment for adhering to the Hy-Nial dynasty, or for some other offence, this Christian king, in rivalry with "the Gentiles," plundered Kildare, Burrow, and Clonmacnoise--the latter perhaps for siding with Connaught in the dispute as to whether the present county of Clare belonged to Connaught or Munster. Twice he met in conference with the monarch at Birr and at Cloncurry--at another time he swept the plain of Meath, and held temporary court in the royal rath of Tara. With all his vices he united an extraordinary energy, and during his time, no Danish settlement was established on the Southern rivers. Shortly before his decease (A.D. 846) he resigned his crown and retired from the world, devoting the short remainder of his days to penance and mortification. What we know of his ambition and ability makes us regret that he ever appeared upon the scene, or that he had not been born of that dominant family, who alone were accustomed to give kings to the whole country.

King Conor died (A.D. 833), and was succeeded by Nial III., surnamed Nial of Callan. The military events of this last reign are so intimately bound up with the more brilliant career of the next ruler--Melaghlin, or Malachy I.--that we must reserve them for the introduction to the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

KINGS OF THE NINTH CENTURY (CONTINUED)--NIAL III.--MALACHY I.--HUGH VII.

When, in the year 833, Nial III. received the usual homage and hostages, which ratified his title of Ard-Righ, the northern invasion had clearly become the greatest danger that ever yet had threatened the institutions of Erin. Attacks at first predatory and provincial had so encouraged the Gentile leaders of the second generation that they began to concert measures and combine plans for conquest and colonization. To the Vikings of Norway the fertile Island with which they were now so familiar, whose woods were bent with the autumnal load of acorns, mast, and nuts, and filled with numerous herds of swine--their favourite food--whose pleasant meadows were well stored with beeves and oxen, whose winter was often as mild as their northern summer, and whose waters were as fruitful in fish as their own Lofoden friths; to these men, this was a prize worth fighting for; and for it they fought long and desperately.

King Nial inherited a disputed sovereignty from his predecessor, and the Southern annalists say he did homage to Felim of Munster, while those of the North--and with them the majority of historians--reject this statement as exaggerated and untrue. He certainly experienced continual difficulty in maintaining his supremacy, not only from the Prince of Cashel, but from lords of lesser

grade--like those of Ossory and Ulidia; so that we may say, while he had the title of King of Ireland, he was, in fact, King of no more than Leath-Con, or the Northern half. The central Province, Meath, long deserted by the monarchs, had run wild into independence, and was parcelled out between two or three chiefs, descendants of the same common ancestor as the kings, but distinguished from them by the tribe-name of "the _Southern_ Hy-Nial." Of these heads of new houses, by far the ablest and most famous was Melaghlin, who dwelt near Mullingar, and lorded it over western Meath; a name with which we shall become better acquainted presently. It does not clearly appear that Melaghlin was one of those who actively resisted the prerogatives of this monarch, though others of the Southern Hy-Nial did at first reject his authority, and were severely punished for their insubordination, the year after his assumption of power.

In the fourth year of Nial III. (A.D. 837), arrived the great Norwegian fleet of 120 sail, whose commanders first attempted, on a combined plan, the conquest of Erin. Sixty of the ships entered the Boyne; the other sixty the Liffey. This formidable force, according to all Irish accounts, was soon after united under one leader, who is known in our Annals as _Turgeis_ or _Turgesius_, but of whom no trace can be found, under that name, in the chronicles of the Northmen. Every effort to identify him in the records of his native land has hitherto failed--so that we are forced to conclude that he must have been one of those wandering sea-kings, whose fame was won abroad, and whose story, ending in defeat, yet entailing no dynastic consequences on his native land, possessed no national interest for the authors of the old Norse Sagas. To do all the Scandinavian chroniclers justice, in cases which come directly under their notice, they acknowledge defeat as frankly as they claim victory proudly. Equal praise may be given to the Irish annalists in recording the same events, whether at first or second-hand. In relation to the campaigns and sway of Turgesius, the difficulty we experience in separating what is true from what is exaggerated or false, is not created for us by the annalists, but by the bards and story-tellers, some of whose inventions, adopted by _Cambrensis_, have been too readily received by subsequent writers. For all the acts of national importance with which his name can be intelligibly associated, we prefer to follow in this as in other cases, the same sober historians who condense the events of years and generations into the shortest space and the most matter of fact expression.

If we were to receive the chronology while rejecting the embellishments of the Bards, Turgesius must have first come to Ireland with one of the expeditions of the year 820, since they speak of him as having been "the scourge of the country for seventeen years," before he assumed the command of the forces landed from the fleet of 837. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that an accurate knowledge of the country, acquired by years of previous

warfare with its inhabitants, may have been one of the grounds upon which the chief command was conferred on Turgesius. This knowledge was soon put to account; Dublin was taken possession of, and a strong fort, according to the Scandinavian method, was erected on the hill where now stands the Castle. This fort and the harbour beneath it were to be the rendezvous and arsenal for all future operations against Leinster, and the foundation of foreign power then laid, continued in foreign hands, with two or three brief intervals, until transferred to the Anglo-Norman chivalry, three centuries and a half later. Similar lodgment was made at Waterford, and a third was attempted at Limerick, but at this period without success; the Danish fort at the latter point is not thought older than the year 855. But Turgesius--if, indeed, the independent acts of cotemporary and even rival chiefs be not too often attributed to him--was not content with fortifying the estuaries of some principal rivers; he established inland centres of operation, of which the cardinal one was on Lough Ree, the expansion of the Shannon, north of Athlone; another was at a point called Lyndwachill, on Lough Neagh. On both these waters were stationed fleets of boats, constructed for that service, and communicating with the forts on shore. On the eastern border of Lough Ree, in the midst of its meadows, stood Clonmacnoise, rich with the offerings and endowments of successive generations. Here, three centuries before, in the heart of the desert, St. Kieran had erected with his own hands a rude sylvan cell, where, according to the allegory of tradition, "the first monks who joined him," were the fox, the wolf, and the bear; but time had wrought wonders on that hallowed ground, and a group of churches--at one time, as many as ten in number--were gathered within two or three acres, round its famous schools, and presiding Cathedral. Here it was Turgesius made his usual home, and from the high altar of the Cathedral his unbelieving Queen was accustomed to issue her imperious mandates in his absence. Here, for nearly seven years, this conqueror and his consort exercised their far-spread and terrible power. According to the custom of their own country--a custom attributed to Odin as its author--they exacted from every inhabitant subject to their sway--a piece of money annually, the forfeit for the non-payment of which was the loss of the nose, hence called "nose-money." Their other exactions were a union of their own northern imposts, with those levied by the chiefs whose authority they had superseded, but whose prerogatives they asserted for themselves. Free quarters for their soldiery, and a system of inspection extending to every private relation of life, were the natural expedients of a tyranny so odious. On the ecclesiastical order especially their yoke bore with peculiar weight, since, although avowed Pagans, they permitted no religious house to stand, unless under an Abbot, or at least an Erenach (or Treasurer) of their approval. Such is the complete scheme of oppression presented to us, that it can only be likened to a monstrous spider-web spread from the centre of the Island over its fairest and most populous districts. Glendalough, Ferns, Castle-Dermid, and Kildare in the east; Lismore, Cork,

Clonfert, in the southern country; Dundalk, Bangor, Derry, and Armagh in the north; all groaned under this triumphant despot, or his colleagues. In the meanwhile King Nial seems to have struggled resolutely with the difficulties of his lot, and in every interval of insubordination to have struck boldly at the common enemy. But the tide of success for the first few years after 837 ran strongly against him. The joint hosts from the Liffey and the Boyne swept the rich plains of Meath, and in an engagement at Invernabark (the present Bray) gave such a complete defeat to the southern Hy-Nial clans as prevented them making head again in the field, until some summers were past and gone. In this campaign Saxolve, who is called "the chief of the foreigners," was slain; and to him, therefore, if to any commander-in-chief, Turgesius must have succeeded. The shores of all the inland lakes were favourite sites for Rathes and Churches, and the beautiful country around Lough Erne shared the fiery ordeal which blazed on Lough Ree and Lough Neagh. In 839 the men of Connaught also suffered a defeat equal to that experienced by those of Meath in the previous campaign; but more unfortunate than the Methians, they lost their leader and other chiefs on the field. In 840, Ferns and Cork were given to the flames, and the fort at Lyndwachill, or Magheralin, poured out its ravages in every direction over the adjacent country, sweeping off flocks, herds, and prisoners, laymen and ecclesiastics, to their ships. The northern depredators counted among their captives "several Bishops and learned men," of whom the Abbot of Clogher and the Lord of Galtrim are mentioned by name. Their equally active colleagues of Dublin and Waterford took captive, Hugh, Abbot of Clonenagh, and Foranan, Archbishop of Armagh, who had fled southwards with many of the relics of the Metropolitan Church, escaping from one danger only to fall into another a little farther off. These prisoners were carried into Munster, where Abbot Hugh suffered martyrdom at their hands, but the Archbishop, after being carried to their fleet at Limerick, seems to have been rescued or ransomed, as we find him dying in peace at Armagh in the next reign. The martyrs of these melancholy times were very numerous, but the exact particulars being so often unrecorded it is impossible to present the reader with an intelligible account of their persons and sufferings. When the Anglo-Normans taunted the Irish that their Church had no martyrs to boast of, they must have forgotten the exploits of their Norse kinsmen about the middle of this century.

But the hour of retribution was fast coming round, and the native tribes, unbound, divided, confused, and long unused to foreign war, were fast recovering their old martial experience, and something like a politic sense of the folly of their border feuds. Nothing perhaps so much tended to arouse and combine them together as the capture of the successor of Saint Patrick, with all his relics, and his imprisonment among a Pagan host, in Irish waters. National humiliation could not much farther go, and as we read we pause, prepared for either alternative --mute submission or a brave uprising. King Nial seems

to have been in this memorable year, 843, defending as well as he might his ancestral province--Ulster--against the ravagers of Lough Neagh, and still another party whose ships flocked into Lough Swilly. In the ancient plain of Moynith, watered by the little river Finn, (the present barony of Raphoe,) he encountered the enemy, and according to the Annals, "a countless number fell"--victory being with Nial. In the same year, or the next, Turgesius was captured by Melaghlin, Lord of Westmeath, apparently by stratagem, and put to death by the rather novel process of drowning. The Bardic tale told to Cambrensis, or parodied by him from an old Greek legend, of the death by which Turgesius died, is of no historical authority. According to this tale, the tyrant of Lough Ree conceived a passion for the fair daughter of Melaghlin, and demanded her of her father, who, fearing to refuse, affected to grant the infamous request, but despatched in her stead, to the place of assignation, twelve beardless youths, habited as maidens, to represent his daughter and her attendants; by these maskers the Norwegian and his boon companions were assassinated, after they had drank to excess and laid aside their arms and armour. For all this superstructure of romance there is neither ground-work nor license in the facts themselves, beyond this, that Turgesius was evidently captured by some clever stratagem. We hear of no battle in Meath or elsewhere against him immediately preceding the event; nor, is it likely that a secondary Prince, as Melaghlin then was, could have hazarded an engagement with the powerful master of Lough Ree. If the local traditions of Westmeath may be trusted, where Cambrensis is rejected, the Norwegian and Irish principals in the tragedy of Lough Owel were on visiting terms just before the denouement, and many curious particulars of their peaceful but suspicious intercourse used to be related by the modern story-tellers around Castle-pollard. The anecdote of the rookery, of which Melaghlin complained, and the remedy for which his visitor suggested to be "to cut down the trees and the rooks would fly," has a suspicious look of the "tall poppies" of the Roman and Grecian legend; two things only do we know for certain about the matter: firstly, that Turgesius was taken and drowned in Lough Owel in the year 843 or 844; and secondly, that this catastrophe was brought about by the agency and order of his neighbour, Melaghlin.

The victory of Moynith and the death of Turgesius were followed by some local successes against other fleets and garrisons of the enemy. Those of Lough Ree seem to have abandoned their fort, and fought their way (gaining in their retreat the only military advantage of that year) towards Sligo, where some of their vessels had collected to bear them away. Their colleagues of Dublin, undeterred by recent reverses, made their annual foray southward into Ossory, in 844, and immediately we find King Nial moving up from the north to the same scene of action. In that district he met his death in an effort to save the life of a gilla, or common servant. The river of Callan being greatly swollen, the gilla, in

attempting to find a ford, was swept away in its turbid torrent. The King entreated some one to go to his rescue, but as no one obeyed he generously plunged in himself and sacrificed his own life in endeavouring to preserve one of his humblest followers. He was in the 55th year of his age and the 13th of his reign, and in some traits of character reminded men of his grandfather, the devout Nial "of the Showers." The Bards have celebrated the justice of his judgments, the goodness of his heart, and the comeliness of his "brunette-bright face." He left a son of age to succeed him, (and who ultimately did become _Ard-Righ_) yet the present popularity of Melaghlin of Meath triumphed over every other interest, and he was raised to the monarchy--the first of his family who had yet attained that honour. Hugh, the son of Nial, sank for a time into the rank of a Provincial Prince, before the ascendant star of the captor of Turgesius, and is usually spoken of during this reign as "Hugh of Aileach." He is found towards its close, as if impatient of the succession, employing the arms of the common enemy to ravage the ancient mensal land of the kings of Erin, and otherwise harassing the last days of his successful rival.

Melaghlin, or Malachy I. (sometimes called "of the Shannon," from his patrimony along that river), brought back again the sovereignty to the centre, and in happier days might have become the second founder of Tara. But it was plain enough then, and it is tolerably so still, that this was not to be an age of restoration. The kings of Ireland after this time, says the quaint old translator of the Annals of Clonmacnoise, "had little good of it," down to the days of King Brian. It was, in fact, a perpetual struggle for self-preservation--the first duty of all governments, as well as the first law of all nature. The powerful action of the Gentile forces, upon an originally ill-centralized and recently much abused Constitution, seemed to render it possible that every new Ard-Righ would prove the last. Under the pressure of such a deluge all ancient institutions were shaken to their foundations; and the venerable authority of Religion itself, like a Hermit in a mountain torrent, was contending for the hope of escape or existence. We must not, therefore, amid the din of the conflicts through which we are to pass, condemn without stint or qualification those Princes who were occasionally driven--as some of them _were_ driven--to that last resort, the employment of foreign mercenaries (and those mercenaries often anti-Christians,) to preserve some show of native government and kingly authority. Grant that in some of them the use of such allies and agents cannot be justified on any plea or pretext of state necessity; where base ends or unpatriotic motives are clear or credible, such treason to country cannot be too heartily condemned; but it is indeed far from certain that such were the motives in _all_ cases, or that such ought to be our conclusion in any, in the absence of sufficient evidence to that effect.

Though the Gentile power had experienced towards the close of the last reign such severe reverses, yet it was

not in the nature of the men of Norway to abandon a prize which was once so nearly being their own. The fugitives who escaped, as well as those who remained within the strong ramparts of Waterford and Dublin, urged the fitting out of new expeditions, to avenge their slaughtered countrymen and prosecute the conquest. But defeat still followed on defeat; in the first year of Malachy, they lost 1,200 men in a disastrous action near Castle Dermot, with Olcobar the Prince-bishop of Cashel; and in the same or the next season they were defeated with the loss of 700 men, by Malachy, at Forc, in Meath. In the third year of Malachy, however, a new northern expedition arrived in 140 vessels, which, according to the average capacity of the long-ships of that age, must have carried with them from 7,000 to 10,000 men. Fortunately for the assailed, this fleet was composed of what they called _Black_-Gentiles, or Danes, as distinguished from their predecessors, the _Fair_-Gentiles, or Norwegians. A quarrel arose between the adventurers of the two nations as to the possession of the few remaining fortresses, especially of Dublin; and an engagement was fought along the Liffey, which "lasted for three days;" the Danes finally prevailed, driving the Norwegians from their stronghold, and cutting them off from their ships. The new Northern leaders are named Anlaf, or Olaf, Sitrick (Sigurd?) and Ivar; the first of the Danish Earls, who established themselves at Dublin, Waterford and Limerick respectively. Though the immediate result of the arrival of the great fleet of 847 relieved for the moment the worst apprehensions of the invaded, and enabled them to rally their means of defence, yet as Denmark had more than double the population of Norway, it brought them into direct collision with a more formidable power than that from which they had been so lately delivered. The tactics of both nations were the same. No sooner had they established themselves on the ruins of their predecessors in Dublin, than the Danish forces entered East-Meath, under the guidance of Kenneth, a local lord, and overran the ancient mensal, from the sea to the Shannon. One of their first exploits was burning alive 260 prisoners in the tower of Treoit, in the island of Lough Gower, near Dunshaughlin. The next year, his allies having withdrawn from the neighbourhood, Kenneth was taken by King Malachy's men, and the traitor himself drowned in a sack, in the little river Nanny, which divides the two baronies of Duleek. This death-penalty by drowning seems to have been one of the useful hints which the Irish picked up from their invaders.

During the remainder of this reign the Gentile war resumed much of its old local and guerrilla character, the Provincial chiefs, and the Ard-Righ, occasionally employing bands of one nation of the invaders to combat the other, and even to suppress their native rivals. The only pitched battle of which we hear is that of "the Two Plains" (near Coolestown, King's County), in the second last year of Malachy (A.D. 859), in which his usual good fortune attended the king. The greater part of his reign was occupied, as always must be the case with the founder of

a new line, in coercing into obedience his former peers. On this business he made two expeditions into Munster, and took hostages from all the tribes of the Eugenic race. With the same object he held a conference with all the chiefs of Ulster, Hugh of Aileach only being absent, at Armagh, in the fourth year of his reign, and a General _Feis_, or Assembly of all the Orders of Ireland, at Rathugh, in West-Meath, in his thirteenth year (A.D. 857). He found, notwithstanding his victories and his early popularity, that there are always those ready to turn from the setting to the rising sun, and towards the end of his reign he was obliged to defend his camp, near Armagh, by force, from a night assault of the discontented Prince of Aileach; who also ravaged his patrimony, almost at the moment he lay on his death-bed. Malachy I. departed this life on the 13th day of November, (A.D. 860), having reigned sixteen years. "Mournful is the news to the Gael!" exclaims the elegiac Bard! "Red wine is spilled into the valley! Erin's monarch has died!" And the lament contrasts his stately form as "he rode the white stallion," with the striking reverse when, "his only horse this day"--that is the bier on which his body was borne to the churchyard--"is drawn behind two oxen."

The restless Prince of Aileach now succeeded as Hugh VII., and possessed the perilous honour he so much coveted for sixteen years, the same span that had been allotted to his predecessor. The beginning of this reign was remarkable for the novel design of the Danes, who marched out in great force, and set themselves busily to breaking open the ancient mounds in the cemetery of the Pagan kings, beside the Boyne, in hope of finding buried treasure. The three Earls, Olaf, Sitrick, and Ivar, are said to have been present, while their gold-hunters broke into in succession the mound-covered cave of the wife of Goban, at Drogheda, the cave of "the Shepherd of Elcmar," at Dowth, the cave of the field of Aldai, at New Grange, and the similar cave at Knowth. What they found in these huge cairns of the old _Tuatha_ is not related; but Roman coins of Valentinian and Theodosius, and torques and armlets of gold, have been discovered by accident within their precincts, and an enlightened modern curiosity has not explored them in vain, in the higher interests of history and science.

In the first two years of his reign, Hugh VII. was occupied in securing the hostages of his suffragans; in the third he swept the remaining Danish and Norwegian garrisons out of Ulster, and defeated a newly arrived force on the borders of Lough Foyle; the next the Danish Earls went on a foray into Scotland, and no exploit is to be recorded; in his sixth year, Hugh, with 1,000 chosen men of his own tribe and the aid of the Sil-Murray (O'Connor's) of Connaught, attacked and defeated a force of 5,000 Danes with their Leinster allies, near Dublin at a place supposed to be identical with Killaderry. Earl Olaf lost his son, and Erin her _Roydamna_, or heir-apparent, on this field, which was much celebrated by the Bards of Ulster and of Connaught. Amongst those who fell was Flan, son of Conaing,

chief of the district which included the plundered cemeteries, fighting on the side of the plunderers. The mother of Flan was one of those who composed quatrains on the event of the battle, and her lines are a natural and affecting alternation from joy to grief--joy for the triumph of her brother and her country, and grief for the loss of her self-willed, warlike son. Olaf, the Danish leader, avenged in the next campaign the loss of his son, by a successful descent on Armagh, once again rising from its ruins. He put to the sword 1,000 persons, and left the primatial city lifeless, charred, and desolate. In the next ensuing year the monarch chastised the Leinster allies of the Danes, traversing their territory with fire and sword from Dublin to the border town of Gowran. This seems to have been the last of his notable exploits in arms. He died on the 20th of November, 876, and is lamented by the Bards as "a generous, wise, staid man." These praises belong--if at all deserved--to his old age.

Flan, son of Malachy I. (and surnamed like his father "of the Shannon"), succeeded in the year 877, of the Annals of the Four Masters, or more accurately the year 879 of our common era. He enjoyed the very unusual reign of thirty-eight years. Some of the domestic events of his time are of so unprecedented a character, and the period embraced is so considerable, that we must devote to it a separate chapter.

CHAPTER III.

REIGN OF FLAN "OF THE SHANNON" (A.D. 879 TO 916).

Midway in the reign we are called upon to contemplate, falls the centenary of the first invasion of Ireland by the Northmen. Let us admit that the scenes of that century are stirring and stimulating; two gallant races of men, in all points strongly contrasted, contend for the most part in the open field, for the possession of a beautiful and fertile island. Let us admit that the Milesian-Irish, themselves invaders and conquerors of an older date, may have had no right to declare the era of colonization closed for their country, while its best harbours were without ships, and leagues of its best land were without inhabitants; yet what gives to the contest its lofty and fearful interest, is, that the foreigners who come so far and fight so bravely for the prize, are a Pagan people, drunk with the evil spirit of one of the most anti-Christian forms of human error. And what is still worse, and still more to be lamented, it is becoming, after the experience of a century, plainer and plainer, that the Christian natives, while defending with unfaltering courage their beloved country, are yet descending more and more to the moral level of their assailants, without the apology of their Paganism. Degenerate civilisation may be a worse element for truth to work in than original barbarism; and, therefore, as we enter on the second

century of this struggle, we begin to fear for the Christian Irish, _not_ from the arms or the valour, but from the contact and example of the unbelievers. This, it is necessary to premise, before presenting to the reader a succession of Bishops who lead armies to battle, of Abbots whose voice is still for war, of treacherous tactics and savage punishments; of the almost total disruption of the last links of that federal bond, which, "though light as air were strong as iron," before the charm of inviolability had been taken away from the ancient constitution.

We begin to discern in this reign that royal marriages have much to do with war and politics. Hugh, the late king, left a widow, named Maelmara ("follower of Mary"), daughter to Kenneth M'Alpine, King of the Caledonian Scots: this lady Flan married. The mother of Flan was the daughter of Dungal, Prince of Ossory, so that to the cotemporary lords of that borderland the monarch stood in the relation of cousin. A compact seems to have been entered into in the past reign, that the _Roydamna_, or successor, should be chosen alternately from the Northern and Southern Hy-Nial; and, subsequently, when Nial, son of his predecessor, assumed that onerous rank, Flan gave him his daughter Gormley, celebrated for her beauty, her talents, and her heartlessness, in marriage. From these several family ties, uniting him so closely with Ossory, with the Scots, and with his successor, much of the wars and politics of Flan Siona's reign take their cast and complexion. A still more fruitful source of new complications was the co-equal power, acquired through a long series of aggressions, by the kings of Cashel. Their rivalry with the monarchy, from the beginning of the eighth till the end of the tenth century, was a constant cause of intrigues, coalitions, and wars, reminding us of the constant rivalry of Athens with Sparta, of Genoa with Venice. This kingship of Cashel, according to the Munster law of succession, "the will of Olild," ought to have alternated regularly between the descendants of his sons, Eugene More and Cormac Cas--the Eugenians and Dalcassians. But the families of the former kindred were for many centuries the more powerful of the two, and frequently set at nought the testamentary law of their common ancestor, leaving the tribe of Cas but the border-land of Thomond, from which they had sometimes to pay tribute to Cruachan, and at others to Cashel. In the ninth century the competition among the Eugenic houses--of which too many were of too nearly equal strength--seems to have suggested a new expedient, with the view of permanently setting aside the will of Olild. This was, to confer the kingship when vacant, on whoever happened to be Bishop of Emly or of Cashel, or on some other leading ecclesiastical dignitary, always provided that he was of Eugenic descent; a qualification easily to be met with, since the great sees and abbacies were now filled, for the most part, by the sons of the neighbouring chiefs. In this way we find Cenfalad, Felim, and Olcobar, in this century, styled Prince-Bishops or Prince-Abbots. The principal domestic difficulty of Flan

Siona's reign followed from the elevation of Cormac, son of Cuillenan, from the see of Emly to the throne of Cashel.

Cormac, a scholar, and, as became his calling, a man of peace, was thus, by virtue of his accession, the representative of the old quarrel between his predecessors and the dominant race of kings. All Munster asserted that it was never the intention of their common ancestors to subject the southern half of Erin to the sway of the north; that Eber and Owen More had resisted such pretensions when advanced by Eremhon and Conn of the Hundred Battles; that the _esker_ from Dublin to Galway was the true division, and that, even admitting the title of the Hy-Nial king as Ard-Righ, all the tribes south of the _esker_, whether in Leinster or Connaught, still owed tribute by ancient right to Cashel. Their antiquaries had their own version in of "the Book of Rights," which countenanced these claims to co-equal dominion, and their Bards drew inspiration from the same high pretensions. Party spirit ran so high that tales and prophecies were invented to show how St. Patrick had laid his curse on Tara, and promised dominion to Cashel and to Dublin in its stead. All Leinster, except the lordship of Ossory--identical with the present diocese of the same name--was held by the _Brehons_ of Cashel to be tributary to their king; and this _Borooa_ or tribute, abandoned by the monarchs at the intercession of Saint Moling, was claimed for the Munster rulers as an inseparable adjunct of their southern kingdom.

The first act of Flan Siona, on his accession, was to dash into Munster, demanding hostages at the point of the sword, and sweeping over both Thomond and Desmond with irresistible force, from Clare to Cork. With equal promptitude he marched through every territory of Ulster, securing, by the pledges of their heirs and _Tanists_, the chiefs of the elder tribes of the Hy-Nial. So effectually did he consider his power established over the provinces, that he is said to have boasted to one of his hostages, that he would, with no other attendants than his own servants, play a game of chess on Thurles Green, without fear of interruption. Carrying out this foolish wager, he accordingly went to his game at Thurles, and was very properly taken prisoner for his temerity, and made to pay a smart ransom to his captors. So runs the tale, which, whether true or fictitious, is not without its moral. Flan experienced greater difficulty with the tribes of Connaught, nor was it till the thirteenth year of his reign (892) that Cathal, their Prince, "came into his house," in Meath, "under the protection of the clergy" of Clonmacnoise, and made peace with him. A brief interval of repose seems to have been vouchsafed to this Prince, in the last years of the century; but a storm was gathering over Cashel, and the high pretensions of the Eugenian line were again to be put to the hazard of battle.

Cormac, the Prince-Bishop, began his rule over Munster in the year 900 of our common era, and passed some years

in peace, after his accession. If we believe his panegyrists, the land over which he bore sway, "was filled with divine grace and worldly prosperity," and with order so unbroken, "that the cattle needed no cowherd, and the flocks no shepherd, so long as he was king." Himself an antiquary and a lover of learning, it seems but natural that "many books were written, and many schools opened," by his liberality. During this enviable interval, councillors of less pacific mood than their studious master were not wanting to stimulate his sense of kingly duty, by urging him to assert the claim of Munster to the tribute of the southern half of Erin. As an antiquary himself, Cormac must have been bred up in undoubting belief in the justice of that claim, and must have given judgment in favour of its antiquity and validity, before his accession. These _dicta_ of his own were now quoted with emphasis, and he was besought to enforce, by all the means within his reach, the learned judgments he himself had delivered. The most active advocate of a recourse to arms was Flaherty, Abbot of Scatterry, in the Shannon, himself an Eugenian, and the kinsman of Cormac. After many objections, the peaceful Prince-Bishop allowed himself to be persuaded, and in the year 907 he took up his line of march, "in the fortnight of the harvest," from Cashel toward Gowran, at the head of all the armament of Munster. Lorcan, son of Lactna, and grandfather of Brian, commanded the Dalcassians, under Cormac; and Oliol, lord of Desies, and the warlike Abbot of Scatterry, led on the other divisions. The monarch marched southward to meet his assailants, with his own proper troops, and the contingents of Connaught under Cathel, Prince of that Province, and those of Leinster under the lead of Kerball, their king. Both armies met at Ballaghmoon, in the southern corner of Kildare, not far from the present town of Carlow, and both fought with most heroic bravery. The Munster forces were utterly defeated; the Lords of Desies, of Fermoy, of Kinalmeaky, and of Kerry, the Abbots of Cork and Kennity, and Cormac himself, with 6,000 men, fell on the ensanguined field. The losses of the victors are not specified, but the 6,000, we may hope, included the total of the slain on both sides. Flan at once improved the opportunity of victory by advancing into Ossory, and establishing his cousin Dermid, son of Kerball, over that territory. This Dermid, who appears to have been banished by Munster intrigues, had long resided with his royal cousin, previous to the battle, from which he was probably the only one that derived any solid advantage. As to the Abbot Flaherty, the instigator of this ill-fated expedition, he escaped from the conquerors, and, safe in his island sanctuary, gave himself up for a while to penitential rigours. The worldly spirit, however, was not dead in his breast, and after the decease of Cormac's next successor, he emerged from his cell, and was elevated to the kingship of Cashel.

In the earlier and middle years of this long reign, the invasions from the Baltic had diminished both in force and in frequency. This is to be accounted for from the fact, that during its entire length it was contemporaneous

with the reign of Harold, "the Fair-haired" King of Norway, the scourge of the sea-kings. This more fortunate Charles XII., born in 853, died at the age of 81, after sixty years of almost unbroken successes, over all his Danish, Swedish, and insular enemies. It is easy to comprehend, by reference to his exploits upon the Baltic, the absence of the usual northern force from the Irish waters, during his lifetime, and that of his cotemporary, Flan of the Shannon. Yet the race of the sea-kings was not extinguished by the fair-haired Harold's victories over them, at home. Several of them permanently abandoned their native coasts never to return, and recruited their colonies, already so numerous, in the Orkneys, Scotland, England, Ireland, and the Isle of Man. In 885, Flan was repulsed in an attack on Dublin, in which repulse the Abbots of Kildare and Kildalkey were slain; in the year 890, Aileach was surprised and plundered by Danes, for the first time, and Armagh shared its fate; in 887, 888, and 891, three minor victories were gained over separate hordes, in Mayo, at Waterford, and in Ulidia (Down). In 897, Dublin was taken for the first time in sixty years, its chiefs put to death, while its garrison fled in their ships beyond sea. But in the first quarter of the tenth century, better fortune begins to attend the Danish cause. A new generation enters on the scene, who dread no more the long arm of the age-stricken Harold, nor respect the treaties which bound their predecessors in Britain to the great Alfred. In 912, Waterford received from sea a strong reinforcement, and about the same date, or still earlier, Dublin, from which they had been expelled in 897, was again in their possession. In 913, and for several subsequent years, the southern garrisons continued their ravages in Munster, where the warlike Abbot of Scattery found a more suitable object for the employment of his valour than that which brought him, with the studious Cormac, to the fatal field of Ballaghmoon.

The closing days of Flan of the Shannon were embittered and darkened by the unnatural rebellion of his sons, Connor and Donogh, and his successor, Nial, surnamed Black-Knee (Glundubh), the husband of his daughter, Gormley. These children were by his second marriage with Gormley, daughter of that son of Conaing, whose name has already appeared in connection with the plundered sepulchres upon the Boyne. At the age of three score and upwards Flan is frequently obliged to protect by recourse to arms his mensal lands in Meath-their favourite point of attack-or to defend some faithful adherent whom these unnatural Princes sought to oppress. The daughter of Flan, thus wedded to a husband in arms against her father, seems to have been as little dutiful as his sons. We have elegiac stanzas by her on the death of two of her husbands and of one of her sons, but none on the death of her father: although this form of tribute to the departed, by those skilled in such compositions, seems to have been as usual as the ordinary prayers for the dead.

At length, in the 37th year of his reign, and the 68th of his age, King Flan was at the end of his sorrows. As

became the prevailing character of his life, he died peacefully, in a religious house at Kyneigh, in Kildare, on the 8th of June, in the year 916, of the common era. The Bards praise his "fine shape" and "august mien," as well as his "pleasant and hospitable" private habits. Like all the kings of his race he seems to have been brave enough: but he was no lover of war for war's-sake, and the only great engagement in his long reign was brought on by enemies who left him no option but to fight. His munificence rebuilt the Cathedral of Clonmacnoise, with the co-operation of Colman, the Abbot, the year after the battle of Ballaghmoon (908); for which age, it was the largest and finest stone Church in Ireland. His charity and chivalry both revolted at the cruel excesses of war, and when the head of Cormac of Cashel was presented to him after his victory, he rebuked those who rejoiced over his rival's fall, kissed reverently the lips of the dead, and ordered the relics to be delivered, as Cormac had himself willed it, to the Church of Castledermot, for Christian burial. These traits of character, not less than his family afflictions, and the generally peaceful tenor of his long life, have endeared to many the memory of Flan of the Shannon.

CHAPTER IV.

KINGS OF THE TENTH CENTURY; NIAL IV.; DONOGH II.; CONGAL III.; DONALD IV.

Nial IV. (surnamed Black-Knee) succeeded his father-in-law, Flan of the Shannon (A.D. 916), and in the third year of his reign fell in an assault on Dublin; Donogh II., son of Flan Siona, reigned for twenty-five years; Congal III. succeeded, and was slain in an ambush by the Dublin Danes, in the twelfth year of his reign (A.D. 956); Donald IV., in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, died at Armagh, (A.D. 979); which four reigns bring us to the period of the accession of Malachy II. as Ard-Righ, and the entrance of Brian Boru, on the national stage, as King of Cashel, and competitor for the monarchy.

The reign of Nial Black-Knee was too brief to be memorable for any other event than his heroic death in battle. The Danes having recovered Dublin, and strengthened its defences, Nial, it is stated, was incited by his confessor, the Abbot of Bangor, to attempt their re-expulsion. Accordingly, in October, 919, he marched towards Dublin, with a numerous host; Conor, son of the late king and Roydamna; the lords of Ulidia (Down), Oriel (Louth), Breagh (East-Meath), and other chiefs, with their clans accompanying him. Sitrick and Ivar, sons of the first Danish leaders in Ireland, marched out to meet them, and near Rathfarnham, on the Dodder, a battle was fought, in which the Irish were utterly defeated and their monarch slain. This Nial left a son named Murkertach,

who, according to the compact entered into between the Northern and Southern Hy-Nial, became the Roydamna of the next reign, and the most successful leader against the Danes, since the time of Malachy I. He was the step-son of the poetic Lady Gormley, whose lot it was to have been married in succession to the King of Munster, the King of Leinster, and the Monarch. Her first husband was Cormac, son of Cuilenan, before he entered holy orders; her second, Kerball of Leinster, and her third, Nial Black-Knee. She was an accomplished poetess, besides being the daughter, wife, and mother of king's, yet after the death of Nial she "begged from door to door," and no one had pity on her fallen state. By what vices she had thus estranged from her every kinsman, and every dependent, we are left to imagine; but that such was her misfortune, at the time her brother was monarch, and her step-son successor, we learn from the annals, which record her penance and death, under the date of 948.

The defeat sustained near Rathfarnham, by the late king, was amply avenged in the first year of the new Ard-Righ (A.D. 920), when the Dublin Danes, having marched out, taken and burned Kells, in Meath, were on their return through the plain of Breagh, attacked and routed with unprecedented slaughter. "There fell of the nobles of the Norsemen here," say the old Annalists, "as many as fell of the nobles and plebeians of the Irish, at Ath-Cliath" (Dublin). The Northern Hydra, however, was not left headless. Godfrey, grandson of Ivar, and Tomar, son of Algi, took command at Dublin, and Limerick, infusing new life into the remnant of their race. The youthful son of the late king, soon after at the head of a strong force (A.D. 921), compelled Godfrey to retreat from Ulster, to his ships, and to return by sea to Dublin. This was Murkertach, fondly called by the elegiac Bards, "the Hector of the West," and for his heroic achievements, not undeserving to be named after the gallant defender of Troy. Murkertach first appears in our annals at the year 921, and disappears in the thick of the battle in 938. His whole career covers seventeen years; his position throughout was subordinate and expectant--for King Donogh outlived his heir: but there are few names in any age of the history of his country more worthy of historical honour than his. While Donogh was king in name, Murkertach was king in fact; on him devolved the burden of every negotiation, and the brunt of every battle. Unlike his ancestor, Hugh of Aileach, in his opposition to Donogh's ancestor, Malachy I., he never attempts to counteract the king, or to harass him in his patrimony. He rather does what is right and needful himself, leaving Donogh to claim the credit, if he be so minded. True, a coolness and a quarrel arises between them, and even "a challenge of battle" is exchanged, but better councils prevail,

peace is restored, and the king and the Roydamna march as one man against the common enemy. It has been said of another but not wholly dissimilar form of government, that Crown-Princes are always in opposition; if this saying holds good of father and son, as occupant and

expectant of a throne, how much more likely is it to be true of a successor and a principal, chosen from different dynasties, with a view to combine, or at worst to balance, conflicting hereditary interests? In the conduct of Murkertach, we admire, in turn, his many shining personal qualities, which even tasteless panegyric cannot hide, and the prudence, self-denial, patience, and prescience with which he awaits his day of power. Unhappily, for one every way so worthy of it, that day never arrived!

At no former period,--not even at the height of the tyranny of Turgesius,--was a capable Prince more needed in Erin. The new generation of Northmen were again upon all the estuaries and inland waters of the Island. In the years 923-4 and 5, their light armed vessels swarmed on Lough Erne, Lough Ree, and other lakes, spreading flame and terror on every side. Clonmacnoise and Kildare, slowly recovering from former pillage, were again left empty and in ruins. Murkertach, the base of whose early operations was his own patrimony in Ulster, attacked near Newry a Northern division under the command of the son of Godfrey (A.D. 926), and left 800 dead on the field. The escape of the remnant was only secured by Godfrey marching rapidly to their relief and covering the retreat. His son lay with the dead. In the years 933, at Slieve Behma, in his own Province, Murkertach won a third victory; and in 936, taking political advantage of the result of the great English battle of Brunanburgh, which had so seriously diminished the Danish strength, the Roydamna, in company with the King, assaulted Dublin, expelled its garrison, levelled its fortress, and left the dwellings of the Northmen in ashes. From Dublin they proceeded southward, through Leinster and Munster, and after taking hostages of every tribe, Donogh returned to his Methian home and Murkertach to Aileach. While resting in his own fort (A.D. 939), he was surprised by a party of Danes, and carried off to their ships, but, says the old translator of the Annals of Clonmacnoise, "he made a good escape from them, as it was God's will." The following season he redoubled his efforts against the enemy. Attacking them on their own element, he ravaged their settlements on the Scottish coasts and among the isles of Insi-Gall (the Hebrides), returned laden with spoils, and hailed with acclamations as the liberator of his people.

Of the same age with Murkertach, the reigning Prince at Cashel was Kellachan, one of the heroes of the latter Bards and Story-tellers of the South. The romantic tales of his capture by the Danes, and captivity in their fleet at Dundalk, of the love which Sitrick's wife bore him, and of his gallant rescue by the Dalcassians and Eugenians, have no historical sanction. He was often both at war and at peace with the foreigners of Cork and Limerick, and did not hesitate more than once to employ their arms for the maintenance of his own supremacy; but his only authentic captivity was, as a hostage, in the hands of Murkertach. While the latter was absent, on his expedition to Insi-Gall, Kellachan fell upon the Deisi and Ossorians, and inflicted severe chastisement upon them--alleging, as

his provocation, that they had given hostages to Murkertach, and acknowledged him as _Roydamna_ of all Erin, in contempt of the co-equal rights of Cashel. When Murkertach returned from his Scotch expedition, and heard what had occurred, and on what pretext Kellachan had acted, he assembled at Aileach all the branches of the Northern Hy-Nial, for whom this was cause, indeed. Out of these he selected 1000 chosen men, whom he provided, among other equipments, with those "leathern coats," which lent a _soubriquet_ to his name; and with these "ten hundred heroes," he set out--strong in his popularity and his alliances--to make a circuit of the entire island (A.D. 940). He departed from Aileach, says his Bard, whose Itinerary we have, "keeping his left hand to the sea;" Dublin, once more rebuilt, acknowledged his title, and Sitrick, one of its lords, went with him as hostage for Earl Blacair and his countrymen; Leinster surrendered him Lorcan, its King; Kellachan, of Cashel, overawed by his superior fortune, advised his own people not to resist by force, and consented to become himself the hostage for all Munster. In Connaught, Conor, (from whom the O'Conors take their family name), son of the Prince, came voluntarily to his camp, and was received with open arms. Kellachan alone was submitted to the indignity of wearing a fetter. With these distinguished hostages, Murkertach and his leather-cloaked "ten hundred" returned to Aileach, where, for five months, they spent a season of unbounded rejoicing. In the following year, the _Roydamna_ transferred the hostages to King Donogh, as his _suzerain_, thus setting the highest example of obedience from the highest place. He might now look abroad over all the tribes of Erin, and feel himself without a rival among his countrymen. He stood at the very summit of his good fortune, when the Danes of Dublin, reinforced from abroad, after his "Circuit," renewed their old plundering practices. They marched north, at the close of winter, under Earl Blacair, their destination evidently being Armagh. Murkertach, with some troops hastily collected, disputed their passage at the ford of Ardee. An engagement ensued on Saturday, the 4th of March, 943, in which the noble _Roydamna_ fell. King Donogh, to whose reign his vigorous spirit has given its main historical importance, survived him but a twelvemonth; the Monarch died in the bed of repose; his destined successor in the thick of battle.

The death of the brave and beloved Murkertach filled all Erin with grief and rage, and as King Donogh was too old to avenge his destined successor, that duty devolved on Congal, the new _Roydamna_. In the year after the fatal action at Ardee, Congal, with Brann, King of Leinster, and Kellach, heir of Leinster, assaulted and took Dublin, and wreaked a terrible revenge for the nation's loss. The "women, children, and plebeians," were carried off captive; the greater part of the garrison were put to the sword; but a portion escaped in their vessels to their fortress on Dalkey, an island in the bay of Dublin. This was the third time within a century that Dublin had been rid of its foreign yoke, and yet as the Gaelic-Irish would not themselves dwell in fortified towns, the site

remained open and unoccupied, to be rebuilt as often as it might be retaken. The gallant Congal, the same year, succeeded on the death of Donogh to the sovereignty, and, so soon as he had secured his seat, and surrounded it with sufficient hostages, he showed that he could not only avenge the death, but imitate the glorious life of him whose place he held. Two considerable victories in his third and fourth years increased his fame, and rejoiced the hearts of his countrymen: the first was won at Slane, aided by the Lord of Breffni (O'Ruarc), and by Olaf the Crooked, a northern chief. The second was fought at Dublin (947), in which Blacair, the victor at Ardee, and 1,600 of his men were slain. Thus was the death of Murkertach finally avenged.

It is very remarkable that the first conversions to Christianity among the Danes of Dublin should have taken place immediately after these successive defeats--in 948. Nor, although quite willing to impute the best and most disinterested motives to these first neophytes, can we shut our eyes to the fact that no change of life, such as we might reasonably look for, accompanied their change of religion. Godfrid, son of Sitrick, and successor of Blacair, who professed himself a Christian in 948, plundered and destroyed the churches of East-Meath in 949, burnt 150 persons in the oratory of Drumree, and carried off as captives 3,000 persons. If the tree is to be judged by its fruits, this first year's growth of the new faith is rather alarming. It compels us to disbelieve the sincerity of Godfrid, at least, and the fighting men who wrought these outrages and sacrileges. It forces us to rank them with the incorrigible heathens who boasted that they had twenty times received the Sacrament of Baptism, and valued it for the twenty white robes which had been presented to them on those occasions. Still, we must endeavour hereafter, when we can, to distinguish Christian from Pagan Danes, and those of Irish birth, sons of the first comers, from the foreign-born kinsmen of their ancestors. Between these two classes there grew a gulf of feeling and experience, which a common language and common dangers only partially bridged over. Not seldom the interests and inclinations of the Irish-born Dane, especially if a true Christian, were at open variance with the interests and designs of the new arrivals from Denmark, and it is generally, if not invariably, with the former, that the Leinster and other Irish Princes enter into coalitions for common political purposes. The remainder of the reign of Congal is one vigorous battle. The Lord of Breffni, who had fought beside him on the hill of Slane, advanced his claim to be recognised _Roydamna_, and this being denied, broke out into rebellion and harassed his patrimony. Donald, son of Murkertach, and grandson of Nial, (the first who took the name of _Uai-Nial_, or O'Neill), disputed these pretensions of the Lord of Breffni; carried his boats overland from Aileach to Lough Erne in Fermanagh, and Lough Oughter in Cavan; attacked the lake-islands, where the treasure and hostages of Breffni were kept, and carried them off to his own fortress. The warlike and indefatigable king was

in the field summer and winter enforcing his authority on Munster and Connaught, and battling with the foreign garrisons between times. No former Ard-Righ had a severer struggle with the insubordinate elements which beset him from first to last. His end was sudden, but not inglorious. In returning from the chariot-races at the Curragh of Kildare, he was surprised and slain in an ambuscade laid for him by Godfrid at a place on the banks of the Liffey called Tyraris or Teeraris house. By his side, fighting bravely, fell the lords of Teffia and Ferrard, two of his nephews, and others of his personal attendants and companions. The Dublin Danes had in their turn a day of rejoicing and of revenge for the defeats they had suffered at Congal's hands.

This reign is not only notable for the imputed first conversion of the Danes to Christianity, but also for the general adoption of family names. Hitherto, we have been enabled to distinguish clansmen only by tribe-names formed by prefixing _Hy_, _Kinneel_, _Sil_, _Muintir_, _Dal_, or some synonymous term, meaning race, kindred, sept, district, or part, to the proper name of a remote common ancestor, as Hy-Nial, Kinneel-Connel, Sil-Murray, Muintir-Eolais, Dal-g Cais, and Dal-Riada. But the great tribes now begin to break into families, and we are hereafter to know particular houses, by distinct hereditary surnames, as O'Neill, O'Connor, MacMurrough, and McCarthy. Yet, the whole body of relatives are often spoken of by the old tribal title, which, unless exceptions are named, is supposed to embrace all the descendants of the old connection to whom it was once common. At first this alternate use of tribe and family names may confuse the reader--for it _is_ rather puzzling to find a MacLoughlin with the same paternal ancestor as an O'Neill, and a McMahon of Thomond as an O'Brien, but the difficulty disappears with use and familiarity, and though the number and variety of newly-coined names cannot be at once committed to memory, the story itself gains in distinctness by the change.

In the year 955, Donald O'Neill, son of the brave and beloved Murkertach, was recognised as Ard-Righ, by the required number of Provinces, without recourse to coercion. But it was _not_ to be expected that any Ard-Righ should, at this period of his country's fortunes, reign long in peace. War was then the business of the King; the first art he had to learn, and the first to practise. Warfare in Ireland had not been a stationary science since the arrival of the Norwegians and their successors, the Danes. Something they may have acquired from the natives, and in turn the natives were not slow to copy whatever seemed most effective in their tactics. Donald IV. was the first to imitate their habit of employing armed boats on the inland lakes. He even improved on their example, by carrying these boats with him overland, and launching them wherever he needed their co-operation; as we have already seen him do in his expedition against Breffni, while _Roydamna_, and as we find him doing again, in the seventh year of his reign, when he carried his boats

overland from Armagh to West-Meath in order to employ them on Loch Ennell, near Mullingar. He was at this time engaged in making his first royal visitation of the Provinces, upon which he spent two months in Leinster, with all his forces, coerced the Munster chiefs by fire and sword into obedience, and severely punished the insubordination of Fergal O'Ruarc, King of Connaught. His fleet upon Loch Ennell, and his severities generally while in their patrimony, so exasperated the powerful families of the Southern Hy-Nial (the elder of which was now known as O'Melaghlin), that on the first opportunity they leagued with the Dublin Danes, under their leader, Olaf "the Crooked" (A.D. 966), and drove King Donald out of Leinster and Meath, pursuing him across Slieve-Fuaid, almost to the walls of Aileach. But the brave tribes of Tyrconnell and Tyrowen rallied to his support, and he pressed south upon the insurgents of Meath and Dublin; West-Meath he rapidly overran, and "planted a garrison in every cantred from the Shannon to Kells," In the campaigns which now succeeded each other, without truce or pause, for nearly a dozen years, the Leinster people generally sympathised with and assisted those of West-Meath, and Olaf, of Dublin, who recruited his ranks by the junction of the Lagmans, a warlike tribe, from Insi-Gall (the Hebrides). Ossory, on the other hand, acted with the monarch, and the son of its Tanist (A.D. 974) was slain before Dublin, by Olaf and his Leinster allies, with 2,600 men, of Ossory and Ulster. The campaign of 978 was still more eventful: the Leinster men quarrelled with their Danish allies, who had taken their king captive, and in an engagement at Belan, near Athy, defeated their forces, with the loss of the heir of Leinster, the lords of Kinsellagh, Lea and Morett, and other chiefs. King Donald had no better fortune at Killmoon, in Meath, the same season, where he was utterly routed by the same force, with the loss of Ardgall, heir of Ulidia, and Kenneth, lord of Tyrconnell. But for the victories gained about the same period in Munster, by Mahon and Brian, the sons of Kennedy, over the Danes of Limerick, of which we shall speak more fully hereafter, the balance of victory would have strongly inclined towards the Northmen at this stage of the contest.

A leader, second in fame and in services only to Brian, was now putting forth his energies against the common enemy, in Meath. This was Melaghlin, better known afterwards as Malachy II., son of Donald, son of King Donogh, and, therefore, great-grandson to his namesake, Malachy I. He had lately attained to the command of his tribe--and he resolved to earn the honours which were in store for him, as successor to the sovereignty. In the year 979, the Danes of Dublin and the Isles marched in unusual strength into Meath, under the command of Rannall, son of Olaf the Crooked, and Connail, "the Orator of Ath-Cliath," (Dublin). Malachy, with his allies, gave them battle near Tara, and achieved a complete victory. Earl Rannall and the Orator were left dead on the field, with, it is reported, 5,000 of the foreigners. On the Irish side fell the heir of Leinster, the lord of Morgallion and his son;

the lords of Fertullagh and Cremorne, and a host of their followers. The engagement, in true Homeric spirit, had been suspended on three successive nights, and renewed three successive days. It was a genuine pitched battle--a trial of main strength, each party being equally confident of victory. The results were most important, and most gratifying to the national pride. Malachy, accompanied by his friend, the lord of Ulidia (Down), moved rapidly on Dublin, which, in its panic, yielded to all his demands. The King of Leinster and 2,000 other prisoners were given up to him without ransom. The Danish Earls solemnly renounced all claims to tribute or fine from any of the dwellers without their own walls. Malachy remained in the city three days, dismantled its fortresses, and carried off its hostages and treasure. The unfortunate Olaf the Crooked fled beyond seas, and died at Iona, in exile, and a Christian. In the same year, and in the midst of universal rejoicing, Donald IV. died peacefully and piously at Armagh, in the 24th year of his reign. He was succeeded by Malachy, who was his sister's son, and in whom all the promise of the lamented Murkertach seemed to revive.

The story of Malachy II. is so interwoven with the still-more illustrious career of Brian _Borooa_, that it will not lose in interest by being presented in detail. But before entering on the rivalry of these great men, we must again remark on the altered position which the Northmen of this age hold to the Irish from that which existed formerly. A century and a half had now elapsed since their first settlement in the seaports, especially of the eastern and southern Provinces. More than one generation of their descendants had been born on the banks of the Liffey, the Shannon, and the Suir. Many of them had married into Irish families, had learned the language of the country, and embraced its religion. When Limerick was taken by Brian, Ivar, its Danish lord, fled for sanctuary to Scattery Island, and when Dublin was taken by Malachy II., Olaf the Crooked fled to Iona. Inter-marriages with the highest Gaelic families became frequent, after their conversion to Christianity. The mother of Malachy, after his father's death, had married Olaf of Dublin, by whom she had a son, named _Gluniarran_ (Iron-Knee_, from his armour), who was thus half-brother to the King. It is natural enough to find him the ally of Malachy, a few years later, against Ivar of Waterford; and curious enough to find Ivar's son called Gilla-Patrick--servant of Patrick. Kellachan of Cashel had married a Danish, and Sitrick "of the Silken beard," an Irish lady. That all the Northmen were not, even in Ireland, converted in one generation, is evident. Those of Insi-Gall were still, perhaps, Pagans; those of the Orkneys and of Denmark, who came to the battle of Clontarf in the beginning of the next century, chose to fight on Good Friday under the advice of their heathen Oracles. The first half of the eleventh century, the age of Saint Olaf and of Canute, is the era of the establishment of Christianity among the Scandinavians, and hence the necessity for distinguishing between those who came to

Ireland, direct from the Baltic, from those who, born in Ireland and bred up in the Christian faith, had as much to apprehend from such an invasion, as the Celts themselves.

CHAPTER V.

REIGN OF MALACHY II. AND RIVALRY OF BRIAN.

Melaghlin, or Malachy II., fifth in direct descent from Malachy I. (the founder of the Southern Hy-Nial dynasty), was in his thirtieth year when (A.D. 980) he succeeded to the monarchy. He had just achieved the mighty victory of Tara when the death of his predecessor opened his way to the throne; and seldom did more brilliant dawn usher in a more eventful day than that which Fate held in store for this victor-king. None of his predecessors, not even his ancestor and namesake, had ever been able to use the high language of his "noble Proclamation," when he announced on his accession--"Let all the Irish who are suffering servitude in the land of the stranger return home to their respective houses and enjoy themselves in gladness and in peace." In obedience to this edict, and the power to enforce it established by the victory at Tara, 2,000 captives, including the King of Leinster and the Prince of Aileach, were returned to their homes.

The hardest task of every Ard-Righ of this and the previous century had been to circumscribe the ambition of the kings of Cashel within Provincial bounds. Whoever ascended the southern throne--whether the warlike Felim or the learned Cormac--we have seen the same policy adopted by them all. The descendants of Heber had tired of the long ascendancy of the race of Heremon, and the desertion of Tara, by making that ascendancy still more strikingly Provincial, had increased their antipathy. It was a struggle for supremacy between north and south; a contest of two geographical parties; an effort to efface the real or fancied dependency of one-half the island on the will of the other. The Southern Hy-Nial dynasty, springing up as a third power upon the Methian bank of the Shannon, and balancing itself between the contending parties, might perhaps have given a new centre to the whole system; Malachy II. was in the most favourable position possible to have done so, had he not had to contend with a rival, his equal in battle and superior in council, in the person of Brian, the son of Kennedy, of Kincorra.

The rise to sovereign rank of the house of Kincorra (the O'Briens), is one of the most striking episodes of the tenth century. Descending, like most of the leading families of the South, from Olild, the Clan Dalgais had long been excluded from the throne of Cashel, by successive coalitions of their elder brethren, the Eugenians. Lactna and Lorcan, the grandfather and father of Kennedy, intrepid and able men, had strengthened their tribe by wise and vigorous measures, so that the former was able to claim

the succession, apparently with success. Kennedy had himself been a claimant for the same honour, the alternate provision in the will of Olild, against Kellachan Cashel (A.D. 940-2), but at the Convention held at Glanworth, on the river Funcheon, for the selection of king, the aged mother of Kellachan addressed his rival in a quatrain, beginning--

"Kennedi Cas revere the law!"

which induced him to abandon his pretensions. This Prince, usually spoken of by the Bards as "the chaste Kennedy," died in the year 950, leaving behind him four or five out of twelve sons, with whom he had been blessed. Most of the others had fallen in Danish battles--three in the same campaign (943), and probably in the same field. There appear in after scenes, Mahon, who became King of Cashel; Ehtierna, who was chief of Thomond, under Mahon; Marcan, an ecclesiastic, and Brian, born in 941, the Benjamin of the household. Mahon proved himself, as Prince and Captain, every way worthy of his inheritance. He advanced from victory to victory over his enemies, foreign and domestic. In 960 he claimed the throne of Munster, which claim he enforced by royal visitation five years later. In the latter year, he rescued Clonmacnoise from the Danes, and in 968 defeated the same enemy, with a loss of several thousand men at Sulchoid. This great blow he followed up by the sack of Limerick, from which "he bore off a large quantity of gold, and silver, and jewels." In these, and all his expeditions, from a very early age, he was attended by Brian, to whom he acted not only as a brother and prince, but as a tutor in arms. Fortune had accompanied him in all his undertakings. He had expelled his most intractable rival--Molloy, son of Bran, lord of Desmond; his rule was acknowledged by the Northmen of Dublin and Cork, who opened their fortresses to him, and served under his banner; he carried "all the hostages of Munster to his house," which had never before worn so triumphant an aspect. But family greatness begets family pride, and pride begets envy and hatred. The Eugenic families who now found themselves overshadowed by the brilliant career of the sons of Kennedy, conspired against the life of Mahon, who, from his too confiding nature, fell easily into their trap. Molloy, son of Bran, by the advice of Ivar, the Danish lord of Limerick, proposed to meet Mahon in friendly conference at the house of Donovan, an Eugenic chief, whose rath was at Bruree, on the river Maigue. The safety of each person was guaranteed by the Bishop of Cork, the mediator on the occasion. Mahon proceeded unsuspectingly to the conference, where he was suddenly seized by order of his treacherous host, and carried into the neighbouring mountains of Knocinreorin. Here a small force, placed for the purpose by the conspirators, had orders promptly to despatch their victim. But the foul deed was not done unwitnessed. Two priests of the Bishop of Cork followed the Prince, who, when arrested, snatched up "the Gospel of St. Barry," on which Molloy was to have sworn his fealty. As the swords of the assassins were aimed at his

heart, he held up the Gospel for a protection, and his blood spouting out, stained the Sacred Scriptures. The priests, taking up the blood-stained volume, fled to their Bishop, spreading the horrid story as they went. The venerable successor of St. Barry "wept bitterly, and uttered a prophecy concerning the future fate of the murderers;" a prophecy which was very speedily fulfilled.

This was in the year 976, three or four years before the battle of Tara and the accession of Malachy. When the news of his noble-hearted brother's murder was brought to Brian, at Kinkora, he was seized with the most violent grief. His favourite harp was taken down, and he sang the death-song of Mahon, recounting all the glorious actions of his life. His anger flashed out through his tears, as he wildly chanted

"My heart shall burst within my breast,
Unless I avenge this great king;
They shall forfeit life for this foul deed
Or I must perish by a violent death."

But the climax of his lament was, that Mahon "had not fallen in battle behind the shelter of his shield, rather than trust in the treacherous words of Donovan." Brian was now in his thirty-fifth year, was married, and had several children. Morrogh, his eldest, was able to bear arms, and shared in his ardour and ambition. "His first effort," says an old Chronicle, "was directed against Donovan's allies, the Danes of Limerick, and he slew Ivar their king, and two of his sons." These conspirators, foreseeing their fate, had retired into the holy isle of Scattery, but Brian slew them between "the horns of the altar." For this violation of the sanctuary, considering his provocation, he was little blamed. He next turned his rage against Donovan, who had called to his aid the Danish townsmen of Desmond. "Brian," says the Annalist of Innisfallen, "gave them battle where Auliffe and his Danes, and Donovan and his Irish forces, were all cut off." After that battle, Brian sent a challenge to Molloy, of Desmond, according to the custom of that age, to meet him in arms near Macroom, where the usual coalition, Danes and Irish, were against him. He completely routed the enemy, and his son Morrogh, then but a lad, "killed the murderer of his uncle Mahon with his own hand." Molloy was buried on the north side of the mountain where Mahon was murdered and interred; on Mahon the southward sun shone full and fair; but on the grave of his assassin, the black shadow of the northern sky rested always. Such was the tradition which all Munster piously believed. After this victory over Molloy, son of Bran (A.D. 978), Brian was universally acknowledged King of Munster, and until Malachy had won the battle of Tara, was justly considered the first Irish captain of his age.

Malachy, in the first year of his reign, having received the hostages of the Danes of Dublin, having liberated the Irish prisoners and secured the unity of his own territory, had his attention drawn, naturally enough,

towards Brian's movements. Whether Brian had refused him homage, or that his revival of the old claim to the half-kingdom was his offence, or from whatever immediate cause, Malachy marched southwards, enforcing homage as he went. Entering Thomond he plundered the Dalcassians, and marching to the mound at Adair, where, under an old oak, the kings of Thomond had long been inaugurated, he caused it to be "dug from the earth with its roots," and cut into pieces. This act of Malachy's certainly bespeaks an embittered and aggressive spirit, and the provocation must, indeed, have been grievous to palliate so barbarous an action. But we are not informed what the provocation was. At the time Brian was in Ossory enforcing his tribute; the next year we find him seizing the person of Gilla-Patrick, Lord of Ossory, and soon after he burst into Meath, avenging with fire and sword the wanton destruction of his ancestral oak.

Thus were these two powerful Princes openly embroiled with each other. We have no desire to dwell on all the details of their struggle, which continued for fully twenty years. About the year 987, Brian was practically king of half Ireland, and having the power, (though not the title,) he did not suffer any part of it to lie waste. His activity was incapable of exhaustion; in Ossory, in Leinster, in Connaught, his voice and his arm were felt everywhere. But a divided authority was of necessity so favourable to invasion, that the Danish power began to loom up to its old proportions. Sitrick, "with the silken beard," one of the ablest of Danish leaders, was then at Dublin, and his occasional incursions were so formidable, that they produced (what probably nothing else could have done) an alliance between Brian and Malachy, which lasted for three years, and was productive of the best consequences. Thus, in 997, they imposed their yoke on Dublin, taking "hostages and jewels" from the foreigners. Reinforcements arriving from the North, the indomitable Danes proceeded to plunder Leinster, but were routed by Brian and Malachy at Glen-Mama, in Wicklow, with the loss of 6,000 men and all their chief captains. Immediately after this victory the two kings, according to the Annals, "entered into Dublin, and the fort thereof, and there remained seven nights, and at their departure took all the gold, silver, hangings, and other precious things that were there with them, burnt the town, broke down the fort, and banished Sitrick from thence" (A.D. 999).

The next three years of Brian's life are the most complex in his career. After resting a night in Meath, with Malachy, he proceeded with his forces towards Armagh, nominally on a pilgrimage, but really, as it would seem, to extend his party. He remained in the sacred city a week, and presented ten ounces of gold, at the Cathedral altar. The Archbishop Marian received him with the distinction due to so eminent a guest, and a record of his visit, in which he is styled "Imperator of the Irish," was entered in the book of St. Patrick. He, however, got no hostages in the North, but on his march southward, he learned that the Danes had returned to Dublin, were

rebuilding the City and Fort, and were ready to offer submission and hostages to him, while refusing both to Malachy. Here Brian's eagerness for supremacy misled him. He accepted the hostages, joined the foreign forces to his own, and even gave his daughter in marriage to Sitrick of "the silken beard." Immediately he broke with Malachy, and with his new allies and son-in-law, marched into Meath in hostile array. Malachy, however, stood to his defence; attacked and defeated Brian's advance guard of Danish horse, and the latter, unwilling apparently to push matters to extremities, retired as he came, without "battle, or hostage, or spoil of any kind."

But his design of securing the monarchy was not for an instant abandoned, and, by combined diplomacy and force, he effected his end. His whole career would have been incomplete without that last and highest conquest over every rival. Patiently but surely he had gathered influence and authority, by arms, by gifts, by connections on all sides. He had propitiated the chief families of Connaught by his first marriage with More, daughter of O'Heyne, and his second marriage with Duvchalvay, daughter of O'Conor. He had obtained one of the daughters of Godwin, the powerful Earl of Kent, for his second son; had given a daughter to the Prince of Scots, and another to the Danish King of Dublin.

Malachy, in diplomatic skill, in foresight, and in tenacity of purpose, was greatly inferior to Brian, though in personal gallantry and other princely qualities, every way his equal. He was of a hospitable, out-spoken, enjoying disposition, as we gather from many characteristic anecdotes. He is spoken of as "being generally computed the best horseman in those parts of Europe;" and as one who "delighted to ride a horse that was never broken, handled, or ridden, until the age of seven years." From an ancient story, which represents him as giving his revenues for a year to one of the Court Poets and then fighting him with a "headless staff" to compel the Poet to return them, it would appear that his good humour and profusion were equal to his horsemanship. Finding Brian's influence still on the increase west of the Shannon, Malachy, in the year of our Lord 1000, threw two bridges across the Shannon, one at Athlone, the other at the present Lanesborough. This he did with the consent and assistance of O'Conor, but the issue was as usual--he made the bridges, and Brian profited by them. While Malachy was at Athlone superintending the work, Brian arrived with a great force recruited from all quarters (except Ulster), including Danish men-in-armour. At Athlone was held the conference so memorable in our annals, in which Brian gave his rival the alternative of a pitched battle, within a stated time, or abdication. According to the Southern Annalists, first a month, and afterwards a year, were allowed the Monarch to make his choice. At the expiration of the time Brian marched into Meath, and encamped at Tara, where Malachy, having vainly endeavoured to secure the alliance of the Northern Hy-Nial in the interval, came and submitted to Brian without

safeguard or surety. The unmade monarch was accompanied by a guard "of twelve score horsemen," and on his arrival, proceeded straight to the tent of his successor. Here the rivals contended in courtesy, as they had often done in arms, and when they separated, Brian, as Lord Paramount, presented Malachy as many horses as he had horsemen in his train when he came to visit him. This event happened in the year 1001, when Brian was in his 60th and Malachy in his 53rd year. There were present at the Assembly all the princes and chiefs of the Irish, except the Prince of Aileach, and the Lords of Oriel, Ulidia, Tyrowen and Tyrconnell, who were equally unwilling to assist Malachy or to acknowledge Brian. What is still more remarkable is, the presence in this national assembly of the Danish Lords of Dublin, Carmen (Wexford), Waterford and Cork, whom Brian, at this time, was trying hard to conciliate by gifts and alliances.

CHAPTER VI.

BRIAN, ARD-RIGH--BATTLE OF CLONTARF.

By the deposition of Malachy II., and the transfer of supreme power to the long-excluded line of Heber, Brian completed the revolution which Time had wrought in the ancient Celtic constitution. He threw open the sovereignty to every great family as a prize to be won by policy or force, and no longer an inheritance to be determined by usage and law. The consequences were what might have been expected. After his death the O'Conors of the west competed with both O'Neills and O'Briens for supremacy, and a chronic civil war prepared the path for Strongbow and the Normans. The term "Kings with Opposition" is applied to nearly all who reigned between Brian's time and Roderick O'Conor's, meaning, thereby, kings who were unable to secure general obedience to their administration of affairs.

During the remainder of his life, Brian wielded with accustomed vigour the supreme power. The Hy-Nials were, of course, his chief difficulty. In the year 1002, we find him at Ballysadare, in Sligo, challenging their obedience; in 1004, we find him at Armagh "offering twenty ounces of gold on Patrick's altar," staying a week there and receiving hostages; in 1005, he marched through Connaught, crossed the river Erne at Ballyshannon, proceeded through Tyrconnell and Tyrowen, crossed the Bann into Antrim, and returned through Down and Dundalk, "about Lammas," to Tara. In this and the two succeeding years, by taking similar "circuits," he subdued Ulster, without any pitched battle, and caused his authority to be feared and obeyed nearly as much at the Giant's Causeway as at the bridge of Athlone. In his own house of Kinkora, Brian entertained at Christmas 3,000 guests, including the Danish Lords of Dublin and Man, the fugitive Earl of Kent, the young King of Scots, certain Welsh Princes, and those of Munster, Ulster, Leinster and Connaught,

beside his hostages. At the same time Malachy, with the shadow, of independence, kept his unfrequented court in West-Meath, amusing himself with wine and chess and the taming of unmanageable horses, in which last pursuit, after his abdication, we hear of his breaking a limb. To support the hospitalities of Kinkora, the tributes of every province were rendered in kind at his gate, on the first day of November. Connaught sent 800 cows and 800 hogs; Ulster alone 500 cows, and as many hogs, and "sixty loads of iron;" Leinster 300 bullocks, 300 hogs, and 300 loads of iron; Ossory, Desmond, and the smaller territories, in proportion; the Danes of Dublin 150 pipes of wine, and the Danes of Limerick 365 of red wine. The Dalcassians, his own people, were exempt from all tribute and taxation --while the rest of Ireland was thus catering for Kinkora.

The lyric Poets, in then nature courtiers and given to enjoyment, flocked, of course, to this bountiful palace. The harp was seldom silent night or day, the strains of panegyric were as prodigal and incessant as the falling of the Shannon over Killaloe. Among these eulogiums none is better known than that beautiful allegory of the poet McLaig, who sung that "a young lady of great beauty, adorned with jewels and costly dress, might perform unmolested a journey on foot through the Island, carrying a straight wand, on the top of which might be a ring of great value." The name of Brian was thus celebrated as in itself a sufficient protection of life, chastity, and property, in every corner of the Island. Not only the Poets, but the more exact and simple Annalists applaud Brian's administration of the laws, and his personal virtues. He laboured hard to restore the Christian civilization, so much defaced by two centuries of Pagan warfare. To facilitate the execution of the laws he enacted the general use of surnames, obliging the clans to take the name of a common ancestor, with the addition of "Mac," or "O"--words which signify "of," or "son of," a forefather. Thus, the Northern Hy-Nials divided into O'Neils, O'Donnells, McLaughlins, &c.; the Sil-Murray took the name of O'Conor, and Brian's own posterity became known as O'Briens. To justice he added munificence, and of this the Churches and Schools of the entire Island were the recipients. Many a desolate shrine he adorned, many a bleak chancel he hung with lamps, many a long silent tower had its bells restored. Monasteries were rebuilt, and the praise of God was kept up perpetually by a devoted brotherhood. Roads and bridges were repaired and several strong stone fortresses were erected, to command the passes of lakes and rivers. The vulnerable points along the Shannon, and the Suir, and the lakes, as far north as the Foyle, were secured by forts of clay and stone. Thirteen "royal houses" in Munster alone are said to have been by him restored to their original uses. What increases our respect for the wisdom and energy thus displayed, is the fact, that the author of so many improvements, enjoyed but five short years of peace, after his accession to the Monarchy. His administrative genius must have been great when, after a long life of warfare, he could apply himself to so many works of

internal improvement and external defence.

In the five years of peace just spoken of (from 1005 to 1010), Brian lost by death his second wife, a son called Donald, and his brother Marcan, called in the annals "head of the clergy of Munster;" Hugh, the son of Mahon, also died about the same period. His favourite son and heir, Morrogh, was left, and Morrogh had, at this time, several children. Other sons and daughters were also left him, by each of his wives, so that there was every prospect that the posterity for whom he had so long sought the sovereignty of Ireland, would continue to possess it for countless generations. But God disposes of what man only proposes!

The Northmen had never yet abandoned any soil on which they had once set foot, and the policy of conciliation which the veteran King adopted in his old age, was not likely to disarm men of their stamp. Every intelligence of the achievements of their race in other realms stimulated them to new exertions and shamed them out of peaceful submission. Rollo and his successors had, within Brian's lifetime, founded in France the great dukedom of Normandy; while Sweyn had swept irresistibly over England and Wales, and prepared the way for a Danish dynasty. Pride and shame alike appealed to their warlike compatriots not to allow the fertile Hibernia to slip from their grasp, and the great age of its long-dreaded king seemed to promise them an easier victory than heretofore was possible. In 1012 we find Brian at Lough Foyle repelling a new Danish invasion, and giving "freedom to Patrick's Churches;" the same year, an army under Morrogh and another under Malachy was similarly engaged in Leinster and Meath; the former carrying his arms to Kilmainham, on the south side of Dublin, the other to Howth, on the north; in this year also "the Gentiles," or Pagan Northmen, made a descent on Cork, and burned the city, but were driven off by the neighbouring chiefs.

The great event, however, of the long war which had now been waged for full two hundred years between the men of Erin and the men of Scandinavia was approaching. What may fairly be called the last field day of Christianity and Paganism on Irish soil, was near at hand. A taunt thrown out over a game of chess, at Kinkora, is said to have hastened this memorable day. Maelmurra, Prince of Leinster, playing or advising on the game, made, or recommended, a false move, upon which Morrogh, son of Brian, observed, it was no wonder his friends, the Danes, (to whom he owed his elevation,) were beaten at Glen-Mama, if he gave them advice like that. Maelmurra, highly incensed by this allusion--all the more severe for its bitter truth--arose, ordered his horse, and rode away in haste. Brian, when he heard it, despatched a messenger after the indignant guest, begging him to return, but Maelmurra was not to be pacified, and refused. We next hear of him as concerting with certain Danish agents, always open to such negotiations, those measures which led to the great invasion of the year 1014, in which the

whole Scanian race, from Anglesea and Man, north to Norway, bore an active share.

These agents passing over to England and Man, among the Scottish isles, and even to the Baltic, followed up the design of an invasion on a gigantic scale. Suibne, Earl of Man, entered warmly into the conspiracy, and sent the "war arrow" through all those "out-islands" which obeyed him as Lord. A yet more formidable potentate, Sigurd, of the Orkneys, next joined the league. He was the fourteenth Earl of Orkney of Norse origin, and his power was, at this period, a balance to that of his nearest neighbour, the King of Scots. He had ruled since the year 996, not only over the Orkneys, Shetland, and Northern Hebrides, but the coasts of Caithness and Sutherland, and even Ross and Moray rendered him homage and tribute. Eight years before the battle of Clontarf, Malcolm II., of Scotland, had been feign to purchase his alliance, by giving him his daughter in marriage, and the Kings of Denmark and Norway treated with him on equal terms. The hundred inhabited isles which lie between Yell and Man,--isles which after their conversion contained "three hundred churches and chapels"--sent in their contingents, to swell the following of the renowned Earl Sigurd. As his fleet bore southward from Kirkwall it swept the subject coast of Scotland, and gathered from every lough its galleys and its fighting men. The rendezvous was the Isle of Man, where Suibne had placed his own forces under the command of Brodar or Broderick, a famous leader against the Britons of Wales and Cornwall. In conjunction with Sigurd, the Manxmen sailed over to Ireland, where they were joined, in the Liffey, by Carl Canuteson, Prince of Denmark, at the head of 1400 champions clad in armour. Sitrick of Dublin stood, or affected to stand, neutral in these preparations, but Maelmurra of Leinster had mustered all the forces he could command for such an expedition. He was himself the head of the powerful family of O'Byrne, and was followed in his alliances by others of the descendants of Cahir More. O'Nolan and O'More, with a truer sense of duty, fought on the patriotic side.

Brian had not been ignorant of the exertions which were made during the summer and winter of the year 1013, to combine an overwhelming force against him. In his exertions to meet force with force, it is gratifying to every believer in human excellence to find him actively supported by the Prince whom he had so recently deposed. Malachy, during the summer of 1013, had, indeed, lost two sons in skirmishes with Sitrick and Maelmurra, and had, therefore, his own personal wrongs to avenge; but he cordially co-operated with Brian before those occurrences, and now loyally seconded all his movements. The Lords of the southern half-kingdom--the Lords of Desies, Fermoy, Inchiquin, Corca-Baskin, Kinalmeaky, Kerry, and the Lords of Hy-Many and Hy-Fiachra, in Connaught, hastened to his standard. O'More and O'Nolan of Leinster, and Donald, Steward of Marr, in Scotland, were the other chieftains who joined him before Clontarf, besides those of his own kindred. None of the Northern

Hy-Nial took part in the battle--they had submitted to Brian, but they never cordially supported him.

Clontarf, the lawn or meadow of bulls, stretches along the crescent-shaped north strand of Dublin harbour, from the ancient salmon-weir at Ballyboght bridge, towards the promontory of Howth. Both horns of the crescent were held by the enemy, and communicated with his ships: the inland point terminating in the roofs of Dublin, and the seaward marked by the lion-like head of Howth. The meadow land between sloped gently upward and inward from the beach, and for the myriad duels which formed the ancient battle, no field could present less positive vantage-ground to combatants on either side. The invading force had possession of both wings, so that Brian's army, which had first encamped at Kilmainham, must have crossed the Liffey higher up, and marched round by the present Drumcondra in order to reach the appointed field. The day seems to have been decided on by formal challenge, for we are told Brian did not wish to fight in the last week of Lent, but a Pagan oracle having assured victory to Brodar, one of the northern leaders, if he engaged on a Friday, the invaders insisted on being led to battle on that day. And it so happened that, of all Fridays in the year, it fell on the Friday before Easter: that awful anniversary when the altars of the Church are veiled throughout Christendom, and the dark stone is rolled to the door of the mystic sepulchre.

The forces on both sides could not have fallen short of twenty thousand men. Under Carl Canuteson fought "the ten hundred in armour," as they are called in the Irish annals, or "the fourteen hundred," as they are called in northern chronicles; under Brodar, the Manxmen and the Danes of Anglesea and Wales; under Sigurd, the men of Orkney and its dependencies; under Maelmurra, of Leinster, his own tribe, and their kinsmen of Offally and Cullen --the modern Kildare and Wicklow; under Brian's son, Morrogh, were the tribes of Munster; under the command of Malachy, those of Meath; under the Lord of Hy-Many, the men of Connaught; and the Stewart of Marr had also his command. The engagement was to commence with the morning, so that, as soon as it was day, Brian, Crucifix in hand, harangued his army. "On this day Christ died for _you_!" was the spirit-stirring appeal of the venerable Christian King. At the entreaty of his friends, after this review, he retired to his tent, which stood at some distance, and was guarded by three of his aids. Here, he alternately prostrated himself before the Crucifix, or looked out from the tent door upon the dreadful scene that lay beyond. The sun rose to the zenith and took his way towards the west, but still the roar of the battle did not abate. Sometimes as their right hands swelled with the sword-hilts, well-known warriors might be seen falling back to bathe them, in a neighbouring spring, and then rushing again into the melee. The line of the engagement extended from the salmon-weir towards Howth, not less than a couple of miles, so that it was impossible to take in at a glance the probabilities of victory. Once

during the heat of the day one of his servants said to Brian, "A vast multitude are moving towards us." "What sort of people are they?" inquired Brian. "They are green-naked people." said the attendant. "Oh!" replied the king, "they are the Danes in armour!" The utmost fury was displayed on all sides. Sigurd, Earl of Orkney, fell by Thurlogh, grandson of Brian; and Anrud, one of the captains of the men in armour, by the hand of his father, Morrogh; but both father and son perished in the dreadful conflict; Maelmurra of Leinster, with his lords, fell on one side, and Conaing, nephew of Brian, O'Kelly, O'Heyne, and the Stewart of Marr, on the other. Hardly a nobly-born man escaped, or sought to escape. The ten hundred in armour, and three thousand others of the enemy, with about an equal number of the men of Ireland, lay dead upon the field. One division of the enemy were, towards sunset, retreating to their ships, when Brodar, the Viking, perceiving the tent of Brian, standing apart, without a guard, and the aged king on his knees before the Crucifix, rushed in, cut him down with a single blow, and then continued his flight. But he was overtaken by the guard, and despatched by the most cruel death they could devise. Thus, on the field of battle, in the act of prayer, on the day of our Lord's Crucifixion, fell the Christian King in the cause of native land and Holy Cross. Many elegies have been dedicated to his memory, and not the least noble of these strains belong to his enemies. In death as in life he was still Brian "of the tributes."

The deceased hero took his place at once in history, national and foreign. On hearing of his death, Maelmurra, Archbishop of Armagh, came with his clergy to Swords, in Meath, and conducted the body to Armagh, where, with his son and nephew and the Lord of Desies, he was solemnly interred "in a new tomb." The fame of the event went out through all nations. The chronicles of Wales, of Scotland, and of Man; the annals of Ademar and Marianus; the Sagas of Denmark and the Isles all record the event. In "the Orcades" of Thormodus Torfaeus, a wail over the defeat of the Islesmen is heard, which they call

"Orkney's woe and Randver's bane."

The Norse settlers in Caithness saw terrific visions of Valhalla "the day after the battle." In the NIALA SAGA a Norwegian prince is introduced as asking after his men, and the answer is, "they were all killed." Malcolm of Scotland rejoiced in the defeat and death of his dangerous and implacable neighbour. "Brian's battle," as it is called in the Sagas, was, in short, such a defeat as prevented any general northern combination for the subsequent invasion of Ireland. Not that the country was entirely free from their attacks till the end of the eleventh century, but from the day of Clontarf forward, the long cherished Northern idea of a conquest of Ireland, seems to have been gloomily abandoned by that indomitable people.

CHAPTER VII.

EFFECTS OF THE RIVALRY OF BRIAN AND MALACHY ON THE ANCIENT CONSTITUTION.

If a great battle is to be accounted lost or won, as it affects principles rather than reputations, then Brian lost at Clontarf. The leading ideas of his long and political life were, evidently, centralization and an hereditary monarchy. To beat back foreign invasion, to conciliate and to enlist the Irish-born Danes under his standard, were preliminary steps. For Morrogh, his first-born, and for Morrogh's descendants, he hoped to found an hereditary kinship after the type universally copied throughout Christendom. He was not ignorant of what Alfred had done for England, Harold for Norway, Charlemagne for France, and Otho for Germany; and it was inseparable from his imperial genius to desire to reign in his posterity, long after his own brief term of sway should be for ever ended. A new centre of royal authority should be established on the banks of the great middle river of the island--itself the best bond of union, as it was the best highway of intercourse; the Dalgais dynasty should there flourish for ages, and the descendants of Brian of the Tributes, through after centuries, eclipse the glory of the descendants of Nial of the Hostages. It is idle enough to call the projector of such a change an usurper and a revolutionist. Usurper he clearly was not, since he was elevated to power by the action of the old legitimate electoral principle; revolutionist he was not, because his design was defeated at Clontarf, in the death of his eldest son and grandson. Not often have three generations of Princes of the same family been cut off on the same field; yet at Clontarf it so happened. Hence, when Brian fell, and his heir with him, and his heir's heir, the projected Dalgais dynasty, like the Royal Oak at Adair, was cut down and its very roots destroyed. For a new dynasty to be left suddenly without indisputable heirs is ruinous to its pretensions and partizans. And in this the event of the battle proved destructive to the Celtic Constitution. Not from the Anglo-Norman invasion, but from the day of Clontarf we may date the ruin of the old electoral monarchy. The spell of ancient authority was effectually broken and a new one was to be established. Time, which was indispensable, was not given. No Prince of the blood of Brian succeeded immediately to himself. On Clontarf Morrogh, and Morrogh's heir fell, in the same day and hour. The other sons of Brian had no direct title to the succession, and, naturally enough, the deposed Malachy resumed the rank of monarch, without the consent of Munster, but with the approval of all the Princes, who had witnessed with ill-concealed envy the sudden ascendancy of the sons of Kennedy. While McLaig was lamenting for Brian, by the cascade of Killaloe, the Laureat of Tara, in an elegy over a lord of Breffni, was singing--

"Joyful are the race of Conn after Brian's
Fall, in the battle of Clontarf."

A new dynasty is rarely the work of one able man. Designed by genius, it must be built up by a succession of politic Princes, before it becomes an essential part of the framework of the State. So all history teaches--and Irish history, after the death of Brian, very clearly illustrates that truth. Equally true is it that when a nation breaks up of itself, or from external forces, and is not soon consolidated by a conqueror, the most natural result is the aggrandizement of a few great families. Thus it was in Rome when Julius was assassinated, and in Italy, when the empire of the west fell to pieces of its own weight. The kindred of the late sovereign will be sure to have a party, the chief innovators will have a party, and there is likely to grow up a third or moderate party. So it fell out in Ireland. The Hy-Nials of the north, deprived of the succession, rallied about the Princes of Aileach as their head. Meath, left crownless, gave room to the ambition of the sons of Malachy, who, under the name of O'Melaghlin, took provincial rank. Ossory, like Issachar, long groaning beneath the burdens of Tara and of Cashel, cruelly revenged on the Dalgais, returning from Clontarf, the subjection to which Mahon and Brian had forcibly reduced that borderland. The Eugenians of Desmond withdrew in disgust from the banner of Donogh O'Brien, because he had openly proclaimed his hostility to the alternate succession, and left his surviving clansmen an easy prey to the enraged Ossorians. Leinster soon afterwards passed from the house of O'Byrne to that of McMurrough. The O'Briens maintained their dominant interest in the south; as, after many local struggles, the O'Conors did in the west. For a hundred and fifty years, after the death of Malachy II., the history of Ireland is mainly the history of these five families, O'Neils, O'Melaghlin, McMurroughs, O'Briens and O'Conors. And for ages after the Normans enter on the scene, the same provincialized spirit, the same family ambitions, feuds, hates, and coalitions, with some exceptional passages, characterize the whole history. Not that there will be found any want of heroism, or piety, or self-sacrifice, or of any virtue or faculty, necessary to constitute a state, save and except the _power of combination_, alone. Thus, judged by what came after him, and what was happening in the world abroad, Brian's design to re-centralize the island, seems the highest dictate of political wisdom, in the condition to which the Norwegian and Danish wars had reduced it, previous to his elevation to the monarchy. Malachy II. --of the events of whose second reign some mention will be made hereafter--held the sovereignty after Brian's death, until the year 1023, when he died an edifying death in one of the islands of Lough Ennel, near the present Mullingar. He is called, in the annals of Clonmacnoise, "the last king of Ireland, of Irish blood, that had the crown." An ancient quatrain, quoted by Geoffrey Keating, is thus literally translated:

"After the happy Melaghlin
Son of Donald, son of Donogh,
Each noble king ruled his own tribe
But Erin owned no sovereign Lord."

The annals of the eleventh and twelfth centuries curiously illustrate the workings of this "anarchical constitution"--to employ a phrase first applied to the Germanic Confederation. "After Malachy's death," says the quaint old Annalist of Clonmacnoise, "this kingdom was without a king 20 years, during which time the realm was governed by two learned men; the one called Con O'Lochan, a well learned temporal man, and chief poet of Ireland; the other Corcran Claireach, a devout and holy man that was anchorite of all Ireland, whose most abiding was at Lismore. The land was governed like a free state, and not like a monarchy by them." Nothing can show the headlessness of the Irish Constitution in the eleventh century clearer than this interregnum. No one Prince could rally strength enough to be elected, so that two Arbitrators, an illustrious Poet and a holy Priest, were appointed to take cognizance of national causes. The associating together of a Priest and a layman, a southerner and a northerner, is conclusive proof that the bond of Celtic unity, frittered away during the Danish period, was never afterwards entirely restored. Con O'Lochan having been killed in Teffia, after a short jurisdiction, the holy Corcran exercised his singular jurisdiction, until his decease, which happened at Lismore, (A.D. 1040.) His death produced a new paroxysm of anarchy, out of which a new organizer arose among the tribes of Leinster. This was Dermid, son of Donogh, who died (A.D. 1005), when Dermid must have been a mere infant, as he does not figure in the annals till the year 1032, and the acts of young Princes are seldom overlooked in Gaelic Chronicles. He was the first McMurrough who became King of Leinster, that royalty having been in the O'Byrne family, until the son of Maelmurra, of Clontarf, was deposed by O'Neil in 1035, and retired to a monastery in Cologne, where he died in 1052. In 1036 or 1037 Dermid captured Dublin and Waterford, married the grand-daughter of Brian, and by '41 was strong enough to assume the rank of ruler of the southern half-kingdom. This dignity he held with a strong and warlike hand thirty years, when he fell in battle, at Ova, in Meath. He must have been at that time full threescore years and ten. He is described by the elegiac Bards as of "ruddy complexion," "with teeth laughing in danger," and possessing all the virtues of a warrior-king; "whose death," adds the lamentation, "brought scarcity of peace" with it, so that "there will not be peace," "there will not be armistice," between Meath and Leinster. It may well be imagined that every new resort to the two-third test, in the election of Ard-Righ, should bring "scarcity of peace" to Ireland. We can easily understand the ferment of hope, fear, intrigue, and passion, which such an occasion caused among the great rival families. What canvassing there was in Kinkora and Cashel, at Cruachan and Aileach, and at Fernamore! What piecing and patching of interests,

what libels on opposing candidates, what exultation in the successful, what discontent in the defeated camp!

The successful candidate for the southern half-kingdom after Dermid's death was Thorlogh, grandson of Brian, and foster-son of the late ruler. In his reign, which lasted thirty-three years, the political fortunes of his house revived. He died in peace at Kinkora (A.D. 1087), and the war of succession again broke out. The rival candidates at this period were Murrogh O'Brien, son of the late king, whose ambition was to complete the design of Brian, and Donald, Prince of Aileach, the leader of the Northern Hy-Nials. Two abler men seldom divided a country by their equal ambition. Both are entered in the annals as "Kings of Ireland," but it is hard to discover that, during all the years of their contest, either of them submitted to the other. To chronicle all the incidents of the struggle would take too much space here; and, as was to be expected, a third party profited most by it; the West came in, in the person of O'Conor, to lord it over both North and South, and to add another element to the dynastic confusion.

This brief abstract of our civil affairs after the death of Brian, presents us with the extraordinary spectacle of a country without a constitution working out the problem of its stormy destiny in despite of all internal and external dangers. Everything now depended on individual genius and energy; nothing on system, usage, or prescription. Each leading family and each province became, in turn, the head of the State. The supreme title seems to have been fatal for a generation to the family that obtained it, for in no case is there a lineal descent of the crown. The prince of Aileach or Kinkora naturally preferred his permanent patrimony to an uncertain tenure of Tara; an office not attached to a locality became, of course, little more than an arbitrary title. Hence, the titular King of Ireland might for one lifetime reign by the Shannon, in the next by the Bann, in a third, by Lough Corrib. The supremacy, thus came to be considered a merely personal appurtenance, was carried about in the old King's tent, or on the young King's crupper, deteriorating and decaying by every transposition it underwent. Herein, we have the origin of Irish disunion with all its consequences, good, bad, and indifferent.

Are we to blame Brian for this train of events against which he would have provided a sharp remedy in the hereditary principle? Or, on the other hand, are we to condemn Malachy, the possessor of legitimate power, if he saw in that remedy only the ambition of an aspiring family already grown too great? Theirs was in fact the universal struggle of reform and conservatism; the reformer and the heirs of his work were cut off on Clontarf; the abuses of the elective principle continued unrestrained by ancient salutary usage and prejudice, and the land remained a tempting prey to such Adventurers, foreign or native, as dare undertake to mould power out of its chaotic materials.

CHAPTER VIII.

LATTER DAYS OF THE NORTHMEN IN IRELAND.

Though Ireland dates the decay of Scandinavian power from Good Friday, 1014, yet the North did not wholly cease to send forth its warriors, nor were the shores of the Western Island less tempting to them than before. The second year after the battle of Clontarf, Canute founded his Danish dynasty in England, which existed in no little splendour during thirty-seven years. The Saxon line was restored by Edward "the Confessor;" in the forty-third year of the century, only to be extinguished for ever by the Norman conquest twenty-three years later. Scotland, during the same years was more than once subject to invasion from the same ancient enemy. Malcolm II., and the brave usurper Macbeth, fought several engagements with the northern leaders, and generally with brilliant success. By a remarkable coincidence, the Scottish chronicles also date the decadence of Danish power on their coasts from 1014, though several engagements were fought in Scotland after that year.

Malachy II. had promptly followed up the victory of Clontarf by the capture of Dublin, the destruction of its fort, and the exemplary chastisement of the tribes of Leinster, who had joined Maelmurra as allies of the Danes. Sitrick himself seems to have eluded the suspicions and vengeance of the conquerors by a temporary exile, as we find in the succession of the Dublin Vikings, "one Hyman, an usurper," entered as ruling "part of a year while Sitrick was in banishment." His family interest, however, was strong among the native Princes, and whatever his secret sympathies may have been, he had taken no active part against them in the battle of Clontarf. By his mother, the Lady Gormley of Offally, he was a half O'Connor; by marriage he was son-in-law of Brian, and uterine brother of Malachy. After his return to Dublin, when, in 1018, Brian, son of Maelmurra, fell prisoner into his hands, as if to clear himself of any lingering suspicion of an understanding with that family, he caused his eyes to be put out--a cruel but customary punishment in that age. This act procured for him the deadly enmity of the warlike mountaineers of Wicklow, who, in the year 1022, gave him a severe defeat at Delgany. Even this he outlived, and died seven years later, the acknowledged lord of his town and fortress, forty years after his first accession to that title. He was succeeded by his son, grandson, and great-grandson during the remaining half century.

The kingdom of Leinster, in consequence of the defeat of Maelmurra, the incapacity of Brian, and the destruction of other claimants of the same family, passed to the family of McMurrough, another branch of the same ancestry.

Dermid, the first and most distinguished King of Leinster of this house, took Waterford (A.D. 1037), and so reduced its strength, that we find its hosts no longer formidable in the field. Those of Limerick continued their homage to the house of Kinkora, while the descendants of Sitrick recognised Dermid of Leinster as their sovereign. In short, all the Dano-Irish from thenceforward began to knit themselves kindly to the soil, to obey the neighbouring Princes, to march with them to battle, and to pursue the peaceful calling of merchants, upon sea. The only peculiarly _Danish_ undertaking we hear of again, in our Annals, was the attempt of a united fleet, equipped by Dublin, Wexford, and Waterford, in the year 1088, to retake Cork from the men of Desmond, when they were driven with severe loss to their ships. Their few subsequent expeditions were led abroad, into the Hebrides, the Isle of Man, or Wales, where they generally figure as auxiliaries or mercenaries in the service of local Princes. They appear in Irish battles only as contingents to the native armies--led by their own leaders and recognized as a separate, but subordinate force. In the year 1073, the Dublin Danes did homage to the monarch Thorlogh, and from 1095, until his death (A.D. 1119), they recognized no other lord but Murkertach More O'Brien; this king, at their own request, had also nominated one of his family as Lord of the Danes and Welsh of the Isle of Man.

The wealth of these Irish-Danes, before and after the time of Brian, may be estimated by the annual tribute which Limerick paid to that Prince--a pipe of red wine for every day in the year. In the year 1029, Olaf, son of Sitrick, of Dublin, being taken prisoner by O'Regan, the Lord of East-Meath, paid for his ransom--"twelve hundred cows, seven score British horses, three score ounces of gold!" sixty ounces of white silver as his "fetter-ounce;" the sword of Carlus, besides the usual legal fees, for recording these profitable formalities.

Being now Christians, they also began to found and endow churches, with the same liberality with which their Pagan fathers had once enriched the temples of Upsala and Trondheim. The oldest religious foundations in the seaports they possessed owe their origin to them; but even as Christians, they did not lose sight of their nationality. They contended for, and obtained Dano-Irish Bishops, men of their own race, speaking their own speech, to preside over the sees of Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick. When the Irish Synods or Primates asserted over them any supervision which they were unwilling to admit--except in the case of St. Malachy--they usually invoked the protection of the See of Canterbury, which, after the Norman conquest of England, became by far the most powerful Archbishopric in either island.

In the third quarter of this century there arose in the Isle of Man a fortunate leader, who may almost be called the last of the sea kings. This was Godard _Crovan_ (the white-handed), son of an Icelandic Prince, and one of the followers of Harald Harfagar and Earl Tosti, in their

invasion of Northumbria (A.D. 1066). Returning from the defeat of his chiefs, Godard saw and seized upon Man as the centre of future expeditions of his own, in the course of which he subdued the Hebrides, divided them with the gallant Somerled (ancestor of the MacDonalds of the Isles), and established his son Lagman (afterwards put to death by King Magnus _Barefoot_) as his viceroy in the Orkneys and Shetlands. The weakened condition of the Danish settlement at Dublin attracted his ambition, and where he entered as a mediator he remained as a master. In the succession of the Dublin Vikings he is assigned a reign of ten years, and his whole course of conquest seems to have occupied some twenty years (A.D. 1077 to 1098). At length the star of this Viking of the Irish sea paled before the mightier name of a King of Norway, whose more brilliant ambition had a still shorter span. The story of this _Magnus_ (called, it is said, from his adoption of the Scottish kilt, Magnus _Barefoot_) forms the eleventh Saga in "the Chronicles of the Kings of Norway." He began to reign in the year 1093, and soon after undertook an expedition to the south, "with many fine men, and good shipping." Taking the Orkneys on his way, he sent their Earls prisoners to Norway, and placed his own son, Sigurd, in their stead. He overran the Hebrides, putting Lagman, son of Godard Crovan, to death. He spared only "the holy Island," as Iona was now called, even by the Northmen, and there, in after years, his own bones were buried. The Isles of Man and Anglesea, and the coast of Wales, shared the same fate, and thence he retraced his course to Scotland, where, borne in his galley across the Isthmus of Cantyre, to fulfil an old prophecy, he claimed possession of the land on both sides of Loch Awe. It was while he wintered in the Southern Hebrides, according to the Saga, that he contracted his son Sigurd with the daughter of Murkertach O'Brien, called by the Northmen "Biadmynia." In summer he sailed homeward, and did not return southward till the ninth year of his reign (A.D. 1102), when his son, Sigurd, had come of age, and bore the title of "King of the Orkneys and Hebrides." "He sailed into the west sea," says the Saga, "with the finest men who could be got in Norway. All the powerful men of the country followed him, such as Sigurd Hranesson, and his brother Ulf, Vidkunner Johnsson, Dag Eliffsson, Sorker of Sogn, Eyvind Olboge, the king's marshal, and many other great men." On the intelligence of this fleet having arrived in Irish waters, according to the annals, Murkertach and his allies marched in force to Dublin, where, however, Magnus "made peace with them for one year," and Murkertach "gave his daughter to Sigurd, with many jewels and gifts." That winter Magnus spent with Murkertach at Kinkora, and "towards spring both kings went westward with their army all the way to Ulster." This was one of those annual visitations which kings, whose authority was not yet established, were accustomed to make. The circuit, as usual, was performed in about six weeks, after which the Irish monarch returned home, and Magnus went on board his fleet at Dublin, to return to Norway. According to the Norse account he landed again on the coast of Ulidia (Down), where he expected "cattle

for ship-provision," which Murkertach had promised to send him, but the Irish version would seem to imply that he went on shore to seize the cattle perforce. It certainly seems incredible that Murkertach should send cattle to the shore of Strangford Lough, from the pastures of Thomond, when they might be more easily driven to Dublin, or the mouth of the Boyne. "The cattle had not made their appearance on the eve of Bartholomew's Mass" (August 23rd, A.D. 1103), says the Saga, so "when the sun rose in the sky, King Magnus himself went on shore with the greater part of his men. King Magnus," continues the scald, "had a helmet on his head; a red shield, in which was inlaid a gilded lion; and was girt with the sword Legbiter, of which the hilt was of ivory, and the hand grip wound about with gold thread; and the sword was extremely sharp. In his hand he had a short spear, and a red silk short cloak over his coat, on which both before and behind was embroidered a lion, in yellow silk; and all men acknowledged that they had never seen a brisker, statelier man." A dust cloud was seen far inland, and the Northmen fell into order of battle. It proved, however, by their own account to be the messengers with the promised supply of cattle; but, after they came up, and while returning to the shore, they were violently assailed on all sides by the men of Down. The battle is described, with true Homeric vigour, by Sturleson. "The Irish," he says, "shot boldly; and although they fell in crowds, there came always two in place of one." Magnus, with most of his nobles, were slain on the spot, but Vidkunner Johnsson escaped to the shipping, "with the King's banner and the sword Legbiter." And the Saga of Magnus Barefoot concludes thus: "Now when King Sigurd heard that his father had fallen, he set off immediately, leaving the

Irish King's daughter behind, and proceeded in autumn, with the whole fleet directly to Norway." The annalists of Ulster barely record the fact, that "Magnus, King of Lochlan and the Isles, was slain by the Ulidians, with a slaughter of his people about him, while on a predatory excursion." They place the event in the year 1104.

Our account with the Northmen may here be closed. Borne along by the living current of events, we leave them behind, high up on the remoter channels of the stream. Their terrible ravens shall flit across our prospect no more. They have taken wing to their native north, where they may croak yet a little while over the cold and crumbling altars of Odin and Asa Thor. The bright light of the Gospel has penetrated even to those last haunts of Paganism, and the fierce but not ungenerous race, with which we have been so long familiar, begin to change their natures under its benign influence.

Although both the scalds and chroniclers of the North frequently refer to Ireland as a favourite theatre of their heroes, we derive little light from those of their works which have yet been made public. All connection between the two races had long ceased, before the first scholars of the North began to investigate the earlier

annals of their own country, and then they were content with a very vague and general knowledge of the western Island, for which their ancestors had so, fiercely contended throughout so many generations. The oldest maps, known in Scandinavia, exhibit a mere outline of the Irish coast, with a few points in the interior; fiords, with Norse names, are shown, answering to Loughs Foyle, Swilly, Larne, Strang_ford_, and Carling_ford_; the Provincial lines of Ulster and of Connaught are rudely traced; and the situation of Enniskillen, Tara, Dublin, Glendaloch, Water_ford_, Limer_ick_, and Swer_wick_, accurately laid down. It is thought that all those places ending in _wick_ or _ford_, on the Irish map, are of Scandinavian origin; as well as the names of the islets, Skerries, Lambey, and Saltees. Many noble families, as the Plunkets, McIvers, Archbolds, Harolds, Stacks, Skiddies, Cruises, and McAuliffes, are derived from the same origin.

During the contest we have endeavoured to describe, three hundred and ten years had passed since the warriors of Lochlin first landed on the shores of Erin. Ten generations, according to the measured span of adult life, were born, and trained to arms and marshalled in battle, since the enemy, "powerful on sea," first burst upon the shield-shaped Isle of Saints. At the close of the eighth century we cast back a grateful retrospect on the Christian ages of Ireland. Can we do so now, at the close of the eleventh? Alas! far from it. Bravely and in the main successfully as the Irish have borne themselves, they come out of that cruel, treacherous, interminable war with many rents and stains in that vesture of innocence in which we saw them arrayed at the close of their third Christian century. Odin has not conquered, but all the worst vices of warfare--its violence, its impiety, discontent, self-indulgence, and contempt for the sweet paths of peace and mild counsels of religion--these must and did remain, long after Dane and Norwegian have for ever disappeared!

BOOK III.

WAR OF SUCCESSION.

CHAPTER I.

THE FORTUNES OF THE FAMILY OF BRIAN.

The last scene of the Irish monarchy, before it entered on the anarchical period, was not destitute of an appropriate grandeur. It was the death-bed scene of the second Malachy, the rival, ally, and successor of the great Brian. After the eventful day of Clontarf he resumed the monarchy, without opposition, and for eight years he continued in its undisturbed enjoyment. The fruitful

land of Meath again gave forth its abundance, unscourged by the spoiler, and beside its lakes and streams the hospitable Ard-Righ had erected, or restored, three hundred fortified houses, where, as his poets sung, shelter was freely given to guests from the king of the elements. His own favourite residence was at Dunnasciath ("the fort of shields"), in the north-west angle of Lough Ennel, in the present parish of Dysart. In the eighth year after Clontarf--the summer of 1022--the Dublin Danes once again ventured on a foray into East-Meath, and the aged monarch marched to meet them. At Athboy he encountered the enemy, and drove them, routed and broken, out of the ancient mensal land of the Irish kings.

Thirty days after that victory he was called on to confront the conqueror of all men, even Death. He had reached the age of seventy-three, and he prepared to meet his last hour with the zeal and humility of a true Christian. To Dunnasciath repaired Amalgaid, Archbishop of Armagh, the Abbots of Clonmacnoise and of Durrow, with a numerous train of the clergy. For greater solitude, the dying king was conveyed into an island of the lake opposite his fort--then called Inis-Cro, now Cormorant Island--and there, "after intense penance," on the fourth of the Nones of September precisely, died Malachy, son of Donald, son of Donogh, in the fond language of the bards, "the pillar of the dignity and nobility of the western world:" and "the seniors of all Ireland sung masses, hymns, psalms, and canticles for the welfare of his soul."

"This," says the old Translator of the Clonmacnoise Annals, "was the last king of Ireland of Irish blood, that had the crown; yet there were seven kings after without crown, before the coming in of the English." Of these seven subsequent kings we are to write under the general title of "the War of Succession." They are called Ard-Righ _go Fresabra_, that is, kings opposed, or unrecognised, by certain tribes, or Provinces. For it was essential to the completion of the title, as we have before seen, that when the claimant was of Ulster, he should have Connaught and Munster, or Leinster and Munster, in his obedience: in other words, he should be able to command the allegiance of two-thirds of his suffragans. If of Munster, he should be equally potent in the other Provinces, in order to rank among the recognised kings of Erin. Whether some of the seven kings subsequent to Malachy II., who assumed the title, were not fairly entitled to it, we do not presume to say; it is our simpler task to narrate the incidents of that brilliant war of succession, which occupies almost all the interval between the Danish and Anglo-Norman invasions. The chaunt of the funeral Mass of Malachy was hardly heard upon Lough Ennel, when Donogh O'Brien despatched his agents, claiming the crown from the Provincial Princes. He was the eldest son of Brian by his second marriage, and his mother was an O'Conor, an additional source of strength to him, in the western Province. It had fallen to the lot of Donogh, and his elder brother, Teigue or Thaddeus, to conduct the remnant of the Dalcassians from Clontarf

to their home. Marching through Ossory, by the great southern road, they were attacked in their enfeebled state by the lord of that brave little border territory, on whom Brian's hand had fallen with heavy displeasure. Wounded as many of them were, they fought their way desperately towards Cashel, leaving 150 men dead in one of their skirmishes. Of all who had left the Shannon side to combat with the enemy, but 850 men lived to return to their homes.

No sooner had they reached Kinkora, than a fierce dispute arose, between the friends of Teigue and Donogh, as to which should reign over Munster. A battle ensued, with doubtful result, but by the intercession of the Clergy this unnatural feud was healed, and the brothers reigned conjointly for nine years afterwards, until Teigue fell in an engagement in Ely (Queen's County), as was charged and believed, by the machinations of his colleague and brother. Thorlogh, son of Teigue, was the foster-son, and at this time the guest or hostage of Dermid of Leinster, the founder of the McMurrough family, which had now risen into the rank justly forfeited by the traitor Maelmurra. When he reached man's age he married the daughter of Dermid, and we shall soon hear of him again asserting in Munster the pretensions of the eldest surviving branch of the O'Brien family.

The death of his brother and of Malachy within the same year, proved favourable to the ambition of Donogh O'Brien. All Munster submitted to his sway; Connaught was among the first to recognise his title as Ard-Righ. Ossory and Leinster, though unwillingly, gave in their adhesion. But Meath refused to recognise him, and placed its government in commission, in the hands of Con O'Lochan, the arch-poet, and Corcran, the priest, already more than once mentioned. The country, north of Meath, obeyed Flaherty O'Neil, of Aileach, whose ambition, as well as that of all his house, was to restore the northern supremacy, which had continued unbroken, from the fourth to the ninth century. This Flaherty was a vigorous, able, and pious Prince, who held stoutly on to the northern half-kingdom. In the year 1030 he made the frequent but adventurous pilgrimage to Rome, from which he is called, in the pedigree of his house, _an Trostain_, or the cross-bearer.

The greatest obstacle, however, to the complete ascendancy of Donogh, arose in the person of his nephew, now advanced to manhood. Thorlogh O'Brien possessed much of the courage and ability of his grandfather, and he had at his side, a faithful and powerful ally in his foster-father, Dermid, of Leinster. Rightly or wrongly, on proof or on suspicion, he regarded his uncle as his father's murderer, and he pursued his vengeance with a skill and constancy worthy of _Hamlet_. At the time of his father's death, he was a mere lad—in his fourteenth year. But, as he grew older, he accompanied his foster-father in all his expeditions, and rapidly acquired a soldier's fame. By marriage with Dervorgoil, daughter of the Lord of Ossory,

he strengthened his influence at the most necessary point; and what, with so good a cause and such fast friends as he made in exile, his success against his uncle is little to be wondered at. Leinster and Ossory, which had temporarily submitted to Donogh's claim, soon found good pretexts for refusing him tribute, and a border war, marked by all the usual atrocities, raged for several successive seasons. The contest, is relieved, however, of its purely civil character, by the capture of Waterford, still Danish, in 1037, and of Dublin, in 1051. On this occasion, Dermid, of Leinster, bestowed the city on his son Morrogh (grandfather of Strongbow's ally), to whom the remnant of its inhabitants, as well as their kinsmen in Man, submitted for the time with what grace they could.

The position of Donogh O'Brien became yearly weaker. His rival had youth, energy, and fortune on his side. The Prince of Connaught finally joined him, and thus, a league was formed, which overcame all opposition. In the year 1058, Donogh received a severe defeat at the base of the Galtees; and although he went into the house of O'Conor the same year, and humbly submitted to him, it only postponed his day of reckoning. Three years after O'Conor took Kinkora, and Dermid, of Leinster, burned Limerick, and took hostages as far southward as Saint Brendan's hill (Tralee). The next year Donogh O'Brien, then fully fourscore years of age, weary of life and of the world, took the cross-staff, and departed on a pilgrimage to Rome, where he died soon after, in the monastery of St. Stephen. It is said by some writers that Donogh brought with him to Rome and presented to the Pope, Alexander II., the crown of his father--and from this tradition many theories and controversies have sprung. It is not unlikely that a deposed monarch should have carried into exile whatever portable wealth he still retained, nor that he should have presented his crown to the Sovereign Pontiff before finally quitting the world. But as to conferring with the crown, the sovereignty of which it was once an emblem, neither reason nor religion obliges us to believe any such hypothesis.

Dermid of Leinster, upon the banishment of Donogh, son of Brian (A.D. 1063), became actual ruler of the southern half-kingdom and nominal Ard-Righ, "with opposition." The two-fold antagonism to this Prince, came, as might be expected from Conor, son of Malachy, the head of the southern Hy-Nial dynasty, and from the chiefs of the elder dynasty of the North. Thorlogh O'Brien, now King of Cashel, loyally repaid, by his devoted adherence, the deep debt he owed in his struggles and his early youth to Dermid. There are few instances in our Annals of a more devoted friendship than existed between these brave and able Princes through all the changes of half a century. No one act seems to have broken the life-long intimacy of Dermid and Thorlogh; no cloud ever came between them; no mistrust, no distrust. Rare and precious felicity of human experience! How many myriads of men have sighed out their souls in vain desire for that best blessing which Heaven can bestow, a true, unchanging, unsuspecting

friend!

To return: Conor O'Melaghlin could not see, without deep-seated discontent, a Prince of Leinster assume the rank which his father and several of his ancestors had held. A border strife between Meath and Leinster arose not unlike that which had been waged a few years before for the deposition of Donogh, between Leinster and Ossory on the one part, and Munster on the other. Various were the encounters, whose obscure details are seldom preserved to us. But the good fortune of Dermid prevailed in all, until, in the year 1070, he lost Morrogh, his heir, by a natural death at Dublin, and Gluniarn, another son, fell in battle with the men of Meath. Two years later, in the battle of Ova, in the same territory, and against the same enemy, Dermid himself fell, with the lord of Forth, and a great host of Dublin Danes and Leinster men. The triumph of the son of Malachy, and the sorrow and anger of Leinster, were equally great. The bards have sung the praise of Dermid in strains which history accepts: they praise his ruddy aspect and laughing teeth; they remember how he upheld the standard of war, and none dared contend with him in battle; they denounce vengeance on Meath as soon as his death-feast is over--a vengeance too truly pursued.

As a picture of the manners and habits of thought in those times, the fate of Conor, son of Melaghlin, and its connection with the last illness and death of Thorlogh O'Brien, are worthy of mention. Conor was treacherously slain, the year after the battle of Ova, in a parley with his own nephew, though the parley was held under the protection of the _Bachall-Isa_, or Staff, of Christ, the most revered relic of the Irish Church. After his death, his body was buried in the great Church of Clonmacnoise, in his own patrimony. But Thorlogh O'Brien perhaps, from his friendship for Dermid, carried off his head, as the head of an enemy, to Kinkora. When it was placed in his presence in his palace, a mouse ran out from the dead man's head, and under the king's mantle, which occasioned him such a fright that he grew suddenly sick, his hair fell off, and his life was despaired of. It was on Good Friday that the buried head was carried away, and on Easter Sunday, it was tremblingly restored again, with two rings of gold as a peace offering to the Church. Thus were God and Saint Kieran vindicated. Thorlogh O'Brien slowly regained his strength, though Keating, and the authors he followed, think he was never the same man again, after the fright he received from the head of Conor O'Melaghlin. He died peaceably and full of penitence, at Kinkora, on the eve of the Ides of July, A.D. 1086, after severe physical suffering. He was in the 77th year of his age, the 32nd of his rule over Munster, and the 13th--since the death of Dermid of Leinster--in his actual sovereignty of the southern half, and nominal rule of the whole kingdom. He was succeeded by his son Murkertach, or Murtogh, afterwards called _More_, or the great.

We have thus traced to the third generation the political fortunes of the family of Brian, which includes so much of the history of those times. That family had become, and was long destined to remain, the first in rank and influence in the southern half-kingdom. But internal discord in a great house, as in a great state, is fatal to the peaceable transmission of power. That "acknowledged right of birth" to which a famous historian attributes "the peaceful successions" of modern Europe, was too little respected in those ages, in many countries of Christendom--and had no settled prescription in its favour among the Irish. Primogeniture and the whole scheme of feudal dependence seems to have been an essential preparative for modern civilization: but as Ireland had escaped the legions of Rome, so she existed without the circle of feudal organization. When that system did at length appear upon her soil it was embodied in an invading host, and patriot zeal could discern nothing good, nothing imitable in the laws and customs of an enemy, whose armed presence in the land was an insult to its inhabitants. Thus did our Island twice lose the discipline which elsewhere laid the foundation of great states: once in the Roman, and again in the Feudal era.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONTEST BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH--RISE OF THE FAMILY OF O'CONOR.

Four years before the death of Thorlogh O'Brien, a Prince destined to be the life-long rival of his great son, had succeeded to the kingship of the northern tribes. This was Donald, son of Ardgall, Prince of Aileach, sometimes called "O" and sometimes "Mac" Laughlin. Donald had reached the mature age of forty when he succeeded in the course of nature to his father, Ardgall, and was admitted the first man of the North, not only in station but for personal graces and accomplishments; for wisdom, wealth, liberality, and love of military adventure.

Murkertach, or Murtogh O'Brien, was of nearly the same age as his rival, and his equal, if not superior in talents, both for peace and war. During the last years of his father's reign and illness, he had been the real ruler of the south, and had enforced the claims of Cashel on all the tribes of Leath Mogha, from Dublin to Galway. In the year 1094, by mutual compact, brought about through the intercession of the Archbishop of Armagh and the great body of the clergy, north and south--and still more perhaps by the pestilence and famine which raged at intervals during the last years of the eleventh century --this ancient division of the midland asker, running east and west, was solemnly restored by consent of both parties, and Leath Mogha and Leath Conn became for the moment independent territories. So thoroughly did the Church enter into the arrangement, that, at the Synod of

Rath-Brazil, held a few years later, the seats of the twelve Bishops of the southern half were grouped round the Archbishop of Cashel, while the twelve of the northern half were ranged round the Archbishop of Armagh. The Bishops of Meath, the ancient mensal of the monarchy, seem to have occupied a middle station between the benches of the north and south.

Notwithstanding the solemn compact of 1094, Murtoth did not long cease to claim the title, nor to seek the hostages of all Ireland. As soon as the fearful visitations with which the century had closed were passed over, he resumed his warlike forays, and found Donald of Aileach nothing loath to try again the issue of arms. Each prince, however, seems to have been more anxious to coerce or interest the secondary chiefs in his own behalf than to meet his rival in the old-style pitched battle. Murtoth's annual march was usually along the Shannon, into Leitrim, thence north by Sligo, and across the Erne and Finn into Donegal and Derry. Donald's annual excursion led commonly along the Bann, into Dalriada and Ulidia, Whence by way of Newry, across the Boyne, into Meath, and from West-Meath into Munster. In one of these forays, at the very opening of the twelfth century, Donald surprised Kinkora in the absence of its lord, razed the fort and levelled the buildings to the earth. But the next season the southern king paid him back in kind, when he attacked and demolished Aileach, and caused each of his soldiers to carry off a stone of the ruin in his knapsack. "I never heard of the billeting of grit stones," exclaims a bard of those days, "though I have heard of the billeting of soldiers: but now we see the stones of Aileach billeted on the horses of the King of the West!"

Such circuits of the Irish kings, especially in days of opposition, were repeated with much regularity. They seem to have set out commonly in May--or soon after the festival of Easter--and when the tour of the island was made, they occupied about six weeks in duration. The precise number of men who took part in these visitations is nowhere stated, but in critical times no prince, claiming the perilous honour of Ard-Righ, would be likely to march with less than from five to ten thousand men. The movements of such a multitude must have been attended with many oppressions and inconveniences; their encampment for even a week in any territory must have been a serious burthen to the resident inhabitants, whether hostile or hospitable. Yet this was one inevitable consequence of the breaking up of the federal centre at Tara. In earlier days, the Ard-Righ, on his election, or in an emergency, made an armed procession through the island. Ordinarily, however, his suffragans visited him, and not he them; all Ireland went up to Tara to the Feis, or to the festivals of Baaltine and Samhain. Now that there was no Tara to go to, the monarch, or would-be monarch, found it indispensable to show himself often, and to exercise his authority in person, among every considerable tribe in the island. To do justice to Murtoth O'Brien, he does not appear to have sought occasions of employing force

when on these expeditions, but rather to have acted the part of an armed negotiator. On his return from the demolition of Aileach (A.D. 1101), among other acts of munificence, he, in an assembly of the clergy of Leath Mogha, made a solemn gift of the city of Cashel, free of all rents and dues, to the Archbishop and the Clergy, for ever. His munificence to churches, and his patronage of holy men, were eminent traits in this Prince's character. And the clergy of that age were eminently worthy of the favours of such Princes. Their interposition frequently brought about a truce between the northern and southern kings. In the year 1103, the hostages of both were placed in custody with Donald, Archbishop of Armagh, to guarantee a twelvemonth's peace. But the next season the contest was renewed. Murtoth besieged Armagh for a week, which Donald of Aileach successfully defended, until the siege was abandoned. In a subsequent battle the northern force defeated one division of Murtoth's allies in Iveagh, under the Prince of Leinster, who fell on the field, with the lords of Idrone, Ossory, Desies, Kerry, and the Dublin Danes. Murtoth himself, with another division of his troops, was on an incursion into Antrim when he heard of this defeat. The northern visitors carried off among other spoils the royal tent and standard, a trophy which gave new bitterness on the one side, and new confidence on the other. Donald, the good Archbishop, the following year (A.D. 1105) proceeded to Dublin, where Murtoth was, or was soon expected, to renew the previous peace between North and South, but he fell suddenly ill soon after his arrival, and caused himself to be carried homewards in haste. At a church by the wayside, not far from Dublin, he was anointed and received the viaticum. He survived, however, to reach Armagh, where he expired on the 12th day of August. Kellach, latinized Celsus, his saintly successor, was promoted to the Primacy, and solemnly consecrated on Saint Adamnan's day following--the 23rd of September, 1105.

Archbishop Celsus, whose accession was equally well received in Munster as in Ulster, followed in the footsteps of his pious predecessor, in taking a decided part with neither Leath Mogha nor Leath Conn. When, in the year 1110, both parties marched to Slieve-Fuaid, with a view to a challenge of battle, Celsus interposed between them the _Bachall-Isa_--and a solemn truce followed; again, three years later, when they confronted each other in Iveagh, in Down, similar success attended a similar interposition. Three years later Murtoth O'Brien was seized with so severe an illness, that he became like to a living skeleton, and though he recovered sufficiently to resume the exercise of authority he never regained his full health. He died in a spiritual retreat, at Lismore, on the 4th of the Ides of March, A.D. 1119, and was buried at Killaloe. His great rival, Donald of Leath Conn, did not long survive him: he died at Derry, also in a religious house, on the 5th of the Ides of February, A.D. 1121.

While these two able men were thus for more than a quarter

of a century struggling for the supremacy, a third power was gradually strengthening itself west of the Shannon, destined to profit by the contest, more than either of the principals. This was the family of O'Conor, of Roscommon, who derived their pedigree from the same stock as the O'Neils, and their name from Conor, an ancestor, who ruled over Connaught, towards the end of the ninth century. Two or three of their line before Conor had possessed the same rank and title, but it was by no means regarded as an adjunct of the house of Rathcrogan, before the time at which we have arrived. Their co-relatives, sometimes their rivals, but oftener their allies, were the O'Ruarcs of Breffny, McDermots of Moylurg, the O'Flahertys of _Iar_ or West Connaught, the O'Shaughnessys, O'Heynes, and O'Dowdas. The great neighbouring family of O'Kelly had sprung from a different branch of the far-spreading Gaelic tree. At the opening of the twelfth century, Thorlogh More O'Conor, son of Ruari of the Yellow Hound, son of Hugh of the Broken Spear, was the recognised head of his race, both for valour and discretion. By some historians he is called the half-brother of Murtoth O'Brien, and it is certain that he was the faithful ally of that powerful prince. In the early stages of the recent contest between North and South, Donald of Aileach had presented himself at Rathcrogan, the residence of O'Conor, who entertained him for a fortnight, and gave him hostages; but Connaught finally sided with Munster, and thus, by a decided policy, escaped being ground to powder, as corn is ground between the mill-stones. But the nephew and successor of Murtoth was not prepared to reciprocate to Connaught the support it had rendered to Munster, but rather looked for its continuance to himself. Conor O'Brien, who became King of Munster in 1120, resisted all his life the pretensions of any house but his own to the southern half-kingdom, and against a less powerful or less politic antagonist, his energy and capacity would have been certain to prevail. The posterity of Malachy in Meath, as well as the Princes of Aileach, were equally hostile to the designs of the new aspirant. One line had given three, another seven, another twenty kings to Erin--but who had ever heard of an _Ard-Righ_ coming out of Connaught? 'Twas so they reasoned in those days of fierce family pride, and so they acted. Yet Thorlogh, son of Ruari, son of Hugh, proved himself in the fifteen years' war, previous to his accession (1021 to 1136), more than a match for all his enemies. He had been chief of his tribe since the year 1106, and from the first had begun to lay his far forecasting plans for the sovereignty. He had espoused the cause of the house of O'Brien, and had profited by that alliance. Nor were all his thoughts given to war. He had bridged the river Suca at Ballinasloe, and the Shannon at Athlone and Shannon harbour, and the same year these works were finished (1120 or '21) he celebrated the ancient games at Tailtean, in assertion of his claim to the monarchy. His main difficulty was the stubborn pride of Munster, and the valour and enterprise of Conor O'Brien, surnamed Conor "of the fortresses." Of the years following his assertion of his title, few passed without war between those Provinces. In 1121 and 1127,

Thorlogh triumphed in the south, took hostages from Lismore to Tralee, and returned home exultingly; a few years later the tide turned, and Conor O'Brien was equally victorious against him, in the heart of his own country. Thorlogh played off in the south the anci

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